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It Doesn't Have to Be This Way – Taking a Stand Against Domestic Violence

... continued from page B1

"People often don't realize that the very attributes that make a town like Orinda an attractive place to live may contribute to a person's ability to exercise abusive control," explains Sandoval. "Houses may be quite separated ... reducing the chances that a neighbor will overhear arguments or violence ... public transportation is scarce, requiring access to a car in order to participate in the community. Neighbors respect each other's privacy, so they may overlook warning signs as not being any of their business ... these factors may serve to increase a victim's isolation, especially if a partner controls the finances, the car, and uses threats of physical violence."

For immigrants, there are additional hurdles. Knowing they fear deportation, their abusers often hide or destroy documents and threaten to report them to Immigration and Naturalization Services.

Take Action

Lamorinda takes "domestic violence very seriously," emphasizes Worth. "As a county, we have a zero tolerance policy." Police are well trained and "are tied in to all of the resources."

Baird wants those thinking about taking their children to a secure loca-

tion to know that STAND! facilities are "very home like" – individual family units with comfy couches, kitchens, and playgrounds where kids will be safe. But because it can be dangerous to leave batterers, she urges victims to work with STAND! to create safety plans.

And if you're the violent one? "Ask for help," says Baird. The crisis line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"As members of the community,"

says Sandoval, "we must play a role if we want to see an end to family violence: Get to know your neighbors. If you haven't seen someone in a few days, check to see if she or he needs anything. If you see something that doesn't seem right, tell someone. If you hear repeated loud arguments, or objects being thrown, call the police."

Says Smith, "By shining a light on this simply unacceptable conduct, we hope to reach out to all those at risk and that help is available."

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month Get Educated

Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda are all issuing proclamations supporting October's National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. On October 4, STAND! will host its 20th Annual Rebuilding Lives Luncheon at 11:30 a.m. at the Concord Hilton. Co-chaired by Orinda resident Nadia Costa and emceed by ABC7 news anchor Cheryl Jennings, the event will feature a talk by actor and domestic violence advocate Victor Rivers. For tickets, contact: (925) 676-2845.

On October 14, the Orinda Community Church will present a special service with dance and music at 10 a.m., followed by a Forum on Domestic Violence. The free event will include an 11 a.m. screening in OCC's 200-seat Fellowship Hall of "Telling Amy's Story," plus a discussion with experts from Kaiser, OCC and STAND! All are welcome. For information, visit www.orindachurch.org.

Domestic Violence Crisis Line (local):
(888) 215-5555

Domestic Violence Hotline (national):
(800) 799-SAFE (7233). TTY: (800) 787-3224

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Bugs in the Garden?



This first-generation VW "Bug" spotted in neighboring Canyon is veritably woven into the landscape under a thick blanket of ivy. Its owner says it was maroon, in its "road worthy" days. No telling how long it has rested there, but the owner stayed loyal to the brand – she still drives a slightly newer, if ivy-free Bug!

Photo Cathy Dausman

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Questions with home care?

Hiring a caregiver...what route should I take?

DEAR VANESSA,

My parents have gotten to that time in their lives where they are needing to have in-home care other than the help from family and friends. I know that there are options to choose from when hiring an in-home care provider including finding a private caregiver as well as going through an agency. Which is the better route? Why should I work through a home care agency? Wouldn't it cost less to hire an independent contractor? I appreciate any advice and answers you can give me to make a wiser, easier, and informed decision. Thank you. ISABEL

Ask Vanessa



Vanessa Valerio, RN
VP and COO for Patient Care
(925) 317-3080
vanessav@careindeed.com

DEAR ISABEL,

Recognizing that it's time to look at sources beyond the family to assist with your parents so they can remain in their own home is not easy. Each caregiving situation is unique and you may face many challenges as you search for information and make decisions about how best to provide care to your aging parents. There are several factors to consider such as cost, legal issues, and other valid concerns.

The cost of hiring an independent contractor is typically lower than that of an agency. You can hire based on your best judgment. You may have more control and choice in the care plan which may provide more flexibility in terms of the caregiving schedule. If you choose this route, be prepared to locate potential caregivers, screen applications, conduct interviews, run background checks, and administer payroll, unemployment, social security and other taxes. You become the employer and the caregiver becomes your employee. Although hiring an independent contractor is less expensive, it involves more risk and is where most fraud and abuse are likely to occur. Many home care workers represent themselves as independent contractors--thereby relieving the hiring family or individual of tax obligations. It is your responsibility to make sure that the home care worker truly is an independent contractor and is therefore paying his own taxes and carrying his own liability and worker's compensation insurance. If the aide is not meeting these obligations, you (the employer) become responsible for him or her. Hiring through an agency is more expensive but involves less risk. On top of the time-saving advantage that this route offers, an agency will handle all legal requirements of being an employer and help you avoid having trouble with the IRS. An agency who hires its own employees pays the payroll taxes, files tax returns and has workers compensation insurance, with liability insurance. These are all necessary to ensure that you and your family are protected.

Another concern is exploitation. While the vast majority of people who become home care workers do so out of a desire to help others and serve the needs of seniors in their community, there are always those who see this type of work as an opportunity to take advantage of those who are frail, functionally limited, or cognitively impaired. This most often occurs when there is no one (agency or individual) to provide proper supervision of the home care worker. A licensed home care agency is required to supervise their aides, have their performances evaluated periodically by an RN, and provide ongoing in-service training. This can reduce a lot of extra work, save you time, and alleviate some anxiety.

A third concern is continuity of care. When you hire someone privately, what happens when they become sick or have family obligations elsewhere? Not having back-up help when your caregiver is unavailable is a disadvantage. If a home care worker comes from an agency, that agency can provide another worker in such cases to make sure that your parents' needs are met without undue interruption.

Working through an agency is not foolproof. But most agencies work diligently to make sure that their clients get the best possible care experience from the best of caregivers. In the long run, this is a safer and more cost-effective option as an agency assumes responsibility and liability for their caregivers. Whatever route you choose to take, I hope you will be fortunate enough to find a devoted caregiver with a kind and caring attitude. VANESSA