

The logo for Home Care features the words "Home" and "Care" stacked vertically in a black, cursive script font. This text is enclosed within a blue, hand-drawn circular shape that has a slightly irregular, artistic feel.

*Home
Care*

REFERRAL REGISTRY
of Washington State

How to Hire and Keep Good Staff

A Guide for Employers of
Individual Home Care Providers

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This manual was designed to support consumers/employers in their crucial role as supervisors. Employers play an important part in the Home Care Quality Authority's (HCQA) efforts to improve the quality of in-home care in Washington State. For more information about HCQA, visit www.hcqa.wa.gov

HCQA wishes to thank the numerous individuals across the state who have helped to define and develop a comprehensive supervisory curriculum that will support the needs of both employers and workers in Washington's unique in-home care system of services. Much of this curriculum was adapted from the rich resources developed by the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute—guidance from Peggy Powell helped shape this course.

Finally, HCQA applauds you, the employer, who has stepped forward to take on a leadership role and learn more about how to be an effective supervisor. Being a supervisor to in-home services workers is an important role. This manual was designed to support you in your role as a supervisor.

Your commitment provides much-needed support to newer workers who may experience isolation and stress in their important day-to-day work. Thank you for your willingness to take on this crucial role, your commitment to make a difference, and your knowledge and expertise which you so freely share.

INTRODUCTION

We are glad you want to learn more about improving communications with your Individual Provider. You already manage the day-to-day details of your in-home services and want to learn more in order to keep good staff. By participating in this course, you will build upon your skills to communicate with others.

Background

The Home Care Quality Authority received a grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to start operating Home Care Referral Registry Centers (HCRR). These HCRRs provide a number of services to recruit and retain individual providers, including employee recognition and peer mentoring.

The HCRRs also operate a Referral Registry, a database of people who have already passed a background check and are willing to provide in-home services.

A Referral Registry Coordinator is available to help you find individual providers. The Referral Registry is operated at a Home Care Referral Registry Center (HCRR) in your area. HCRRs have staff and other resources designed just for you.

***Call them at
1-800-970-5456.***

Manuals that are available from HCQA for Employers of Individual Providers include:

- How to Hire and Keep Good Staff
- Effective Supervision – self-study training using this manual
- Effective Communication – self-study training using this manual

Training Committee

People from all over Washington told HCQA what kinds of training it should offer. Workers, employers, case managers, advocacy groups and others provided guidance about courses, skills and knowledge that would improve long-term in-home services.

A committee of experienced employers spent four months developing these courses. The committee meets regularly to plan upcoming courses and to provide information on how to improve supervisory training. A larger group of people edited this manual and gave input on how to improve it.

About This Course

For many people who use in-home services, the key to being able to live independently is effectively managing their own care. For some people, independent living would be difficult without the physical assistance of another person.

Independent living means that an individual has the right to make his/her own decisions and to have control over the direction of his/her life. Directing and managing your own care with the assistance of an individual provider is a good example of independent living.

This course was created especially for people who employ individual providers (or “personal assistants”) in their home. It was designed to:

- help you, the employer, effectively supervise staff
- give you with the necessary skills to solve problems
- refine your communication skills

This course provides many examples and suggestions to improve your skills as a supervisor. These are merely guidelines—information for you to consider.

Definitions

Employers

People who employ individual providers for in-home services are sometimes called consumers or clients. In this course, we will use

the term “employers” because it recognizes hiring, training and supervision responsibilities.

Individual Providers

People who provide in-home services are sometimes called personal assistants, aides, caregivers or workers. In this course, we use the term individual provider because it transcends the different Medicaid programs and personal services for which these people are hired.

Person-first Language

Person-first language refers to the qualities of a person, not a person’s disabilities. One group of self-advocates came up with the saying, “Label Jars, Not People.” For example, the subtle difference between calling Joe “a person with autism” rather than “an autistic person” is one that acknowledges Joe as a person first.

“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.”
- Mark Twain

A good way to ensure that you are using People First Language is to begin describing people with the words *individual, person, man, or woman*.

TIP: Advise your staff about your preference for using person-first language.

ACTIVITY: How I Prefer to be Addressed

Directions: Spend a few moments in pairs talking about the way you prefer to be addressed. Remember or write down all the terms you like to hear about yourself.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Person First Language: Guidelines For Discussing People With Disabilities

It's the "Person First" - THEN the Disability

If you saw a person in a wheelchair unable to get up the stairs into a building, would you say "there is a handicapped person unable to find a ramp?" Or would you say "there is a person with a disability who is handicapped by an inaccessible building?" What is the proper way to speak to or about someone who has a disability?

Consider how you would introduce someone who doesn't have a disability. You would give her name, where she lives, what she does or what she is interested in--she likes swimming, or eating Mexican food, or watching Robert Redford movies.

Person-First Language:

The practice of referring to persons with disabilities with the term denoting disability following terms referring to them as an individual. Person-first avoids impersonal, negative and medical terminology.

Why say it differently for a person with disabilities? Every person is made up of many characteristics--mental as well as physical--few want to be identified only by their ability to play tennis or by their love for fried onions or by the mole that's on their face. Those are just parts of us.

Person first language

In speaking or writing, remember that children or adults with disabilities are like everyone else, except they happen to have a disability. Therefore, here are a few tips for improving your language related to disabilities:

1. Speak of the person first, then the disability.
2. Emphasize abilities, not limitations.
3. Do not label people as part of a disability group - don't say "disabled", say "people with disabilities."
4. Don't give excessive praise or attention to a person with a disability; don't patronize them.
5. Choice and independence are important; let the person do or speak for him or herself as much as possible; if addressing an adult, say "Bill" instead of "Billy."
6. A disability is a functional limitation that interferes with a person's ability to walk, hear, talk, learn, etc.

| SAY... | INSTEAD OF... |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| child with a disability | disabled or handicapped child |
| person with cerebral palsy | palsied, or C.P., or spastic |
| person who has... | afflicted, suffers from, victim |
| without speech, nonverbal | mute, or dumb |
| developmental delay | slow |
| emotional disorder or mental illness | crazy or insane |

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| deaf or hearing impaired | deaf and dumb |
| uses a wheelchair | confined to a wheelchair |
| person with mental retardation | retarded |
| has a learning disability | is learning disabled |
| non-disabled | normal, healthy |
| has a physical disability | crippled |
| congenital disability | birth defect |

SOURCE: Adapted from "Tools for Teachers" by the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities.
<http://www.autism-mi.org/aboutautism/TeacherTools12-04.html>

DIFFERENT TYPES OF INDIVIDUAL PROVIDERS

There are several different types of workers for you to use when managing your personal services. The type and number will vary according to your individual needs and preferences.

Below are six different types of workers and the advantages of each:

1. Live-in

Live-in individual providers share your home and provide part or all of your services. Compensation varies according to number of hours worked. This can range from a discount on rent to full room-and-board plus a salary. Usually, employers hire their own live-in individual providers.

Six Types of Workers

Live-in

Full-time

Part-time

Back-up (respite)

Shared

Family and Friends

Advantages:

- You can offer free room and board for individual providers. You, as the employer, will save money by offering room and board as part of the individual provider's monthly pay.
- Ensures someone will be there through the night for your safety.

2. Full-Time

Full-time individual providers come into your home for eight hours a day or more. How many days and hours worked is negotiable between you and the individual provider. Full-time individual providers can be individuals you hire on your own.

Advantages:

- They are usually dependable.
- It is easier to hire an individual provider on a full-time basis as opposed to part-time.
- You do not have to live with this individual provider.

3. Part-Time

Part-time individual providers come into your home for a few hours a day or on certain days, or several times in one day. You may have more than one part-time individual provider working each day. Payment depends on the number of hours worked. Part-time individual providers can be individuals you hire on your own.

Advantages:

- Flexible hours and days can be arranged with one or more individuals working part-time.
- Part-time work can provide additional income and job experience for many individuals (for example, college students or others needing volunteer or professional experience).
- There is minimal intrusion in your home and private life with a part-time individual provider.

4. Back-up (respite)

Back-up individual providers are people you keep on reserve in case one of your current individual providers quits, is released, is planning to move or change jobs, becomes ill, etc. Usually, these are individuals who need extra income from time to time or desire

sporadic part-time work. You should be able to call these individuals on short notice, therefore it is important that you keep regular contact with your back-up (respite) individual providers.

Advantages:

- Back-up (respite) individual providers are available on short notice.
- They will provide security and dependability.
- They provide you with emotional benefits. You know someone is there in case of an emergency.

