Trust

Trust is a currency more valuable than gold. Trust, like a precious and delicate flower, is beautiful beyond words, and like a rare African orchid, it can be destroyed with a single thought, or word, or action. When a sacred trust is broken, there are no words nor deeds which can restore the relationship. The trust is gone, the damage done, and nothing can turn back the hands of time to that place where the relation was before.

For companies such as Residential Support Services (RSS) which provide services to the people who are most vulnerable, it is a core responsibility that we earn and keep that trust. We trust that the systems we use to vet our employees are comprehensive, and that the full spectrum of background checks we use prior to hiring an employee will be sufficient to weed out those who should not work around vulnerable people. We trust that our employees will embrace their duty to protect as their highest responsibility, above all other requirements of the job. When, for whatever reason, that trust is broken, it shatters our faith in the system.

RSS believes that when a person accepts the responsibility of taking a paid position to provide care for a vulnerable individual, they need to be held to the highest standard of professionalism in everything they do. There is no greater trust than when a family places their loved one in the care of a paid professional, be it at a nursing home, day care, or residential group home. We expect these professionals to provide the highest level of care for our loved ones for all their needs, whether those needs are physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual. For the most part, these unsung heroes go above and beyond all expectations in delivering quality care for our loved ones. Most of the time.

Everyone makes mistakes, and our frontline caregivers are no exception. Caring for people is a tough way to earn a living, with long hours, burnout, and staffing issues being major contributing factors in staff turnover. When serving people in this type of environment, honest mistakes can and will happen. Staff, and the companies they work for, should use these mistakes as an opportunity to learn how to become better at what we do. But what about times when isolated events occur which are not honest mistakes?

RSS exercises due diligence in vetting all employees. Before any prospective employee is hired, we do extensive background checks, including local, state, and Federal criminal checks, Medicaid fraud checks, Social Security fraud checks, and sexual offender registry checks. We trust that the system does its due diligence in making sure all people who should not be working with vulnerable persons are somehow flagged in the system. We have no choice but to trust that a person’s history will be accurately reported in those background lists. I personally doubt that this system is above reproach.

Despite best efforts to ferret out every bad actor, there are times when someone who never should have been allowed to work around vulnerable people gets hired. When a paid caregiver deliberately victimizes a vulnerable person, this egregious act deserves a higher level of consequence. It is the opinion of this writer that a more severe penalty needs to be available, for incidents where a paid caregiver deliberately has violated his or her core duty to protect our most vulnerable citizens. Please contact your state and Federal representative, and push for legislation that raises criminal penalties on any paid caregiver who in the course of their employment deliberately victimizes society’s weakest members. We all owe our seniors, our children, and the disabled that much. In an era where our collective conscience seems to have diminished, our laws need to be strengthened.

Calvin Calton,

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