

Nicole Leseney

Hi, my name is Nicole Leseney. Thank you for inviting us to speak today. I started working with a privately owned homecare agency in Eugene 8 years ago and was quickly assigned clients. The training was minimal, introductions to the clients were awkward and abrupt and I was more or less thrown into working with individuals who had a wide variety of medical and psycho-social needs after only six hours of training. This training consisted of sitting in a conference room and watching outdated videos that were probably 20 years old and quite basic. One of my friends went to work for a restaurant chain and reported that the training was extensive: a 20 hour week of book work followed by another 20 hour week of shadowing an experienced server before she was ever allowed to serve a party of her own. Six hours of watching old videos to prepare me to have a stranger's life in my hands and all the liability that comes with that, seems irresponsible and neglectful. My friend was given far more training to serve people spaghetti!

After working for this agency for seven years, myself and other caregivers received an email that the company would be shutting its doors with just 48 hours notice. This created a crisis for clients and their families in that they were left scrambling to secure the care they depend on for their lives. The office claimed that they had notified clients, although this was not true, as multiple caregivers returned to the last two days of their jobs only to have to break the news to their clients, who were sad and anxious about what would happen next. One client with severe dementia, who was unable to care for herself, was called by the office and informed herself, instead of her son, who oversaw her care plan. She was sad, confused and just didn't understand the situation.

Another client who was perfectly capable of handling her personal decisions, care and finances, was not informed of the closure. When she called the office, they insisted they had notified her, but this seems unlikely, as she was very organized and kept an eye on her email, mail and phone messages. It was a catastrophe for the caregivers and even more so for the elderly community we care for. Prior to this, there were signs that the company was in financial trouble in the form of bounced payroll checks and other complications.

This disaster could and should have been avoided through greater transparency and oversight but there was no one watching. Bottom line: The training private homecare agencies provide is grossly inadequate and without greater oversight, our parents, grand-parents and other members of the elderly community are at risk. Please support SB 669.