5. Shared

Shared individual providers are a great idea if you live with another person who uses in-home services and both of you have personal needs which have to be met. For example, if both of you need assistance in getting ready for bed at night, you could hire one individual provider to come in and help both of you individually. In addition, people who are neighbors or friends might want to share individual providers for convenience or if the individual provider is dependable and needs extra work.

Advantages:

- It is more efficient to hire one person to do the same chores for two people living together.

6. Family and Friends

For financial, convenience or other reasons, many people with disabilities use their family and friends as their individual providers. Those family members who are unpaid are referred to as “natural supports.”

Advantages:

- There is commitment and interest in your well-being.
- They are dependable and reliable.
- They may help you feel more secure.
- They are less expensive.

Work with your case manager to determine the kind of services you'll need, how many hours per day, and what kind of worker you should

hire to meet your needs. Your case manager will interview you and complete an assessment of your needs. If you are eligible, the case manager will authorize services so that you can hire staff.

Contact a Referral and Workforce Resource Center in your area to get access to the Referral Registry. Call **1-800-970-5456**.

WRITING EFFECTIVE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

What Kind of Person Do You Need?

Before you begin writing a job description, there are several factors to consider. Spend a few moments thinking about what you expect from your staff. Below is a short list of qualities you might want to consider when hiring workers:

- **Punctual** – being on time
- **Dependable** – being on time consistently; being available when needed
- **Helpful** – willing to do things you request
- **Goal oriented** – wanting to get things done
- **Honest** – someone you can trust
- **Clean and neat** – keeps things picked up and sanitary
- **Takes direction** – not argumentative; open to your way of doing things
- **Communicative** – easy to talk with
- **Flexible** – can respond to realistic circumstances and changes
- **Patient** – doesn't get bothered if things take longer than expected

ACTIVITY: My Preferences Are...

Directions: Using the list above, select the top three qualities you want your staff to possess.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

It is your responsibility to clearly express your needs and preferences. Your individual provider works for you. Except for tasks that he/she are prohibited from doing by state regulations and standards of practice, he/she is there to provide you with any assistance that you need to function (unless it is in conflict with the service plan). Your staff should provide services in a way that respects your preferences.

You also have the right to not hire an individual provider if you are uncomfortable with him/her regardless of the reason. The person you hire will be doing very personal tasks for you in the most private aspects of your life. It is extremely important that you are comfortable with the person you hire.

While different qualities are important to different people, it is important that you decide which ones are most important to *you*. It will be difficult to find a person who possesses all these qualities, so you may want to consider prioritizing the qualities.

Now that you have a good idea of the kind of person you are looking for, you are ready to write a job description that describes what kind of work you'd like that person to do.

The Care Plan and Working with a Case Manager: Words of Advice from a Fellow Employer

Your case manager has the responsibility of gathering information from you and writing a care plan. He/she has guidelines and questions to ask you to get the necessary information to include in the plan. The case manager also determines the number of hours that you need for personal services and whether you are eligible to receive public funds for these services.

The information that you provide will be the basis of your support, therefore it needs to be as accurate as possible. Many of us have learned to be as independent as possible and may tend to under represent our needs. It is crucial that you include every task with which you need assistance.

Even if there is a small chance that you will need assistance with a task, include it. Of course you want to present yourself as competent and capable of directing your assistance, but do not down play what you need.

What Tasks Do You Want Accomplished?

The functional assessment your case manager completes will give you a very clear understanding of the kinds of work your staff will do for you. If you are only hiring one person, then the choice is easy. However, if you have several staff, you may want each of them to do a little of every task, or you may want to divide up responsibilities among staff so that one person does a few of the tasks and others complete the rest of the tasks.

If you are dividing up responsibilities, you will need to create a job description for the person you are hiring so they know exactly what is expected of them.

One of the most important things you, as a supervisor, must know is that you should not ask or expect your individual provider(s) to do things that are not listed in your assessment. For example, transportation to pick up medical supplies is acceptable; transportation to the zoo for a fun afternoon is not acceptable. Another example might be asking your individual provider to do the laundry for your entire family, rather than just *your* laundry.

Writing a Job Description

When workers are asked what they dislike about in-home services, lack of a specific job description is among the common complaints.

Similar complaints might be:

- Lack of a clear understanding of the duties involved before they are hired;
- The employer's tendency to minimize the time and effort involved in the tasks before the worker is hired; and
- Adding on duties the individual provider did not feel they had agreed to do.

Without knowing your expectations, it is hard for an individual provider to know if they are doing the job they were hired to do.

A good job description serves several purposes:

1. It helps people you are hiring to determine if they can do the job.
2. It gives you an accurate assessment of the amount and kind of help you need. It is easy to overlook many of the minor jobs and details that are a part of your individual provider's duties, but you may be surprised by the amount of work involved.

For example:

| Task | Number of Hours |
|--|---------------------------|
| Grooming and personal hygiene | 15 hours per month |
| Errands (grocery store, pick up prescriptions) | 3 hours per month |
| Medical needs (doctor or dentist visits) | 2 hours per month |
| Laundry and general housekeeping | 15 hours per month |
| Meal preparation | 15 hours per month |
| TOTAL | 50 hours per month |

Without even trying, you can use up several days doing things that at first glance, don't seem to amount to much. If you haven't budgeted for this time correctly, you may be disappointed in your individual provider about their inability to complete all the work you assign, or worse, your needs may not be adequately met.

3. When interviewing, a job description will give your potential individual provider a clear picture of the duties involved in the job. Most people have never considered the wide variety of tasks that are involved in daily living.
4. It helps you avoid the natural tendency to understate and minimize the time and effort involved in the job in order to make it seem more attractive. You DO have to hire someone and it is hard to avoid feeling pressured about all the tasks you expect completed. However, if you are not honest about the amount and kind of work you need done, your individual provider will certainly resent it. It will affect the quality of the job that person does for you.

5. It helps you avoid the equally natural tendency of all employers (not just you) to “pile on” extra work the person has not agreed to do.
6. It can help resolve disagreements about your individual provider’s duties.
7. When it is time to review performance or renegotiate the agreement, the job description helps you do a thorough job. Any changes you agree to make should be noted immediately.

Below you will find a detailed sample job description. If you have a disability that limits your communication ability, it is essential that you write such a detailed description to ensure there is no misunderstanding with your individual provider regarding your needs and his/her duties. You may prefer to discuss the job description verbally, however, the written description will help you clarify any later discussion relating to duties.

Suppose, for example, you decide to finish your education. To you, this is a good opportunity to learn a job skill, but to your live-in individual provider, it means setting up books and papers for you at home and no stereo or television while you are studying.

A good job description will not only help you be aware of the changes you are making, it makes it much easier for your individual provider to bring them to you attention and ask for some adjustments.

It is highly recommended that you write a detailed job description that both you and your prospective employee can review together.

Sample Job Description (for Live-in Individual Provider)

DUTIES:

Personal care, dressing, toileting, preparing food, transferring in and out of wheelchair to shower, toilet and bed.

HOUSEHOLD TASKS:

Laundry, light cooking, ironing, vacuuming, clean floors, remove garbage, changing sheets, cleaning up after cooking and meals, special projects (i.e., cleaning out closets, windows, or helping to move or organize things).

ERRANDS:

Going to work site to assist with toileting as scheduled; shopping twice per week; take clothes to be altered; pick up packages from post office; transport to medical appointments.

EXPECTATIONS:

- You will have your own phone line. A hook-up already exists in the bedroom. You will be responsible for your own phone expenses.
- Buy your own food and toiletries and contribute to household items such as toilet paper, laundry soap, garbage bags, or other things we both use.
- No smoking, alcohol or drugs in the home.
- Clean apartment once a week: vacuum, bathroom, floors, etc.
- Keep laundry done and no dishes or garbage laying around.

REQUIRED:

- Three personal or professional references.
- Successful criminal background inquiry.
- Completed application.

PAYMENT:

Payment is made through the DSHS Personal Care Program for \$1200/month. Payment is once per month. DSHS pays Social Security and Unemployment taxes. Employee is responsible for FICA taxes to be paid until July, 2006. Monthly payment includes free rent; basic cable service is also included.

ACTIVITY: Writing a Job Description

Directions: Write a brief summary of the kinds of tasks you want a new worker to do.

Personal Care:

Household Tasks:

Errands:

Expectations:

Preferences/Special Needs:

Payment:

Required: References, Background check, application

What Kinds of Qualifications Are Necessary?

