

HOW TO HIRE IN-HOME HELPERS



Human services with you at the center



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Aging and Disability Resources

Aging and Disability Resources helps seniors access a wide range of resources. Our services include:

- Providing information about services and programs for older adults
- Meeting personally with older adults and their families to discuss service options
- Assisting with applications and paperwork
- Providing follow-up to ensure services have been delivered
- Advocating for older adults who encounter difficulty in obtaining services
- Presenting public education seminars about senior programs and service

Aging and Disability Resources provides services free of charge to adults age 60 and over, and to friends and family advocating for older adults. Staff are available to meet in our office, in a client's home, or on the telephone. Information is kept confidential. Please call to make an appointment or drop by our office.

Camano Island & Skagit County

(360) 428-1309

Whatcom County

(360) 738-2500

www.nwrcwa.org





Frequently Used Terms

As you begin the search for an in-home helper, you may hear some terms which are unfamiliar to you. These terms can give you an idea of the level of care you may be looking for. Be aware that some are used by home health agencies to assign costs.

Activities of Daily Living (ADLs):

These are specific activities that individuals must perform with or without assistance to live independently.

Companion:

Provides social contact, accompaniment on walks or errands.

Chore Services:

Housekeeping, grocery shopping, laundry, and some meal preparation (but no personal care).

Homemaker:

All of the above plus meal preparation and help with personal needs like getting dressed. Usually no bathing assistance.

Home Health Aide:

All of the above plus personal care needs (like bathing and management of incontinence). Does not include services that a licensed nurse must perform.

Getting Started



Identifying Services You Need

In-home care becomes necessary when circumstances such as illness, cognitive decline, or injury make it difficult to remain safe and comfortable in one's own residence.

In-home helpers can assist with the following activities of daily living:

- **Bathing:** Assistance with bathing in tub, shower, or bed.
- **Personal Care:** Assistance with dressing, teeth or denture care, shaving, hair care, and grooming needs.
- **Toileting:** Assistance with toileting or incontinence.
- **Ambulation:** Assistance with walking, using a wheelchair, or other assistive device.
- **Transfers:** Assistance moving from wheelchair, tub, bed, toilet, automobile, etc.
- **Positioning:** Assistance with or moving position to avoid discomfort or injury.
- **Eating and/or Feeding:** Assistance with eating.
- **Medication Assistance:** Reminding and/or assisting an individual to take medications appropriately.
- **Errands/Appointments/Shopping:** Transporting or escorting to shopping, appointments, or on errands.
- **Range of Motion:** Providing assistance in movement of legs and arms as directed by a physician or physical therapist.
- **Housekeeping:** Maintaining a safe, sanitary environment with a focus on kitchen, bathroom, and laundry.
- **Meal Preparation:** Preparing nutritious meals for either immediate consumption or later warming.

- **Supervision:** Providing protective supervision for individuals who are not safe when left alone because of confusion or poor judgment.

Use the list above to identify regular tasks and determine what you can do by yourself, what your family is able to help with, and what is not being done. Once you have developed this list, you can use it to write a job description for your in-home helper. Aging and Disability Resources is also available to help with this process.

Tasks I can do by myself:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Tasks my family can help with:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Tasks for an in-home helper:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Aging and Disability Resources staff is available to help you Monday through Friday from 8:30 am - 4:30 pm.

Paying for In-Home Care

There are several methods of paying for in-home help, and it is a good idea to investigate all of the options below to determine if you qualify for financial assistance.

- **COPES and Medicaid Personal Care (MPC):** These are state-funded Medicaid programs offering in-home care to individuals meeting income and resource guidelines. Additional information is available through Home & Community Services office (360) 812-4940 or Aging and Disability Resources (360) 738-2500.
- **Medicare:** Medicare provides limited, intermittent coverage to homebound people for skilled in-home care (nursing or physical therapy, etc.) as prescribed by a physician. It does not pay for custodial care - help with toileting, cooking, and housekeeping, etc. Bathing services may be included while skilled care is being provided.
- **Private insurance:** Some long-term care insurance policies provide coverage for in-home care. If you have this type of policy, you should consult with your insurance company to determine eligibility.
- **Private payment:** An agency or an individual may be privately hired to provide in-home services. Payment is made from personal funds.

Camano Island: ADRCcamano@dshs.wa.gov

Skagit County: ADRCskagit@dshs.wa.gov

Whatcom County: ADRCwhatcom@dshs.wa.gov

Finding In-Home Helpers

Providers of in-home care services can be found in a variety of ways.

Hiring through an agency. There are several local agencies which provide in-home helpers. Agencies charge by the hour and may require a minimum number of hours. Aging and Disability Resources can provide a complete list of local home care agencies, including:

Catholic Community Services Long-Term Care

1742 Iowa Street, Bellingham, WA
(360) 738-6163

Home Attendant Care

1151 Ellis Street #204, Bellingham, WA
(360) 734-3849

Visiting Angels Living Assistance

4213 Rural Avenue, Bellingham, WA
(360) 671-8388

Direct hiring. This method will save money but is also more time consuming than working with an agency. If you choose to do your own hiring, contact Aging and Disability Resources for a full list of current in-home care providers. You can also check newspaper or senior center employment listings, or with your church.

