NORTHEND

VIRGINIA AGENCY PATH INSIGHT

How to Choose the Right Virginia Agency Path

Virginia uses a Home Care Organization license for personal care, skilled home health, and pharmaceutical services. Companion-only models may be exempt, while hospice follows a separate licensing path. The correct choice begins with the exact services the agency will provide.

Homemaker, Chore or Companion-Only Services

Providers offering only homemaker, chore, or companion services fall outside Virginia's Home Care Organization licensing chapter. These services generally include companionship, transportation, meal preparation, shopping, light housekeeping, laundry, and household management.

This is a narrow boundary—not permission to provide unrestricted care. Adding hands-on personal care, skilled care, or another regulated service may trigger HCO licensure.

HCO — Personal Care Services

An agency providing assistance with activities of daily living in a person's Virginia residence generally follows the licensed HCO path. Personal care may include hands-on help with bathing, dressing, eating, toileting, transferring, ambulation, and other services authorized by the agency's approved scope.

Staffing, supervision, assessments, care plans, records, policies, quality improvement, infection control, and emergency planning must match the personal care scope.

HCO — Home Health Services

Virginia also uses the HCO license for skilled services delivered by or under health professionals under a medical plan of care, including nursing, therapy, medical social services, and home attendants assisting with skilled care.

State licensure comes first. Medicare certification, national accreditation, Medicaid enrollment, and payer contracting are separate processes and do not automatically follow from the HCO license.

HCO — Pharmaceutical Services

The HCO category can authorize in-home pharmaceutical services, including dispensing and administering drugs, parenteral nutrition, infusion-related care, and patient instruction. Appropriate professional and pharmacy compliance is required.

Hospice Program and Hospice Facility

Hospice is separately licensed and provides coordinated interdisciplinary care to terminally ill patients and families, available 24/7. A hospice facility adds room, board, and continuous care. Facilities over 16 beds require hospital or nursing-facility licensure and a Certificate of Public Need; those with 16 or fewer beds are exempt from COPN.

Questions to consider

- Will services remain companion and homemaker-only, or include hands-on ADL assistance?
- Will the agency provide skilled nursing, therapy, infusion, or other services under a medical plan of care?
- Will the agency pursue Medicare, Medicaid, accreditation, or private-pay only?
- Will services be home-based hospice, or will the organization operate a hospice facility?

One HCO license—different service lines

Virginia does not issue separate licenses labeled “personal care agency” and “home health agency.” Both use the HCO framework, but the approved services determine the staffing, oversight, policies, records, and survey standards.

Do not stretch the exemption

A companion-only exemption cannot be used to deliver personal care under another label. Define each task and keep marketing, contracts, job descriptions, training, and practice within the selected scope.

Administrator and financial readiness

The HCO administrator needs qualifying direct-care training and experience plus recent supervisory or administrative management experience in home health or a related program. Initial applicants must demonstrate reserve funds for the first three months after licensure.

Application and survey readiness

Applications are filed through the VDH Office of Licensure and Certification portal. The current HCO initial and renewal fee is $1,500, and the completed initial application must be submitted at least 60 days before the planned opening date. A prelicensure consultation and inspection are part of the process.

Before the initial survey, the agency should be fully operational and ready to show approved policies and forms, governing-body records, leadership files, sample personnel and client records, insurance, emergency planning, finances, and an office that matches the application.

Build the agency in the right order

Choose the service scope and payer model first. Then confirm the exemption or license category, administrator, office, finances, insurance, policies, staffing, forms, survey readiness, certification, and enrollment requirements before advertising or admitting clients.

Planning a Virginia agency?

NorthEnd Consulting helps owners define the correct service scope and prepare the licensing documents and operational structure that match the Virginia agency plan.

Visit northendconsultants.com to discuss your agency plan

Current as of November 2026. Requirements, forms, fees, exemptions, service definitions, COPN rules, and federal enrollment availability may change. Licensing, certification, accreditation, enrollment, and payer contracting are separate decisions controlled by the applicable authorities. This is a general planning resource. NorthEnd Consulting does not guarantee approval.