Before you begin the process of hiring an individual provider, think about what it is you are looking for in your staff. Experience, training and good references are obvious. Personality, dependability, attitude and stability are equally important. It might be helpful to think about people who you have employed in the past and what you liked or disliked about them.

ACTIVITY: Past Experiences

Directions: Think about one or two of your past individual providers and answer the following questions.

1. What did you like about their performance?
2. What did you like about their personality?
3. What would have made you more satisfied?
4. What did you dislike about them or their performance?

Look back at your job description. Are there many transfers in your routine? If so, you will probably want to hire someone who can physically perform that task. If you need bowel management, an individual provider must know how to do it—if not, are they willing to learn? What other preferences or needs can you identify?

ACTIVITY: Qualities and Qualifications I am Looking For

Directions: Using your job description and the qualities you identified on the previous page, go through the following list and eliminate any that are not required. List your preferences.

Age: _____ Sex: _____

Experience:

Education and Training:

Physical Strength:

Appearance:

Attitude:

Transportation:

Personal Habits:

ADVERTISING A POSITION

Advertising a position requires a lot of thought and planning to ensure your safety and comfort, and that you will receive the best possible applicants.

The Referral Registry, a database of individual providers who are looking for work or want to work more hours is available in various areas of the state. Individuals on the Referral Registry have passed a background check within the last twelve months. You can search for any number of qualities and qualifications of potential workers. Using the Referral Registry is easy—and because it is web-based, you can access it any time of day or night. Call 1-800-970-5456 for more information.

If you choose to place an advertisement in your local paper, your advertisement should be:

- Well thought out
- Reasonably short
- Interesting

Sample Advertisements

“Full-time assistant needed to live-in with female with a disability. Assist with personal care, shopping and housekeeping. Room, board and monthly salary. Time off arranged. For further information, call Sharon at 555-1234 between 7-10pm.”

“Part-time assistant needed for female with a disability. 8am to noon weekdays. Help with personal care, light housekeeping and grocery shopping. Non-smoker preferred. \$9.20/hour. For more information, call Sharon at 555-1234.”

“Part-time male assistant needed to live in two bedroom barrier free apartment with male with a disability. Assist with some personal care, housekeeping and meal preparation. Low rental rate and compensation for services. Character references a must. For further information, contact the Center for Independent Living at 555-5678.”

“Male roommate needed to share two bedroom apartment with male with a disability. Prefer non-smoker. Mature. Low room rate in exchange for some supportive services. Character references a must. For more information, call the Center for Independent Living at 555-5678.”

“Female student with a disability needs woman aged 18-25 to help with personal care (bathing, dressing, etc.). Mon-Fri, 7-9am. Near central campus. Call Ruth at 555-1234 between 7-10pm.”

ACTIVITY: Advertisement Practice

Directions: Spend a few moments writing a sample advertisement.

Where to Post Advertisements

Center for Independent Living

Network – friends, neighbors, other individual providers

Student Employment or Housing Offices – local colleges and universities

Postings – local stores, libraries, apartment building lobbies

Newspapers

College Publications

Social Services Agencies

Employment Agencies

Hospital Bulletin Boards

Other People With a Disability

Other recommendations:

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

Prescreening Applicants

The purpose of prescreening applicants is to avoid wasting time interviewing people who obviously will not qualify for the job. Follow the steps below to prescreen applicants:

1. Get the applicant's name and telephone number first.
2. If the applicant is calling outside the times you specified in your advertisement, point it out and ask for an explanation (this suggests they may have trouble following directions). If you are satisfied with the explanation, you might consider having them call back at the proper time. If not, be honest and tell them you are not interested.
3. Give a brief description of the hours and duties.
4. If they are available to work during the hours you need, fill in the remaining information on a Telephone Screening Form (a sample is included on the next page).
5. Set up a specific time for an interview.
6. Remind the applicant to bring names, addresses and phone numbers of all previous employers, landlords and at least three personal or professional references.
7. Keep in mind that you do not owe anyone an interview. If you are not comfortable about the applicant coming to your home—for any reason whatsoever—do not allow it to happen. You can always inform the applicant that you are not interested.
8. Protect yourself. Meet in a public place if at all possible. If it is difficult for you to leave your home, arrange for another person to be with you while conducting an interview.

Sample Telephone Screening Form

Name: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Has own transportation? Yes No

Experience: _____

Training: _____

Currently employed? Yes No

Where? _____

Looking for: Part-time Work Full-time Work

Hours/Days Available: _____

Interview Date: _____ **Time:** _____

REMINDER: Bring contact information for all employers and references

Interviewing

Your attitude may be the most important part of the interview. You are not asking the person for charity or pity; you are offering a job to someone who wants one. Among the benefits you are providing are money and valuable experience that includes every major qualification of interest to any future employer: honesty, integrity, dependability, ability to work closely with others and a very high degree of responsibility, among others.

You have a right to expect the best from your employees.

The person you interview may be nervous. In order to get an accurate picture of his or her style and personality, you will need to put them at ease. Call them by their first name, maintain eye contact and tell them a little about yourself.

Next, have the applicant complete your job application (a sample is included at the end of this section). While you review their completed application, it would be an ideal time for them to review the job description you've prepared. Pay special attention to the following areas and feel free to ask questions about:

- Length of time at previous jobs
- Gaps in employment
- Reasons for leaving each job
- Attitude about previous jobs (what did they like/dislike?)
- Phone number for each employer

After you are satisfied with the application, go through the job description with the applicant, making sure they understand what the job involves. When you are finished, it is best to give yourself some time to think before you decide to hire him/her (it also gives them a chance to think about the job—better to know now than back out later). Set a time when you'll call and let them know your decision.

What to Look for During an Interview

- **Appearance:** How would you dress for a job interview? Is the applicant neat, well-groomed and wearing clean clothes?
- **Punctuality:** If the applicant is late, you deserve a good explanation, preferably one you can check.
- **Evasiveness:** If the applicant seems reluctant to discuss a previous employer or there are gaps in the employment history that are not explained to your satisfaction, insist on getting information you can verify. Gaps in work history can indicate negative information, such as dismissal for cause, alcoholism or jail time.
- **Attitude:** Does the applicant seem interested? Do they ask questions and make comments about the job? Do they seem open and flexible? Does the job fit with what they say are their goals and lifestyle?

Questions to Ask in an Interview

It is important to have a written list of questions so that all applicants are asked the same questions and you don't miss anything important. What you ask will depend on your own needs and desires.

To start making your own list, it may be helpful to again think about people who have worked for you in the past:

- What did you like about their performance?
- What did you like about their personality?
- What did you not like?
- What would have made you more satisfied?

Avoid any questions about age, disability, marital status, religion, race, creed or ethnicity. It is okay if the applicant freely shares this information in their answers, but do not let this affect your hiring decision.

Sample Interview Questions

Most Important Questions:

- Tell me about yourself

- What experience do you have with in-home services?

- Why did you leave your last job?

- Have you ever been convicted of a felony?

- Do you have any questions about the job?

General Questions to Ask:

- Why do you want to be an individual provider?

- What would your co-workers say about you?

- What would your last employer say is your strongest point?

- How long do you expect to work with me?

- Have you ever been asked to leave a position?

- Why do you think you will do well at this job?

- What part of this job would be the most difficult?

- Tell me about a problem you had with a past supervisor and how you handled the problem.

- What would you do if you had a disagreement about any job responsibility?

- Tell me how you would know if you were doing a good job.

- What was your favorite job and why?

- What was your least favorite job and why?

Specific Questions to Ask

If you are interviewing a live-in individual provider, or the person will be spending a lot of time in your home, you may need to get more personal information about habits, preferences, likes and dislikes so that you can determine if you and the applicant will be a good fit. The following are some areas you might consider asking about:

Food and Eating Arrangements

- What kinds of food do you usually eat? Likes? Dislikes?
- Are you a good cook?
- Do you eat at a regular time, or when you feel like it?
- How do you feel about eating together?
- How do you feel about taking cooking instructions from me?
- If you like different foods than I do, will you be willing to prepare my meals and yours?

Transportation

- Can you drive?
- Do you have a valid driver's license? (Ask to see it.)
- Do you have valid insurance? (Ask to see proof of insurance.)
- How do you feel about accompanying me on errands?

Housekeeping

- Have you had experience with housekeeping and laundry?
- Do you like things very neat, or are you not particular?
- How do you feel about taking cleaning instructions from me?
- Do you like a definite schedule for cleaning and laundry (example: vacuum on Monday, scrub floors on Tuesday), or do you prefer to be more flexible?

