

Advocacy Today: The Need For Criminal Checks

by Fiona F. Middleton, MSM

As America ages, people increasingly rely on paid caregivers to take care of themselves or the family they love. Many people opt to use an agency for paid services, rather than risk hiring a stranger from the newspaper. People make such choices to guarantee a degree of safety for family members. However, because of varying state laws, not all agencies are mandated to conduct criminal background checks. Even when agencies choose to exceed state regulations, they often face accessibility problems and prohibitive costs.

While some states have easy-to-use, on-line access, others have closed systems that forbid public access or restrict access to local, county checks. Although many states do permit access to statewide criminal record checks, national checks are usually not required and are difficult to obtain. The price of criminal checks varies by state. A statewide check can cost as much as \$25 per individual and more than twice that for a national FBI check. These are costs that are eventually passed on to consumers.

How can you help to change the process? Ask your elected officials how much their parent's safety is worth. Urge them to require *free* national criminal checks for all care providers. Advocate for instant national internet access. And insist that your home care company conduct such checks.

For help in advocacy efforts, or for the telephone numbers of your local legislators, call your local *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE* office today.