ACTION PLAN FOR
Hiring In-Home Caregivers

First and foremost, you want someone who is able to perform all the caregiving tasks you need accomplished. You also want someone who can form a comfortable working relationship with both you and your loved one. Take your time and select carefully.

» **Define your loved one’s and your caregiving needs.** Do you need help with bathing and respite care a couple times a week? Do you need someone available eight hours every night to help the person with Parkinson’s to the bathroom and supervise him or her so you can get uninterrupted sleep?

» **Develop a job description.** Include a list of household tasks, personal care tasks and leisure activities that the home care worker will be expected to do. A well-developed job description will help you or an agency assure that the right worker is hired. It can also be used as a basis to evaluate the worker and, if necessary, terminate employment.

» **Find out about legal, financial and tax issues.** Check with your insurance agent to determine whether your homeowner’s policy covers property damage, theft and personal injury that involves an employee or other person working in the home. Does your automobile insurance cover a home care worker driving the family car, and if so, are there any exceptions? Read “Deciding to Hire Through an Agency or Privately” for more in-depth information on legal and tax issues.

» **Screen and interview applicants.** If you are hiring privately, you will first want to interview candidates by phone, then set up in-person interviews with the most promising ones. Have the job description ready to hand them and a formal list of questions. Remember to include any individual preferences or behaviors that might preclude certain work, such as “this is a smoking household,” “my loved one will not accept personal care from a man/woman,” “the person with Parkinson’s often swears,” etc. If you are hiring from an agency, you may only be presented with one candidate at a time. Presumably the agency has used the information you provided in their care planning interview to pick the best match for your needs. If you truly do not think this person will fit into your household, tell the agency, and ask them to send someone else.
» **Check references and backgrounds.** Whether hiring an agency to provide your home care worker or hiring privately, it is vital that you ask for at least two references. Check them! The agency should have done a criminal background check on their employees, but you will need to do one if you hire privately.

» **Sign a contract or care provider agreement.** If you are using an agency, they will supply a contract that shows what services have been contracted, what rate will be charged, any charges for additional services and billing and payment information. If you hire privately, you should have a written agreement that specifically outlines the terms of employment including salary, days and hours of service, any benefits (e.g., paid holidays, provision of meals, etc.), work rules and notice required for either party to terminate the agreement. Both parties to any contract or agreement should be given a copy for their records.

» **If you decide to hire someone privately, you can place an ad in your local paper or search online.** There are many websites that specialize in providing care services, from companion care to personal care to around-the-clock care. You might also look for a placement agency. These companies charge a one-time finder’s fee for placing a caregiver in a home. The caregivers are often from other countries and may have limited English proficiency. Whichever option you choose, you should make sure the person is legally able to work in the US.

*The worksheets “Questions to Ask a Potential Paid Agency and Individual Caregiver” can help you select either an agency or individual. Find them at Parkinson.org/library.*
Deciding to Hire Through an Agency or Privately

There are pros and cons for deciding to use an agency or hire in-home caregiving help privately. Here are the ABCs you need to consider.

**Administration**
Hiring privately involves running ads, screening applicants, doing background checks, verifying that the person is eligible to work in the US, doing payroll including filing forms and paying taxes at regular intervals during the year, supervising, evaluating and, if necessary, firing the worker.

**Backup**
If the worker becomes ill or has a family emergency, who will provide service? Agencies usually can provide another worker relatively quickly; this may not be true for someone you hire privately.

**Bonding**
This is an insurance policy that protects both the employee and the employer against financial loss. Agencies usually bond their employees. Should you bond your privately hired worker? Check with your insurance agent to find out what is involved.

**Cost**
In most cases, hiring privately will cost less than hiring through an agency.

**Consistency**
An agency may not be able to provide the same person every time. You may end up having to train several workers.

**DID YOU KNOW?**
According to research from the Parkinson's Outcomes Project, the largest clinical study of Parkinson's ever conducted, women with Parkinson's have fewer informal caregiving resources and are more likely to use formal, paid caregiving.
INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR STATUS

Independent contractors are responsible for reporting their income and paying their own Social Security and Medicare taxes. Some caregivers and workers want to claim this status to avoid paperwork and/or paying taxes. This is often the case if you hire through a placement agency that uses foreign workers. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has strict requirements for individuals operating as independent contractors. The IRS rule is, “Anyone who performs services is an employee if you (the employer) can control what will be done and how it will be done – what matters is that you have the legal right to control the method and result of the services.”

Hiring someone as an independent contractor might affect your ability to deduct in-home care expenses as part of your medical expense deductions and might also affect payment from a long-term care insurance policy that covers in-home care. You should check with your tax preparer and your long-term insurance agent before hiring someone with independent contractor status.