Personal Care

- Do you think it would bother you to help me with toileting, catheter irrigations or suppositories, if necessary?
- Will you be able to bathe me?
- Is there any part of my care that makes you uncomfortable?

Personal Habits

- Do you smoke?
- Do you drink alcohol?

- Do you take drugs?
- Do you like to sleep late in the morning or get up early?
- Are you a light sleeper?
- How often do you expect to entertain your friends in my home?
- Do you like planned activities or spur of the moment?
- What do you like to do for entertainment?
- Do you like to listen to music? What kind?
- Do you like quiet surroundings?
- Do you like to watch television?
- What hobbies do you have?
- Describe your personality (strengths or weaknesses).
- Do you have any problems or take medications that might interfere with your work?

Once you have interviewed the applicant and you are prioritizing all of your applicants, it may be helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

- Will this applicant be able to meet my daily living needs?
- Can I live with this person?
- Can I depend on this person?
- Can I trust this person?
- Can I see any conflicting areas with this person?

Qualities and Qualifications to Look For: Words of Advice from a Fellow Employer

Obviously your employee needs to be reliable, on time, honest, and willing to do what you need. Since they perform personal tasks for you in your private space and you will spend many hours with him/her, you need someone with a flexible attitude who views you as the supervisor. Few people with disabilities have staff with whom they do not form some type of relationship other than employer/employee. It is natural to share your life with the person who is assisting you to some degree. Therefore, his/her attitude toward the tasks, you, and your family is extremely important.

You need people who will respect and honor your preferences. You need people who clearly understand that you make the decisions about what is done for you and how. Due to stereotypes that people learn about people with disabilities in our society, some employees may think that you are not capable of making your own decisions and that he/she should intervene to decide things for you. You do not need the stress of dealing with such attitudes day in and day out. Therefore, when hiring someone his/her attitude is a crucial qualification.

EDUCATION

Please list any relevant training, education or courses you have completed (i.e., Orientation, Fundamentals of Caregiving, Safety Training, Becoming a Professional Individual Provider, continuing education classes):

OTHER

Are you legally authorized to work in the U.S.? Yes No

Have you ever been convicted of a crime? Yes No
If yes, please provide date and details below:

Have you ever been placed on an abuse registry? Yes No
If yes, please provide date and details below:

Do you have any health issues that require special accommodations? Yes No

Hours you are willing to work: _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT

Name () Phone Number

Address: _____
City State Zip Code

I authorize my previous employers be contacted for reference purposes.

Applicant Signature Date

NOTE: Ensure you collect contact information for three references.

Sample Release of Information to Conduct Reference Check

TO: _____
(Name of Reference)

I, _____,
(Name of Applicant)

have applied for a position as an individual provider for

(Name of Potential Employer)

and have given your name as a reference. I would appreciate it if you would supply him/her or his/her designee with information regarding my character, dependability and/or performance.

Thank you,

Signature of Applicant

Date

Conducting Reference Checks

You can either call or write to the applicant's personal and professional references.

Whichever method you choose, let the reference know you have the applicant's permission to contact him/her.

You should explain the nature of the job to the reference so he/she can evaluate the applicant with the job in mind.

Always check all references. As a rule, anything that can be checked, should be checked.

Letters of recommendation that the applicant provides to you can either be substituted for a reference check, or they can be used as additional information about the applicant.

Never tell the applicant what any particular reference had to say.

Know what you want to ask references before you call. Be prepared. On the following pages are two sample checklists (professional and personal) to use when conducting reference checks:

Be sure to verify the applicant's information for accuracy. When checking references:

- Give the reference a brief description of your position
- Ask how long the person was employed, or how long the reference has known them
- Check absenteeism and dependability
- Find out if the person handled money, does the reference consider them honest?
- Ensure the person can work independently
- Determine that the person can take supervision and criticism
- Ask how the rapport was between the person and their co-workers and/or supervisor
- Determine why employment ended
- Ask if the reference would re-hire the person.

Sample Employment Reference Checklist

Date: _____

Name of Reference: _____

Reference Phone Number: _____

Relationship to Applicant: _____

Dates of Employment: _____

Job Title: _____

Duties: _____

Reason for Termination: _____

Attendance: _____

Punctuality: _____

Relationships with supervisor and co-workers: _____

Dependability: _____

Job performance: _____

Ability to learn new tasks: _____

Ability to follow directions: _____

Honesty: _____

Responsibility: _____

Would You Hire Again?: _____

Other Comments: _____

Sample Personal Reference Checklist

Date: _____

Name of Reference: _____

Reference Phone Number: _____

Relationship to Applicant: _____

How long have you known applicant? _____

In your opinion, is he/she:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ▪ Honest? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ▪ Dependable? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ▪ Responsible? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ▪ Flexible? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ▪ Communicative? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ▪ Alert? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ▪ A careful driver? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ▪ Considerate? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ▪ Able to learn new tasks? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ▪ Able to follow directions? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Other Comments:

Checking Employment History

Many previous employers are reluctant to do more than confirm that a person was an employee because of the possibility of a lawsuit. When possible, talk to the former supervisor and assure them you have a signed release.

It is acceptable to fax or send a copy of the signed release to the former employer prior to discussing employment history. The Personnel Department may also provide employment information about the applicant.

If the employer is reluctant to give anything but the most basic details, the following questions can help you verify employment history:

NOTE: One poor report does not mean you should not hire the person. Some employers may not be very fair. You should ask the applicant for a good explanation and base your decision on all the information you receive.

- How long did he/she work for you?
- Why did he/she leave?
- Was he/she recommended for raises or promotions?
- How was his/her attendance, punctuality and attitude?
- Would you hire him/her again? This is the key question and should always be asked. Most employers will answer this one honestly, even if they won't answer anything else.

DEVELOPING EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENTS

Once you have interviewed applicants and have decided which person you will hire, it is important that you develop an employment agreement or contract with your new individual provider. There are several areas you should cover.

You may wish to discuss or negotiate the agreement verbally at first, but it is strongly recommended that a written agreement be signed by both you and the individual provider.

If any significant revisions or changes come up later, you will need to revise the employment agreement.

What Should be Included in an Employment Agreement

Below are some issues to consider as well as what items should be included in an employment agreement.

Persons involved: What are the names of the employer and employee involved in this agreement?

Hours: How many hours per week or month will the employee work? Who decides the schedule? How far in advance is a schedule developed? Will hours vary?

Salary: What is the hourly wage? Are there any in-kind payments (like room and board or use of phone and laundry facilities)?

Payment schedule: Note when your worker can expect to be paid.

Benefits: Are there any benefits? Sick time? Vacation Time? Holidays?

Termination: How much advance notice should each party give? How many warnings should the individual provider get if something is unacceptable? What if the employer's health or safety is in danger?

Time needed to obtain a replacement: Whose responsibility is it to find an alternate when the individual provider is sick or an emergency has occurred? What is the process for scheduled time off?

Punctuality and attendance: Should the individual provider be required to call if he/she will be late or absent? Will poor punctuality or attendance result in termination?

Expenses: Who will pay for phone calls, dinner out, entertainment? Who is responsible for breakage or loss?

Behavior: Are smoking, drinking alcohol and invited guests okay? How should the individual provider and employer interact in social situations? What about privacy and using each other's personal property?

Duties (required and alternate): What exactly is the individual provider responsible for (attach a Job Description to the Employment Agreement).

Transportation: Who is responsible for damages in a car accident? Can the individual provider use the employer's vehicle for personal reasons? If so, who pays for gas, repairs and/or maintenance?

Effective Date: Note when the employment agreement (or revision to employment agreement) becomes effective.

Signatures: Both employer and employee should sign the employment agreement.

Sample Employment Agreement

(NOTE: Employment Agreement MUST match the tasks in the Service Plan)

Duties

1. Assist with dressing, grooming, and personal hygiene.
2. Do laundry including towels and sheets as needed.
3. Assist with house cleaning and cooking on an occasional basis.
4. Assist with transportation on an occasional basis.
5. Perform other duties as needed, i.e. take out trash.

Work Policies

6. I understand that I will be paid only for hours worked at a rate of _____ per hour.
8. If I fail to show up without giving prior notice more than twice I may lose my job.
9. I will give two weeks notice when I must miss work or change any prior arranged work schedule.
10. I will give two weeks notice when I quit.
11. I will always clean up the area where I worked before I leave.
12. I will only use supplies that I am told to use and I will inform _____ when supplies are running low.
13. I understand that I will have a two-week probation period beginning on the date below.
14. The employee can terminate this agreement by giving two week's notice.

