Hiring Family or Friends as Your Caregiver

A Guide for Adults Needing Care

This booklet is designed to help you and a family member, friend, or neighbor successfully work together as employer/employee.

Washington State
Department of Social & Health Services
Transforming lives

Introduction

If you are like most people, you want to remain independent and continue to live at home. With some help, most people can. In fact, getting help often increases your options for staying independent.

Hiring someone you know to do tasks around the house, run errands, take you to doctor's appointments, or even help with personal care can have many positive advantages. It can also bring certain challenges. Families come with past history and roles. Also, other family members may have their own opinions and expectations.

The following are practical tips and suggestions from other families who have found ways to make hiring someone they know as a caregiver work smoothly.

Note: The term family/friend caregiver is used in the rest of the booklet to mean a family member, friend or neighbor.

You are in Charge

Your family/friend caregiver is being paid to work for you. As the employer, you decide and direct when and how you want things done. Your choices and direction should be treated with the same courtesy and respect given to any employer.

Establish Ground Rules

Think through and clearly communicate the ground rules you want to establish for your employer/employee roles. This gives both of you a chance to clarify expectations and minimize misunderstandings. Here are some suggested questions to get you started.

Think through and clearly communicate ground rules.

How can you make sure your family/friend caregiver is:

- Helping you get tasks done the way you want them?
- Respecting your role as employer during paid hours?
- Supporting you in staying as independent as possible?

Are there any personal care tasks that make you or your family/friend caregiver feel self-conscious or anxious? What would you like done to ensure your privacy, dignity and comfort?

What can you do to avoid hurt feelings or misunderstandings? How do you want to handle things when one or both of you are upset; feel things aren't going well; or need to make changes?

Do other family members have any problems, concerns, or issues that might affect your care? How can you and your family/friend caregiver work together to keep problems at a minimum?

Are there any house rules you want honored while your family/friend caregiver is working? This might include things like not smoking, taking non-emergency personal phone calls, bringing others to work, using your things, or sharing your food.

Have a Written Care Plan

A written care plan documents exactly what tasks you expect to be done, when, how often, and your preferences for how you want them completed. A detailed care plan helps:

- You think through and clarify what will work for you.
- Make sure your family/friend caregiver understands exactly what is expected.

Use this care plan as your family/friend caregiver's job description. In most cases, you will want to make sure he or she has a copy.

> **DSHS consumers:** Use a copy of the care plan you received from your case manager for this purpose. Your family/friend caregiver can only be paid for those care tasks authorized in your care plan.

Many people find it difficult to ask for help or speak up about what they want. Others assume their family/friend caregiver understands what they need without having to explain.

Although it may not be comfortable for you at first, it is important for you to give clear direction about your care. Communicating your needs helps prevent resentment, confusion and frustration. When giving directions about your care:

- Think through and explain in logical steps what you want done.
- Be specific.
- Make sure your family/friend caregiver understands each step before moving on to the next one.
- Have your family/friend caregiver practice right after you explain what you want done. People assume something will be easy until they try it. If it cannot be practiced, have your family/friend caregiver repeat back the important steps to make sure your needs are understood. This will help you know what steps or details need further clarification.
- Do not assume your family/friend caregiver understands your routine. Although this is second nature to you, it likely requires some explanation.
- Be patient. It takes practice to do something new. Let your family/friend caregiver know when he or she has done it "right".
- Remember to ask and not demand. Asking shows respect and builds a sense of teamwork and partnership.
- Be clear about what you want done and when. Asking for something to be done "soon" or "when you have time" leaves the door open for unmet expectations and disappointment. Here's an example. "I would like you to help me get into the shower in the morning before you start making breakfast."

Maintain Basic Job Standards

You should expect basic job standards to be met while your family/friend caregiver is working, including:

- Working the schedule agreed on.
- Doing work-related tasks during scheduled hours.
- Documenting hours worked (e.g. reporting the time worked on the Individual Provider timesheet in IPOne).
- Giving you adequate notice if he or she cannot work as scheduled.
- Respecting your role as employer.

You should respect your family/friend caregiver's role as an employee.

You should also maintain basic employer standards, including:

- Making sure your requests are respectful and reasonable.
- Communicating your needs and expectations clearly.
- Giving regular feedback and deserved praise on how he or she is doing on the job.
- Providing a safe work environment.
- Respecting your family/friend caregiver's role as employee.

DSHS consumers: If you are required to pay some of the cost of your care (participation), pay the full amount to your caregiver each month. You may be required to report these payments for tax reasons.