State-paid services.

You may qualify for state-funded services such as COPES and Medicaid Personal Care. For details, call Aging and Disability Resources.

When In-Home Help is Resisted

Even though in-home help may be essential, the idea is sometimes resisted. It is important to respond to this issue with understanding. Some common concerns are:

- **Losing independence:** Many people view accepting a stranger's help as an insult to their independence. What they may not realize is that they may have already accepted help in the form of neighborly assistance or family visits. It is important to involve the person needing care in the entire process of hiring and supervising the in-home helper.
- **Fear of depleting savings:** It may be helpful to compute the cost of in-home care over a year so that the expense can be evaluated relative to the benefits received, and in comparison to the cost of moving into an Assisted Living facility or a retirement community.
- **Fear of reduced contact with family members:** Assure the person receiving care that family contact will continue. By stating that the intention in hiring help is to prolong the ability to provide care, family members can assure the care recipient that this action is the opposite of abandonment.
- **Lack of supervisory skills:** You may need to learn how to provide clear instructions and appropriate supervision. Be sure to have a job description prepared before any interviews take place, and compile a checklist of tasks to be performed. This checklist should be given to the worker before each session so that tasks are clearly stated and can be verified if not performed. This checklist also structures the relationship on a professional foundation.



- **Start slow:** It may be wise to start with a small number of hours of in-home help and gradually increase the hours as the recipient becomes comfortable.
- **Fear of victimization:** A new in-home worker may be viewed as a threat. After all, this is a stranger who is gaining access to the personal items of the individual. People who have hearing, vision, or mobility deficits may feel vulnerable. Ways of dealing with this issue include:
 - **Obtain referrals from friends:** An employee of a trusted friend may be an excellent prospect.
 - **Be a physical presence:** It is sometimes wise for a family member or friend to be present during the first few sessions. Later, this person can make occasional, unplanned visits.
 - **Carefully check references**

Hiring an In-Home Helper

Advertising

The best way to find an in-home helper is to get recommendations from family and friends. Let people know you are looking. You may also want to check the “Situation Wanted” section of the classified ads, or you may place an advertisement yourself.

Your advertisement should include hours needed, a brief description of the duties, your telephone number, and the best time to call. You should also mention preferences such as non-smoker or male/female, and the wage you are offering. Do not provide your name and exact address in the advertisement.

Setting Up the Job Agreement

The purpose of a job agreement is to clarify the responsibilities of both the employer and the worker. The agreement can be revised as needed. It is important to be as specific as you can in the agreement, to lessen the chance of confusion in the future.

Included is a sample agreement. You will need to individualize this agreement to meet your needs.



SAMPLE IN-HOME CARE AGREEMENT

Employer: _____ Employee: _____

Salary: \$ _____ per (choose one) hour week month

To be paid: (choose one) weekly bi-weekly monthly

Schedule:	Mon	Tue	Wed
Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Changes in schedule are: (choose one)

Not negotiable Negotiable with prior approval

Duties to be performed (use separate sheet if necessary):

Household Tasks:	Personal Care Tasks:
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Non-acceptable behavior (check all that apply):

- Arriving late Leaving early Smoking inside
- Foul language Personal calls Personal business
- Discussing Other:
- personal problems

Employer Signature: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Social Security # ____ - ____ - ____

Or,

“I will be responsible for my own Social Security or any taxes due to any governmental agency arising from this employment.”

(Employee signs here) X _____

Arranging an Interview

When people call about your ad, ask a few questions on the phone before setting up an interview. For example, inquire about their work history and other experience. Once you have decided which applicants meet your qualifications, schedule the interview. You might want to check some of the applicant's references prior to the interview.

For the Interview: Have your sample agreement ready for the applicant to read, and provide a copy of the job description. Record the name, address, and phone number of the applicant. Below are some suggested interview questions. Make up your own list of questions which meet your particular needs.

Sample Interview Questions

- Where have you worked before?
- Tell me something about your family, hobbies, etc.
- Have you ever provided care for a person similar to what this job requires?
- How do you handle people who are angry?
- Why do you enjoy this kind of work?
- What makes you uncomfortable or angry?
- What is your attitude about smoking, drinking, or using drugs?
- Is there anything in the job agreement which you would not do?
- What training have you had? (CPR, CNA, First Aid, Fundamentals of Caregiving)
- What commitments to staying on this job are you willing to make?



Interview Checklist

- Was the applicant on time for the interview?
- Was his/her appearance and grooming appropriate?
- Did the applicant and I agree on the terms and conditions of the agreement? If not, how do I need to modify my agreement before employing this person?
- Did I get at least three references to call to verify his/her ability to perform needed services?
- Did I feel comfortable with the person?
- Did I note anything that made me uncomfortable (dress, speech, behavior)?
- If the job involves special skills such as lifting into the bathtub or cooking diabetic meals, will the worker require specialized training?