Privacy Rules

15. I will respect my employer (and his/her family's) privacy and property at all times.
16. I will keep my employer's physical needs and his/her physical condition confidential.
17. I will keep my employer's personal and family life confidential.
18. I will keep private supplies and trash out of sight and in appropriate places.
19. I will keep my employer's family conversations, and condition and location of their house confidential.
20. I will only speak about aspects of my employer's needs or supplies with him/her.

Property Rules

21. I will only use the _____ property that I am instructed to.
22. I will only go into places in the house when and if I am asked to or with permission.
23. I will always knock on the door (except early in the morning) and the bedroom door every time I need to enter before entering. I will not enter until told to do so.
24. I will always come to the house alone unless my employer gives prior approval for me to bring someone else.
25. I will only open drawers, cabinets, or doors in the house as instructed.
26. I will only come to the house when my employer is home unless otherwise instructed.

Employee

Date

Employer

Date

Task Lists

It is recommended that you, as an employer, use a simple tool called a task list. The Task List clearly outlines what you want the individual provider to do and when. You can keep the completed Task Lists and refer to them later when evaluating staff. Did the individual provider consistently complete the tasks as requested? How well?

How I Assign Tasks: Words of Advice from a Fellow Employer

Wednesdays

- Sweep and mop bathroom floors
- Vacuum living room and dining room
- Do dishes after meal preparation
- Assist with foot care – lotion, massages, trim nails if needed

Saturdays

- Sweep and mop kitchen and entryway floors
- Do laundry
- Wipe down all kitchen and bathroom counters
- Vacuum bedrooms
- Do dishes after meal preparation

AS NEEDED

- Straighten up and organize
- Essential shopping
- Transfer, stand by for bath
- Assist with dressing
- Empty and take out all garbage

Negotiating Emergencies, Vacation and Illness

Your individual provider will be working for you part time in most cases and will have a life away from you. He/she may be a student, have a family and have other jobs. There will be times when the individual provider will need to change plans, sometimes at the last minute. For this reason, it is important that you have a few people working, giving each enough hours to keep them working for you. Unless the individual provider is working full time for you and this is

his/her only job, negotiation is an essential part of supervising employees. Negotiating emergencies, vacation and what to do if the individual provider is sick can be difficult.

On one hand you need the individual provider to be there for you when you need him/her. On the other hand, he/she is juggling many aspects of life. Therefore, you must learn to be flexible when possible, but firm when necessary. Always keep a list of back-up individual providers in the event your individual provider can't make it to work.

Be clear with your employee that you need adequate notice when he/she will be unavailable. When you offer the job, ask if he/she knows of times that they will be unavailable, no matter how far in the future. This sets a standard that makes it clear that you need respect in that area and you are willing to accommodate his/her needs if possible.

There may be times when the individual provider is adamant that they cannot come to work and you desperately need them to, or you will be stranded. If this happens, you will have to decide the importance of pushing the employee to come to work and deferring to his/her needs. There is no formula for making such a decision. You must use your knowledge of the person and the nature of your relationship as a guide.

The union contract requires individual providers to give at least two week's notice prior to any vacation. Some employers ask their individual provider to help locate a replacement in emergencies or event of illness. Whatever your preference in regard to emergencies, vacation and illness, be very clear about what you expect from your individual provider.

Termination and Resignation

Sometimes the most difficult part of being an employer is terminating employment of an individual provider. Some employees do well when they start a new job, but as they become comfortable with your relationship they may begin to take advantage of your willingness to

be flexible. Other issues can arise, such as safety or honesty that make it imperative that you terminate an employee. Your relationship is crucial at this time.

You need to assess if the person would retaliate in any way. Sometimes the safest way to terminate an employee is to simply stop scheduling hours for them to work. Only you will know your employee well enough to decide the safest course of action. Always err on the side of safety.

When you must confront an employee be sure that you have what you need first to keep from being stranded, and, if possible, have someone else with you at the time. Refer to any documentation you have kept, such as Task Lists that show work patterns, past evaluations, or records of attendance or punctuality.

Be sure to include a reasonable notice requirement in the Employment Agreement so that you will have time to replace the individual provider if they resign.

You, as the employer, have the right to terminate an employee at any time. You should always be comfortable with your employee and satisfied with his/her work. Otherwise, you should replace him/her if the issue in question hasn't improved after counseling.

Respecting Privacy and Confidentiality

Since your individual provider will be assisting you with personal tasks, they will come to know a lot of personal information about you, your family, your home, and how you function. People without disabilities generally do not have to worry about strangers knowing such personal things about them. But for people with disabilities who use individual providers, privacy can be easily invaded—both intentionally and unintentionally. Therefore, for your safety and out of respect for you, your employee must not disclose confidential or private information about your life.

For some people this is difficult. If they are learning for the first time how people with disabilities live, it can be tempting for them to tell

their friends, spouse and/or family. This may be from excitement about the job and could even be complimentary of you, but nevertheless, it is a clear violation of your right to privacy. This is serious enough that it should be cause for termination. Include protection of privacy and confidential information in your employee agreement.

Other instances of privacy invasion include times when your individual provider develops a relationship with one or more of your family members and the family member then discloses information about you as well. There may be times when a family member asks your employee to withhold information from you, or shares information about you without your permission. This is not acceptable. Remember the individual provider works for you and only you.

By law, individual providers are NOT to give out confidential information to family members or friends of their employers.

Of course, privacy and confidentiality works both ways. Since you have a relationship with your individual provider, you will probably learn things about them that are private. You, too have the responsibility of protecting their right to privacy. Many times your staff work at different times and may never meet. It may be tempting to share information about one worker to the others. Resist this temptation.

Your individual providers can share information about you or your condition ***only to the case manager in the following instances:***

- The employer develops any new problems or has personal care needs that are not being met;
- The individual provider has worries or questions about changes in the employer's physical condition including any falls or not eating;
- The individual provider has worries or questions about changes in the employer's mental condition, including talk of suicide or other patterns of serious mental illness or confusion;
- The individual provider has suggestions or know of additional resources (for example, durable medical equipment to help with

- daily living tasks) that would add to the employer's quality of care or independence;
- The individual provider has suspicions, questions, or concerns about abuse, neglect, or exploitation of the employer;
 - The employer and employee make changes to the assigned schedule (days and time of work schedule);
 - The individual provider plans on taking a vacation;
 - The employer enters a hospital, moves into a residential setting, or dies;
 - The individual provider changes their name, telephone, or address;
 - The individual provider has questions about the number of hours they are approved to work or which tasks they are authorized to do;
 - The individual provider is unable or uncomfortable performing the tasks outlined in the service plan;
 - The individual provider is asked to perform tasks not outlined in the Service Plan or for other people living in the household; and
 - The individual provider decides to stop working for their employer.

The case manager or social worker relies on both you and your employee to keep them aware of any concerns or changes they see in your mental or physical health.

EMPLOYEE EVALUATION

Periodic evaluations are an important part of the employer-employee relationship. Evaluations provide a time for you and your individual provider to evaluate goals, tasks and performance. Therefore, they serve two purposes:

- A means of providing constructive feedback to your individual provider; and
- A way of encouraging open discussion between you and your individual provider.

Evaluation Schedule

A recommended schedule to conduct new employee evaluations is at one, three and six months. After that, employee evaluation should occur at least every year. This schedule allows you, the employer, to correct problems early and to provide encouragement and support for your new staff.

Informal Evaluation

An informal evaluation can happen at any time. It is an opportunity to focus on achieving certain milestones or goals. Examples include a “check-in” after the first week of employment to give the individual provider feedback; or, recognizing that the individual provider completed Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving and setting short-term goals that incorporates their new knowledge.

Use this time to be positive and provide encouragement. However, if there are issues you need to address with the individual provider, now is the time to correct an issue before it becomes a habit (constructive feedback). An example might be punctuality—an informal discussion about the importance of being on time should occur and clearly stating what the individual provider and you will do if the behavior continues. Be sure to document issues and discussions

in the event the behavior continues and you need to take disciplinary action.

Formal Evaluation

Formal evaluation is a more in-depth look at all areas related to the individual provider's performance. While you address positive milestones or goals, it is also an opportunity to evaluate whether the individual provider is meeting your performance expectations.

