

Why Use An Agency Anyway?

It was another busy morning: checking references, criminal background checks, taking calls from Clients. I was happy to see Carol when she walked into the office. As she handed me updates of her homemaker certification and fitness to work forms, it occurred to me to ask her about something which had been puzzling me recently. “Why do you work through us, Carol?” I asked. “Wouldn’t it be easier to find private clients yourself through the newspaper and not have to do things like meet our requirements and bring me your updated forms?” She smiled and asked me if I was trying to do myself out of a job. I said, “No, I’m just trying to understand why a person wouldn’t want to have a worker referred by an agency. There are things about it that just don’t make sense to me.” Carol nodded, “Oh, I’ve tried it a few times off and on. I don’t like it. I’m uncomfortable being on my own walking up to a house nobody but me has ever been to. There’s nobody for me to call if something goes wrong, or I get lost, or I’m sick. And I really like that the clients just automatically trust me.” “Well the trust thing is really more about who you are and how you present yourself, don’t you think, Carol?” She smiled again. “That’s nice of you to say and yes, I suppose some of it *is* me, but that’s part of why *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE* refers me isn’t it? Because I’m nice?” That made *me* smile. She continued, “No, what I mean is that they trust me because I’m with this office, I’m not just out there alone with no one watching over the clients. Folks know *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE* and recommend you. It’s like recommending me too. I have the *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE* name badge on so they trust me. I’m part of something important. That feels good. What parts don’t you understand?” “Well, I never understood why a client or family would risk having some stranger off the street answer their newspaper ad. How do they do all the work of checking references and criminal background checks and employment authorization documents? I wonder what they do when the person they hire no-shows or goes on vacation. What happens when there’s a problem with the person they hire, what can they do then? There’s no one to call for help. The money they *think* they save on office fees they lose to unreliability and domestic employee taxes that they don’t risk when the worker referred by a reputable agency. *I worry* about workers who don’t want anyone checking up on their services or how things are going – why don’t those workers *want* to be with an agency? You know, like you, reliable and backed up and trustworthy.” Now we *both* smiled. “You just answered some of your own questions, now didn’t you?” Carol laughed. “Yes, I guess I did!” I finished her file updates, reminded her about the workshop coming up and told her I’d be out to see her and Mrs. Cleary next month. I thanked her for being reliable about getting her updates in to us and for being so good with Mrs. Cleary. As she left I realized that I did, after all, understand *exactly* why Carol was with us and why Mrs. Cleary was as well.

This account of an exchange between a GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE case coordinator and Caregiver is partially fictionalized to protect the privacy of the persons involved.