Checking References

Before making a hiring decision, call at least three references to learn more about the applicant. Here are some suggested questions:

- How long have you known _____? In what capacity?
- Is _____ working for you now?
- Has _____ worked for you in the past?
- If no longer working for reference, why did _____ leave?
- Would you re-hire?
- What is/was _____'s position with your?
- What were _____'s job responsibilities?
- How did they get along with you and/or others?
- Did _____ show initiative or wait to be told what to do?
- Was _____ reliable, trustworthy, and honest?
- What were _____'s strengths and weaknesses?
- Were you aware of any problems with drugs or alcohol?
- Any other problems that could interfere with their ability to perform the job?

Briefly describe why you're looking for a worker and ask the reference if the applicant would be a good match for your situation.

Supervising the In-Home Helper

Once an applicant is offered the job and accepts, the agreement should be signed before the worker starts. Each party should have a copy of the signed agreement. You should then decide on a start date.

Here are some tips for supervising your newly-hired employee:

- **Make a list of the steps for each task**, including preferences for cleansers and implements to be used, the locations of these items, and reminders of parts of the task which could be overlooked, for example, “please separate the whiter laundry.”
- **Avoid following the worker around the home.** Instead, ask to be notified after each task is completed. Check off each step that has been finished correctly. Remind the worker if any step has been omitted.
- **Acknowledge any extra efforts or thoughtfulness**, even if what has been done does not fit exactly with your specifications. It is important to recognize the person’s good will.
- **Correct major errors by giving information rather than criticism.** Unless an error occurs repeatedly, assume that the person needs more information about how something should be handled within the home.



Maintaining Open Communication

Open communication between employer and employee can maintain a positive relationship. People appreciate being told when they are doing a good job. It is also important to tell employees about behaviors you find unacceptable.

Be sure your expectations are clear:

- Give specific, written directions regarding duties to be performed.
- Develop a checklist to be completed by you and the employee by the end of each shift.
- Demonstrate difficult tasks and have employee practice for you.
- Review privileges such as eating meals at your home and the use of your telephone.

Be fair, honest, and kind, and remember to respect your employee's privacy.

Praise a job well done. Workers need to be appreciated. Describe what you like. For example: "Thank you for putting non-skid strips in the bath. I feel much safer" or "I really appreciate the extra care you take in cleaning under the furniture. Having a clean home feels wonderful."

Get small irritations off your chest before they build up.

In the event of problems, permit ample time to discuss and resolve.

- Give criticism as soon as possible after the problem occurs. Keep it brief and to the point.
- Mention one incident at a time and make suggestions for improvement.
- Focus on the situation, issue or behavior, not the person.
- Forgive and forget.

Ethical Considerations

An important ethical consideration facing care recipients and their caregivers is that of gift-giving.

An employee should not accept gifts. It violates the professional relationship between a worker and employer.

Preventing Abuse

Unfortunately, abuse is possible without proper planning, accountability, and supervision. Abuse can take many forms, including inappropriate gifts, theft, physical abuse, emotional battering, and neglect.

The following are ways in which in-home helpers can take advantage of their employer:

- Doing easier tasks first. On your checklist, be sure the harder or more critical tasks are listed first.
- Taking numerous breaks, making phone calls, watching television.
- Taking advantage of sympathy and/or friendship by sharing personal and financial problems.
- Persuading employer to pay wages for hours not worked, late arrivals, and early departures.
- Bringing children to work.
- Soliciting “loans.”

Prevent abuse by periodic monitoring:

- Neighbors, family, and friends can frequently drop by to visit.
- Workers are less likely to exploit people who have a caring and active informal support system.

Financial & Legal Considerations

When you become an employer, you have some obligations in record-keeping. If you pay \$2,600 (in 2024) or more per year to an employee, you are required by law to withhold and pay Social Security taxes. Social Security taxes are deducted from each paycheck and paid quarterly to the IRS.

Exception: If the person you are hiring is self-employed, he/she is required to pay his/her own Social Security taxes. For bookkeeping reasons and less paperwork, many people prefer to hire only self-employed workers.

1. You should have a contract agreement detailing rate of pay, days, and hours of employment.
2. To obtain IRS forms and publications about Social Security withholding requirements, call the IRS and ask for Schedule H. The number is 1-800-829-1040.
3. Set up a form for the recording of payments and deductions for your employee. (See sample below)
4. When you file your own 1040 tax return, determine if payments to your employee qualify as a medical deduction for you.
5. Pay wages by check. If using cash, be aware of possible legal and financial pitfalls, and write receipts for worker. (Receipt books are available at office supply stores.)
6. Keep a record of any serious problems you have with your worker, in case of later disputes.
7. Do not tempt human nature. Keep cash, jewelry, or other valuables in a location where a worker will not have access to them.

Also, be aware that accidents can happen to your employee while working for you. You need to have insurance coverage for such incidents. Talk to your insurance agent about your liability coverage as it applies to someone working in your home.

Name of Worker	Dates of Work	Date of Payment	Deductions (multiply gross by .0765)	Check No.	Amount Paid



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Bellingham, WA 98225

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