Basic behaviors in the areas of attendance, work skills and cooperation with the supervisor are covered in the example Periodic Employee Evaluation form below. The Comments section can be used to give specific information about behaviors. The Responsibilities section should also be reviewed during this time. It is very important that discussion between you and the individual provider accompany the evaluation. Be specific in pointing out any problem areas and be prepared to work with your employee in solving the problems.

Sample Periodic Employee Evaluation

Date: _____

Employee Name: _____

| ATTENDANCE | | Always | Usually | Seldom | Never |
|-------------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. | Employee calls in when they will be absent or late | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | Employee gives sufficient notice when needing time off | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. | Employee does not abuse sick time | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | Comments: _____ _____ _____ | | | | |

WORK SKILLS

| | Always | Usually | Seldom | Never |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Employee follows directions to complete a task | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Employee asks questions when directions are not understood | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Employee completes tasks within time allotted | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Employee keeps work area clean and uses tools properly | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Employee follows safety precautions | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Employee displays clean personal habits | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Comments: | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> | | | |

ATTITUDE/COOPERATION

| | Always | Usually | Seldom | Never |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Employee works cooperatively with supervisor | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. When a conflict arises, employee discusses situation openly and attempts to resolve the problem | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Employee respects supervisor's decisions and values regarding independent functioning. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Employee respects supervisor's need for privacy | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Comments: | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> | | | |

GOALS:

Employee will learn to do the following tasks this coming evaluation period:

Employee will attend the following training this coming evaluation period:

Employee will meet the following goals this coming evaluation period:

Employee Signature Date

Employer Signature Date

Recognizing and Valuing Employees

Employee turnover in the field of in-home services is extremely high. In some areas, turnover exceeds fifty percent. That means over half of all individual providers in an area leave their jobs within the first year. “Burnout” is a major concern. The responsibilities of the job are enormous and there is little room for advancement. When communication issues and additional duties are added, stress and burnout increases.

Medicaid rules forbid an employer to even provide small gifts as gestures of appreciation. With these limitations, how can you recognize and value employees who do good work?

Recognition

Some people like recognition; others don't. Some people like big events while others prefer a simple “thank you.” How you recognize your staff is up to you, but make it meaningful to people who work for you. The following is a list of no-cost and low-cost ways to recognize individual providers:

- Give routine verbal thanks and encouragement.
- Mention the good work of someone in their presence.
- Nominate someone for a special award.
- Say positive things about workers in front of their peers.
- Give recognition for birthdays and important life events.
- Send a note of thanks to the worker's home.
- Post recognition cards on a bulletin board, refrigerator, or other work space.
- Give certificates of achievement or certificates for years of service.
- Submit articles or letters to the editor to the local newspaper about the value of care giving and recognizing staff.

EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES

Training Requirements

All individual providers are required to take several courses in order to continue getting paid, and in some cases, keep their job. Knowing what and when your employees need to complete will help you plan for absences better. Being actively involved in the training of your staff will help you make decisions about what kinds of training you expect your individual providers to complete.

Before being placed on the Referral Registry, any person who has not been an individual provider for more than three months must take the four hour ***Becoming a Professional Individual Provider*** course. The course is taught in a classroom at the Referral and Workforce Resource Center.

All individual providers are required to complete ***Caregiver Orientation*** within 14 days of hire. The course is two hours long and can be completed by video and workbook.

All individuals are required to complete ***Safety Training for Individual Providers***. The course is four hours long, and can be done in a classroom, by reading a manual, or online. If an individual provider is hired after July 1, 2005 they must complete this training within 120 days of hire. All other individual providers (hired BEFORE July 1, 2005) have until December 31, 2006 to complete this training.

Nearly all individual providers must complete a 28 hour course called, ***Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving***. The course is offered all over the state and is taught classroom-style. Individual providers must complete this training within 120 days of hire. Beginning July 1, 2005 safety training is taught at the end of Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving.

Some individuals—those working with through COPES and Medicaid Personal Care programs—are required to complete ***Medicaid Personal Care*** training. This course is six hours long and is taught in a classroom.

All individual providers (except parent providers) are required to complete ten hours of **continuing education** each year. This continuing education requirement begins after they complete Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving. Continuing education courses are employer-focused. That is, the courses are designed to provide training in areas that address employer need rather than employee interest. Some locations in Washington have lots of class choices, other locations have very few.

All Home Care Referral Registry Centers have begun professional development programs, which means greater opportunities for individual providers to get more training and/or take college courses.

You, as an employer, are responsible for much of the **hands-on** training of your staff. You direct how you want tasks to be completed. This means you will sometimes show an employee, but many times it means you will be giving verbal direction. There are times you will be correcting your staff to ensure tasks are completed in the way that you prefer.

Workplace Safety

All individual providers in Washington state are now covered by workers compensation as of October 1, 2004. Workers compensation is a program that helps workers who have been injured on the job. Part of that workers compensation program is called “risk management.” Risk management means that through training, education, information and other actions, the state will reduce the risk of injuries or accidents on the job.

Safety Training for Individual Providers is a big part of the risk management program. All individual providers have to take safety training. In this class, they learn how to protect themselves from injuries and illnesses. They learn to lift people and objects safely, what to do in the event of an emergency, how to reduce the risk of tripping or falling, and other topics. The Home Care Quality Authority also publishes a safety newsletter quarterly and mails it to every individual provider’s home. The newsletter has tips, hints and help on

several safety issues. A safety committee also meets once a quarter to discuss safety issues that individual providers face while on the job.

While safety training, committees and newsletters are important—you, as an employer, are equally important in keeping workers safe. Your home is also a workplace and you are considered the direct manager of your staff. This means that you should take measures to help keep your staff safe. If your employee becomes injured, this will ultimately affect your own quality of life as you may need to find a replacement.

Loose carpets, clutter and rickety stairs all are examples of potential safety hazards that could cause injury to your employees. Following is a Hazard Assessment Checksheet, which should be completed annually. It is recommended that you complete the Hazard Assessment and take measures to reduce accidents and injuries in your home.

SAMPLE HAZARD ASSESSMENT CHECKSHEET

(Conduct this assessment with your employee annually)

- Emergency Action Plan in place (see next page)
- Adequate Protective Equipment
- Outside walkways are well lit, cleared of debris/material
- Inside floors are cleared of furniture, debris
- Stairs have handrails and are well lit
- Rug edges are non-frayed and tacked down
- Throw rugs are removed or non skid mat in place
- No exposed electrical wires
- Extension cords are not frayed and do not pose a tripping hazard
- Used needles are placed in sharps container or closed durable container
- Sharp objects are padded (bed frames etc.)
- Oxygen hoses are out of walkway
- Medical equipment stored properly
- No smoking or open flames with oxygen use
- Liquids such as water, ice, snow, grease are cleaned up immediately
- Materials are stored at proper height and safely
- Proper lighting
- Home is free of infestation and animal waste.
- Animals are controlled.
- Medications and chemicals are labeled and stored correctly
- Fire Extinguishers are readily available and serviced
- Smoke alarms are in working condition
- Lifting and moving objects are kept to a minimum

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN FOR IN-HOME SERVICES
(Employer and employee should develop this plan and post next to phone)

Employer Name: _____

Date: _____

1. EMERGENCIES- LIFE THREATENING – CALL 9-1-1 *Tell them the number you are calling from*

Home Address: _____

Major Crossroad: _____

Home Direction from Crossroad: _____

2. EMERGENCIES- NON- LIFE THREATENING: List the following local numbers

Fire/Paramedics: _____

Physician: _____

Hospital: _____

Ambulance: _____

Police/Sheriff: _____

Poison Control: _____

Other: _____

3. HOME EVACUATION: Make a sketch of the home in this space and show where exits are. Draw arrows to show escape routes. In the event of a fire, get yourself and your employer out.

4. TEMPORARY RELOCATION SITES: List alternative places to go when the home is unsafe.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

5. SAFETY EQUIPMENT- The fire department may help you with installation information.

Fire Extinguishers: _____

Smoke Alarms: _____

6. OTHER EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT- Identify location of first aid kit, blankets, food and water, flashlights, radio and other emergency equipment.

Location: _____

Timesheets

Each month, you will be signing your name to each employee's timesheet. You should compare the scheduled hours you asked the individual provider to work with what they wrote on their timesheet. If there is a discrepancy, you will need to point it out to the individual provider and make corrections as necessary.

Do not sign the timesheet unless you are sure it is correct. When you sign the timesheet, you are confirming that the individual provider worked the hours listed. The individual provider will be paid from the number of hours on the timesheet. If the timesheet is incorrect, the individual provider may be required to pay back any amount that has been overpaid, or it could cause a delay or denial of payment.

