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BUSINESS PLAN

Rewarding Work Resources strives for the right caregiving match



Justin Saglio for The Boston Globe

Elenore Parker visits with her son, Matthew, at the offices of Rewarding Work Resources in Brookline.

By Cindy Cantrell Globe Correspondent – August 11, 2015

Between running a public relations firm and advocating for her son Matthew, who has developmental disabilities, Elenore Parker of Brookline was the natural choice by the Personal Care Attendant Quality Home Care Workforce Council and the state's Department of Developmental Services for a project enabling clients to find their own personal-care assistants and respite caregivers. Rewarding Work Resources was incorporated by Parker and cofounders Jeff Keilson of Ashland and Donald James (now retired in Texas) in 2004, and they launched its directory five years later. Parker, who is president of the nonprofit organization, and Keilson, vice president, had this to say:

Q. What is Rewarding Work Resources?

PARKER: It's a web-based matching service for individuals with disabilities and the elderly who need help with daily activities in order to remain at home, as opposed to going into an institution. They access a searchable database for caregivers, which is geared to the state they live in.

Q. Where is it available?

PARKER: Massachusetts is our biggest program, but we're also in Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Arizona, and New Jersey.

Q. What is the fee structure for clients and workers?

PARKER: In Massachusetts, anybody can use the directory, but you need to receive services through MassHealth [Medicaid] or DDS in order to get a free 12-month subscription. Otherwise, there is a \$10 monthly fee, or \$90 for the year. When the month is over, you have to resubscribe, so no one pays for it who doesn't want it. Vermont is the only state with totally free access. Each state determines its own policy before they contract with us.

Q. How many local users have registered?

KEILSON: In Massachusetts, we currently have 7,000 personal care attendants who have active applications, which they have updated within the past 12 months. Of those, 3,000 also are interested in providing respite care. We've got close to 6,800 consumers, both individuals and family members.

Q. Do you envision expanding nationwide?

KEILSON: That was our vision when we began, but not if it compromises quality. We pride ourselves on our personal customer support, unlike other places where you have to use voice mail or e-mail. With that said, we wouldn't say no if the proper state resources were available. It's our passion and our focus to continue providing this service, wherever there is a need for it and as long as there is a need for it.

For more information, visit www.rewardingwork.org.

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