Have a Backup Plan

Plan ahead for a backup caregiver for times your family/friend caregiver gets sick, has an emergency, or goes on vacation. Often, this is a different family member or friend who can come on short notice. Have several people on your "on call" list with a general idea of their normal availability.

Some people arrange to pay their backup caregiver; others set this up informally and the person is not paid.

Creating a solid backup plan takes time. Start planning as soon as possible.

> **DSHS Consumers:** If you want DSHS to pay a backup caregiver, he or she must be hired as an Individual Provider and contract with DSHS before they can be paid to work.

Your case manager is a resource to help find a replacement provider if you do not know anyone.

You can also connect with prescreened replacement providers through the following resources:

Carina
www.carinacare.com
1-844-797-8901

The Washington State Home Care Referral Registry (HCRR)
www.hcrr.wa.gov (select "Registry Offices")
1-800-970-5456

Payment to your Family/Friend Caregiver for Hours Worked

Your paid family/friend caregiver must submit a timesheet in IPOne to be paid for the time they work providing care for you. They also must track the tasks (the things they do to help you each day). Timesheets must be submitted by the submission due date for timely payment. If your family/friend caregiver has questions about completing or submitting timesheets, they can contact the IPOne Call Center at 1-844-240-1526 for assistance.

Solve Problems Early

Set aside some time for regular check-ins each week to talk through how things are going. This helps solve problems, tension, or frustration before they become a concern.

If you have a concern about job performance:

- Communicate your concerns directly to your family/friend caregiver. Do not keep concerns to yourself or complain to others.
- Give objective and clear feedback.
- Keep your comments focused on job performance.
- Be specific on what he or she can do to improve.
- Make sure to communicate the level of your dissatisfaction. There is a wide range between a minor annoyance to thinking about firing him or her if things do not improve. Give your family/friend caregiver adequate warning if there is a major problem.

If things do not improve, it is your choice to terminate your family/friend caregiver if you are not receiving quality care or feel unsafe.

> **DSHS consumers:** Your case manager has experience working with families in similar situations. He or she is a good resource and can give you some thoughtful and professional suggestions on how to make things work if there are problems.

You are in the best position to know what is happening on a day-to-day basis with your care. Let your case manager know if you:

- Are not receiving all of the services authorized in your care plan.
- Have any concerns about your care plan or the quality of the care you are receiving.
- Decide to replace your family/friend caregiver with someone else.

We Are All Partners Against Adult Abuse

Abuse of vulnerable adults can happen anytime or anywhere. DSHS investigates allegations of abuse.

If you or someone you know are being mentally or physically abused, left without the ability to get food, clothing, shelter or health care, or financially exploited, report it toll-free at 1-866-ENDHARM (866-363-4276).

Finding Support and Services in Washington State

You and your family/friend caregiver are not alone. There are many people and resources that can help you and your family/friend caregiver.

Area Agencies on Aging & Community Living Connections

Community Living Connections (CLC) provides information about local services in the community. CLC staff can help you assess your current situation, plan for what is needed, and help find the resources and services that best meet your needs. CLC is part of your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA). To find the CLC or AAA office nearest you, go to *waclc.org*. You can email the office directly or find the local phone number. You may also call the statewide toll-free number at 1-855-567-0252.

Home and Community Services (HCS)

Home and Community Services staff help adults who need long-term care services but may need state funds (Medicaid) to help pay for them.

Find your local Home and Community Services office by visiting *www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/home-and-community-services/who-contact-find-local-services* or by calling *1-800-422-3263*.

BenefitsCheckUp

BenefitsCheckUp is a comprehensive online service that helps you find federal, state and some local public and private benefits and programs that help pay for prescription drugs, health care, utilities and other needs. BenefitsCheckUp provides a detailed description of the programs, contacts for additional information and materials to help successfully apply for each. Visit *www.benefitscheckup.org*.

Get a Free Family Caregiver Handbook

The Handbook includes 54 pages of down-to-earth information for families providing care, on helpful areas such as:

- Caregiving tips for success in providing day-to-day care.
- Where to turn when you need outside help.
- Dealing with depression, anxiety and other emotional issues.
- Enhancing daily life – nutrition, social contacts, activities, spiritual and intellectual well-being.
- Taking care of yourself as a care provider.

To order a single copy, call 1-800-422-3263. Multiple copies can be ordered by calling (360) 570-3062. You can also read it online at *www.dshs.wa.gov/SESA/publications-library*

Find Information on the Internet

Find articles, booklets, tips, shortcuts, and information about services that can address your needs, questions, and challenges at: *www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/home-and-community-services/caregiver-resources*

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DSHS 22-1332 (Rev. 7/19)