Your case manager may ask to see completed timesheets. The individual provider keeps one signed copy; you keep another signed copy. Copies of timesheets should be kept for two years.

Managing Stress

Being an employer can be stressful. Managing multiple employees, juggling their time and needs with yours, and managing their behavior can be emotionally stressful. Having to find replacements at the last minute and worrying about being stranded can be a regular stressor.

How do you deal with stress? A great way to reduce stress in general is to work hard and play hard. Most of us work hard, but few of us play hard. Finding ways to rest and rejuvenate is essential. Doing something you enjoy doing is relaxing.

Keys to Managing Stress:

- identify sources of stress
- understand your reactions
- find ways to reduce or improve methods to manage stress.

One way many people deal with stress is by putting off a necessary confrontation. Putting it off will add to your stress by imagining what will happen when you do confront your employee. Many times what

you imagine is worse than the reality. The sooner you confront your individual provider about an issue the less stressful it will be.

Find a support system for yourself. The most effective support system is made up of other people with disabilities with similar experiences. It is essential that your support system be made up of people with whom you trust. These are people who will listen to you and give you suggestions to deal with your issues.

If you are an employer representative or a family member responsible for the care of your loved one, you may also join family support groups such as those offered through the Alzheimer's Association of Washington, or ARC's Parent-to-Parent.

Another problem is that many times individual providers feel stress from the responsibilities of their day-to-day work. There are no water coolers or company break room to talk with others, and, there are few opportunities to meet with peers. Because of this, some individual providers feel very isolated and alone.

Remember that you may be the only source of information and communication an individual provider might have at their workplace. As an employer, you need to not only recognize stress, but help the individual provider manage that stress—this is a big responsibility!

| ACTIVITY: Reducing Stress | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Directions: Give three examples of situations that cause stress while on the job. For each example, describe a way to reduce that stress.</i> | |
| CAUSES STRESS ON THE JOB: | ONE WAY TO REDUCE THIS STRESS: |
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |

Self-Direction

You are in charge. You direct your employees and set your own standard of practice. What you have them do and how within state regulations is up to you. Always take charge of what you need. Never relinquish that right.

The difference between being dependent on your individual provider and self-direction is indicated below.

When dependent on an individual provider:

- The individual provider performs tasks in a certain way with little or no input from the employer.
- The employer is the one who is told when and how to do things, such as when to get up, when to take medications, or when to shower.
- The employer makes few decisions on his/her own and has little control over his/her own life.
- The employer has less opportunity to participate fully in life.

When an employer uses self-direction:

- The individual provider performs tasks according to directions from the person receiving the care.
- The employer decides when to get up, when to go to bed or when to shower, and takes responsibility for administering his/her own medications on time.
- The employer controls his/her own life through decisions he/she makes, and is responsible for the consequences of his/her own decisions.
- The person has more opportunity to participate fully in life.

With self-direction, you are in charge. Being clear about your needs and preferences is a first step; exactly how and when they will be met completes the process. This involves good communication so that you and your individual provider develop a strong working relationship where both your needs are met.

NOTE: Some employers are “family representatives” or “employer representatives.” These representatives are expected to direct care when one is not able to self-direct.

Tips for Giving Verbal Directions

- Make sure you have the person's attention before you give the direction.
- Begin by making a statement about what the directions are supposed to accomplish.
- Minimize the number of directions given.
- Individualize the way directions are given. Some people may respond well to verbal direction, while others may need a demonstration or prompts.
- Give clear directions and avoid directions that are vague, such as "be careful" or "get me a jacket." These directions could be substituted with "hold on to the railing" or "please get me my yellow rain jacket."
- Maintain a positive rather than negative tone when you give directions.
- Give the person the opportunity to respond to a direction. Avoid giving multiple directions at one time without giving the person a chance to respond.
- Present steps in the order to be followed.
- When appropriate, give choices and options for following directions. For example, say "while waiting for the dryer to finish, would you prefer to vacuum the living room or start preparing lunch?"
- Follow through with positive acknowledgment when needed to convey that the person is following the directions.

ACTIVITY: Giving Verbal Direction

Directions: Read the verbal instruction below. Write a better way to give the verbal instructions that turns a negative statement into a positive one.

"I want my lunch right now. Go make me something to eat."

A Better Way to Say It:

COMMUNICATION

Learning good communication and using those skills are the keys to working effectively with an individual provider. A good working environment is one of the most important factors in keeping great staff.

Good employers create a work environment that brings out the best a person has to offer. You want your individual provider to have good morale, be happy and satisfied with his/her work and, therefore, be a productive employee. Good communication between you and your individual provider can help do this.

To create a good work environment:

- Reward your employees for the work they are doing. Besides paying them, it is important to praise them frequently as well. Everyone wants to feel needed, appreciated and important.

For example, your individual provider has transferred you very smoothly from your bed to your chair. You might say, "That was a really smooth transfer. You do it very well and I feel safe." You have communicated your appreciation in a very concrete way and your employee will know that he/she has performed this task well.

- When you must criticize something your individual provider has or has not done, it is important to be open and honest and to criticize the action, not the person.

For example, the individual provider has returned an hour later than planned. He/she did not call to explain and you are angry. You might say, "You said you would be home an hour ago. I feel frustrated and angry when people are late. In the future, I would appreciate it if you would call me and let me know you will be late." Don't say, "You stupid idiot! You're always late! I don't know what I'm going to do with you!" This will only make your assistant defensive and angry, and you won't resolve anything.

- Don't let small irritations build up until an angry explosion occurs. Anger vented in these explosions often is expressed in a hurtful and destructive way. If you feel irritated about something that is happening, talk about it as soon as possible. This may happen daily, especially if you have just begun to work together.
- Respect your staff. They are human beings and should be treated accordingly. Use the Golden Rule, and treat your employee as you would like to be treated. Be honest, fair, kind, respectful and patient.
- Individual providers have their own lives, too. Especially people who live-in, it is important to be sure to respect their privacy, leave them alone during their time off and realize that unexpected events sometimes disrupt schedules. Although your individual provider has responsibilities to you, you should not attempt to control his/her life. Flexibility and compromise are important qualities for both of you.
- Ask your individual provider how he/she feels about their work and about you as an employer. Set a regular time to share feelings about your relationship. Then, both of you should be open to making changes in the routine, in attitude, or anything else that can correct a problem. Negotiate a plan that will work for both of you.
- When things just do not work out, even after repeated attempts, it is time to re-evaluate the agreement. There are good and poor ways to do this as well:
 - State your reasons clearly without attacking him/her personally.
 - Give a period of notice, usually two weeks. This allows him/her time to find a new job or place to live; it also allows you time to find a different individual provider.
 - Be sure to terminate the employment agreement and carefully document reason(s), discussions and outcome.

To summarize, you, as the employer, have the opportunity to create a positive work environment for your individual provider. This, in turn, helps him/her to be happy, productive and motivated to work for you. Good communication between the two of you is the key to this interdependent relationship. An individual provider who is happy in his/her work will stay with you longer and do a better job, which will benefit the both of you.

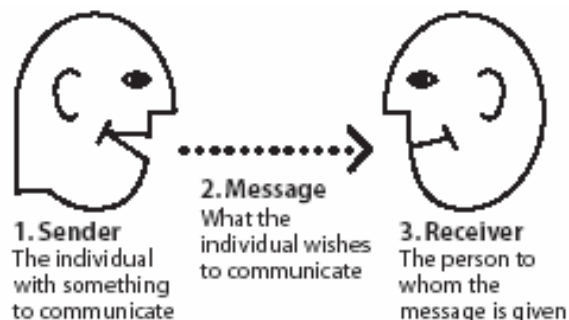
Why Communication is Important

As an employer, one of your most important skills is communication. Good communication will reduce confusion and frustration and improve the quality of life for you and your individual providers. Good communication skills can also reduce stress that individual providers sometimes experience in the workplace. Good communication is a vital component to decision-making and problem-solving.

Knowing how to communicate with simple, clear statements will lead to more positive interactions with your employees. Developing good listening skills to better understand what your employees are telling you will increase your effectiveness as an employer.

What is communication?

Communication is about sharing thoughts, views, feelings, needs and preferences. There are three parts to all communication:



When an individual decides to send a message, the intent is to:

- Express something meaningful to him or her;
- Achieve a purpose; and
- Share thoughts, views, and feelings with other people.

