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Peace of Mind is Our Guarantee*

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Guava Senior Home and Healthcare Services

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Best Small Business to Start: Home Healthcare

By [Matthew Bandyk](#)

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Home Healthcare

As baby boomers begin to retire, there is an increased interest in home healthcare. The trendsetting age group (loath to be stuck in nursing homes) has spurred healthcare planners to prepare for the almost 80 million Americans born from 1946 through 1964, the oldest of whom have become eligible for Social Security this year. After her father had a heart attack, Mary Schreiber of Hockessin, Del., saw firsthand how hard it was to find quality care for elderly people who want to stay in their own homes. "Finding continuity of care and personalized care was very difficult," she says. So, as a person with entrepreneurial skills herself—she has a Ph.D. in [business](#) administration—Schreiber decided to start her own business, Guava Senior Home & Healthcare Services. "I wanted a fun appeal that said 'growing old is one of the best parts of our lives,'" she says. Guava hires certified nursing assistants and companions to perform nonmedical tasks like bathing and other household tasks for clients. Schreiber tries to give the personalized care she found hard to locate by [meeting](#) with each prospective client in his or her home and discussing with the family and caregiver exactly what services are needed. After only two years of operation, Schreiber is working with a consultant to sell Guava's intellectual property as a franchise.

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How much does it pay?

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the meanannual wage for managers in the home healthcare services [industry](#) in May 2007 was \$83,030.

What kind of background do you need?

Experience in management would help with what Schreiber considers one of the hardest parts of her job: finding qualified caregivers. Excellent people skills and the ability to market oneself are a must. Schreiber says she has found traditional advertising to be ineffective. She instead met with the heads of patient relations and social workers at hospitals to find clients when she was launching her business. So, she had to be able to sell others on her business model. "This business is about relationships—it's not about putting an ad in the paper," Schreiber says.

What do you need to get started?

A hurdle in starting a home healthcare business is the licensing process. Regulations vary by state, but you will usually need to apply with the state to become certified. That means filling out numerous forms to show you have a good [business plan](#) and have performed background checks on your employees to indicate they are suitable for working with the elderly. Schreiber has reduced the cost of one part of that process by recruiting certified nursing assistants from the top graduates at local training centers. "What's nice is that the school does the background process," she explains. To offer medical services, you will typically have to go through a more extensive licensing process in order to be able to accept payments through Medicare and Medicaid.