

Papa Pals

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A recent study conducted by AARP found that an increasing number of seniors are choosing to age in place – remaining in their homes as they age – as opposed to moving into a nursing home or an assisted living facility.¹ Maintaining independence is one of the primary reasons for seniors. Another reason is that remaining at home is often more cost-effective than nursing homes; the average cost of which is over \$90,000 in the United States. Assisted living often costs over \$100,000 per year. And, of course, remaining at home can often mean staying close to family and friends.

Staying at home can mean opting for in-home senior care services. Senior care referral companies are known to work with seniors and their family members to help meet these needs. Julian Ocampo, Managing Director at Luz Senior Care explains:

Most people in their middle ages do not have the ability to care for their elderly parents around the clock, but they don't want to check out completely. A senior care referral company can help fill in the gaps while their family is at work or taking care of their children. We kind of act like the glue that helps keep families together.²

Papa, The Company

Another option for seniors aging in place is provided by a Miami, Florida-based company, founded in 2017, called Papa. Founder and CEO, Andrew Parker, was inspired to start the company by his own family's struggles to balance daily demands of life with supporting his grandfather Joseph, who they referred to as "Papa".³ Basically, Papa needed a "pal" to provide some company and help with everyday tasks.

To be sure, Papa Pals is not just for seniors. The company has partnered with Medicare Advantage, Medicaid and nearly 70 commercial health plans to provide companion care services. But, they have also partnered with employers to offer their employees their services as part of their corporate wellness programs. The idea is that the service can help employers to increase productivity and reduce absenteeism. For employees, these services may include dog walking or helping kids with their homework while their parents work from home.

The company allows prospective Papa Pals to apply online. They vet the applicants to earn hourly wages in support of members "with things like companionship, help around the house, shopping, and transportation".⁴ Papa Pals then are able to use the Papa mobile app to browse work opportunities and book visits with members, much like an Uber driver would accept rides.

¹ "More Seniors Choosing to 'Age in Place' Over Nursing Homes: Here's Why". EIN Presswire. October 4, 2022. Available at: https://www.einnews.com/pr_news/594168312/more-seniors-choosing-to-age-in-place-over-nursing-homes-here-s-why Accessed on October 6, 2022.

² Ibid.

³ Papa Website. About Us. Available at: <https://www.papa.com/about> Accessed on October 6, 2022.

⁴ Papa Website. Pals. Available at: <https://www.papa.com/pals> Accessed on October 6, 2022.

Looking through the Papa website, it appears the company is operating and hiring in 40 states. A sample listing for a part-time companion caregiver in Arlington, VA and the surrounding area listed pay as \$13/hour as a Papa Pal. It's easy to see how costs can be kept low at that rate, but they do note that \$20 to \$25 an hour can be earned when bonuses apply. The types of visits described included companionship, errands, house tasks, and transportation.⁵

Evolution of The Sharing Economy

Taxis, restaurants and hotels can certainly continue to thrive in the face of competition from the likes of Uber, GrubHub and AirBnB. Traditional in-home care services and senior care referral companies will continue to meet the needs of a growing number of seniors choosing to age in-place. But, not everyone needs traditional in-home care services. And, even for those who do, supplementary services offered by a company like Papa could make all the difference in making the age in place trend a feasible and affordable alternative.

The foothold of Papa Pals seems to be more with Health Plans, with nearly 70 commercial plan partnerships, as well as with Medicare and Medicaid. Only a handful of employer clients are listed on the company's website. But, who knows? That could change. Employers certainly have a new solution to consider when it comes to questions of productivity and absenteeism for both their work-from-home and at-work employees.

⁵ Papa Website. Locations – Virginia – Arlington County – Arlington. Available at: <https://www.papa.com/locations/virginia/arlington-county/arlington> Accessed on October 6, 2022.