People have many different reasons to communicate during the course of each day:

- Give and get information;
- Express feelings;
- Solve problems;
- Learn new things;
- Persuade others;
- Make decisions; and
- Build relationships.

Types of Communication

Communication has been under development for millions of years. We currently use many ways to get our point across and to understand what others are trying to tell us. Communication can include:

- Listening;
- Speaking—through words or sounds;
- Observing;
- Body Language;
- Action or inaction;
- Writing; and
- Sign Language.

Communication doesn't always occur face-to-face. Other methods of communication using technology, such as phone, fax, e-mail, video and teleconferencing are examples of how our communication methods have developed in the past few decades.

Communication Styles

How do you communicate with others? If you are like most people, your style will vary depending on who you are communicating with and a multitude of other variables, such as your mood. We all have the capacity to exhibit different communication styles in any situation.

For this course, we'll examine three different (but common) communication styles: passive, assertive, and aggressive. Take a look at the chart below to learn more about styles of communication.

| | PASSIVE | ASSERTIVE | AGGRESSIVE |
|-------------------------|--|--|---|
| Definition | Communication style in which you put the rights of others before your own, minimizing your own self-worth | Communication style in which you stand up for your rights while maintaining respect for the rights of others. | Communication style in which you stand up for your rights but you violate the rights of others. |
| Implications for others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ My feelings aren't important ▪ I don't matter ▪ I think I'm inferior | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We are both important ▪ We both matter ▪ I think we are equal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Your feelings are not important ▪ You don't matter ▪ I think I am superior |
| Verbal Styles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apologetic ▪ Overly soft or tentative voice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "I" statements ▪ Firm voice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "You" statements ▪ Loud voice |
| Non-verbal styles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Looking down or away ▪ Stooped posture, excessive head nodding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Looking direct ▪ Firm voice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staring, narrow eyes ▪ Tense, clenched fists, rigid posture, pointing fingers |
| Potential consequences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lowered self-esteem ▪ False feelings of inferiority ▪ Disrespect from others ▪ Pitied by others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Higher self-esteem ▪ Self-respect ▪ Respect from others ▪ Respect of others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guilt ▪ Anger from others ▪ Lowered self-esteem ▪ Disrespect from others ▪ Feared by others |

Assertive Communication in the Workplace

It is important that you be assertive. This involves speaking up for your personal rights and expressing thoughts, feelings and beliefs in direct, honest and appropriate ways which do not violate another person's rights.

Assertion involves respect, not deference. Deference is acting like an inferior person, as if the other person were right or better than you. Respect also includes respect for yourself (expressing your needs and defending your rights), as well as respect for another person's needs and rights.

| Example | | |
|--|--|--|
| PASSIVE | AGGRESSIVE | ASSERTIVE |
| "What can I say? I feel awful telling you no! Gee, I feel really bad that I can't let you take the whole week off. I'm sorry, really." | "What do you mean, you want next week off? Where do you get the nerve to ask me such an unreasonable thing?" | "I'd like to give you the week off but it would be difficult for me to find a back-up on such short notice. Perhaps we can work together to schedule a vacation for you in a few weeks." |

It is important that you avoid passive communication because you will convey that you don't really "count" or that you can be taken advantage of. Passive communication is used to please others and avoid conflict. It can be harmful because it will lead people to have little respect for your own needs.

On the other hand, aggression can be detrimental in developing a working relationship with your staff. The goal of aggression is domination and winning, usually by humiliating, degrading, belittling or overpowering others. Try to avoid aggression when dealing with your individual provider. You can make your wishes known by being assertive, not aggressive.

Self-Assessment of Assertive Communication Skills

| Can you... | Always | Usually | Never |
|---------------------------------|--------|---------|-------|
| Give compliments | | | |
| Receive compliments | | | |
| Make requests | | | |
| Ask for favors | | | |
| Refuse requests and favors | | | |
| Initiate conversation | | | |
| Maintain conversations | | | |
| Stand up for your rights | | | |
| Express personal opinions | | | |
| Express disagreement | | | |
| Express annoyance | | | |
| Introduce yourself | | | |
| Give constructive criticism | | | |
| Receive constructive criticism | | | |
| Talk about yourself | | | |
| Express liking, love, affection | | | |
| Express joy | | | |
| Request a service | | | |
| Request affection | | | |
| Talk in front of a group | | | |
| TOTAL | | | |

Types of Assertion

1. **Simple Assertion** – a simple statement.

“No, I’d rather not.”

“I believe I said that earlier.”

“I don’t agree.”

Other examples:

| |
|--|
| |
| |
| |
| |

2. **Emphatic Assertion** – statement that conveys recognition of others’ feelings or situation.

“I can see you are already busy, but I’d like my coffee now.”

“I understand you want to borrow my car, but I’m going to be using it today.”

Other examples:

| |
|--|
| |
| |
| |
| |

3. **Confrontive Assertion** – statements that point out discrepancies between what someone has said or done, and what you would like to have happen. Non-accusatory.

“As we agreed, I hired you to work half-time and now I find the workload is more than a part-time commitment. I would like to establish reasonable expectations of what can be done in 20 hours.”

Other examples:

4. **Emotive feeling/Negative feeling Assertion** – statement that expresses an emotional reaction/negative feeling.

“I feel anger when you tease me because I take the criticism seriously, even though it’s in the form of a joke. I’d prefer it if you would offer suggestions for improvement instead of criticizing me.”

Other examples:

5. **Escalating Assertion** – stating your position over and over and letting the other person know that 1) you are serious and 2) you are angry (or whatever you are feeling) because you are not being listened to.

Examples:

6. **Soft Assertion** – letting people know positive feelings you are having about them.

“The dinner you made was very well done.”

“I really like the way you helped with my bath this morning.”

| |
|------------------------|
| Other examples: |
| |
| |
| |

Giving Feedback

Feedback is also an important communication tool. Feedback is the process of giving information, instruction, support and guidance. Feedback therefore requires good communication skills.

Here are some guidelines about giving feedback:

1. Feedback should describe behavior, not pass judgment on it.

For instance, rather than saying, “You are too slow,” say “when you were cooking this morning, you spent half an hour on the oatmeal. If breakfast takes that long, there won’t be time for other tasks. What do you think you can do to reduce the time spent making breakfast?”

2. Feedback should be specific rather than vague.

For instance, rather than saying, “you seem like you have an attitude about doing this,” say “when I asked you to do this, you frowned and rolled your eyes. That makes me wonder if something is wrong.”

3. Feedback should describe what you observed, rather than what you assume to be the reason it happened.

Focus on what actually happened rather than why you think it happened. For instance, “the last time we talked, you said you were uncomfortable around my family.” Offer an explanation only if you know for certain that it is true and correct.

4. Feedback should focus on behavior rather than the person.

For instance, rather than saying, “you are incompetent,” say “you did not perform that task according to how you were trained.”

ACTIVITY: Feedback Practice

Directions: Read the following statements and think of another way to say them using the feedback guidelines above.

1. *You didn't do that right.*

Another way to say it using good feedback:

2. *You better not speak to me that way.*

Another way to say it using good feedback:

3. *I don't think you are right for this kind of work*

Another way to say it using good feedback:

4. *You embarrassed me by calling my case manager after we talked. Don't ever do that again.*

Another way to say it using good feedback:

BALANCING EXPECTATIONS

The Service Plan

You and your case manager have probably already completed a Service Plan. Together you decided the tasks in which you need assistance. You probably already talked about how the tasks would be done, and how often. All of this is listed in the Service Plan, which includes:

- A list of services the individual provider will do.
- A description of what, when and how often the services are to be done.
- The name of an emergency contact person.

When you hire an individual provider, they will receive a copy of the Service Plan. It is important to talk about the Service Plan as soon as you hire an individual provider because:

- Both you and the individual provider need to know what they are expected to do.
- Both you and the individual provider need to understand the limits of their work.
- You can avoid misunderstandings later if you discuss the tasks carefully.
- You and your individual provider will feel like part of the same team if you discuss the tasks together.

Tips for Balancing Expectations: Establish a Routine

- You and the individual provider should agree to a routine and stick to it.
- A routine (or schedule) helps the individual provider to complete all tasks.
- A routine (or schedule) helps the employer to know if all tasks were completed.
- Both of you will know what to expect each day.
- As a part of your routine, set aside a time each week to discuss how things are going.

Remember, only the case manager can change the Service Plan. If you and your individual provider are in disagreement about the Service Plan, you might consider contacting the case manager for clarification.