



Consumer-Directed Personal Care Attendant Handbook



The “Personal Care Attendant” handbook will provide you with training material that will help you do your job as a personal care attendant. The materials were chosen and developed from resources that reflect a direct involvement using personal care attendants in the home care setting.

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Sources:

Partners for Inclusive Communities –University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences

IndependentChoices of Arkansas

The Center for Independent Living in Central Florida

A Step Ahead-University of South Carolina

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The National Center on Physical Activity and Disability

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Personal Care Attendant Handbook

For Consumer-Directed Model Programs

Consumer direction is skills training for managing/directing personal care needs through the supervision of a personal care attendant.

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Chapter One

IndependentChoices

Welcome to IndependentChoices! A new way of fulfilling homecare needs by providing and promoting home health care.

The program is designed for any individual who chooses to stay at home instead of using traditional institutional care through directly hiring, training, and managing a Personal Care Attendant!

In Chapter one you will learn:

- The mission of a Consumer-Directed program.**
- How IndependentChoices is supplying the training and support for the program.**
- Learning about the Personal Care Attendant job.**
- Your general responsibilities when you choose to be a personal care attendant.**
- Paperwork you will need to fill out and turn in to your employer.**
- Employment agreement contract**

Introduction

The mission of IndependentChoices is to assure that any individual who chooses home care services over institutional care will have adequate health care by directly hiring, training and managing a personal care attendant (PCA).

For many older people and persons with disabilities, the key to living an independent life is having a personal care attendant who is able to help them with their activities of daily living.

Activities of daily living are day to day living tasks that we sometimes take for granted. At times, a person with disabilities may find some of these tasks hard to perform on their own due to a limitation.

Some examples of activities of daily living are:

- Meal preparation
- Feeding assistance
- Dressing/Undressing
- Grooming
- Mobility
- Bowel care
- Bladder care
- Bathing/Showering
- Housekeeping
- Transportation

The IndependentChoices program is called Consumer Directed Care because the consumer is in charge of making all the decisions about their home care needs with the assistance of a personal care attendant.



*W*elcome

To



**Congratulations on your new position as a
Personal Care Attendant!**

**This handbook will provide you with basic information for you to
get started in your new job as a home care service provider.**

Orientation

If you have never worked as a PCA you may not know what to do or how to help with a person’s day to day living needs.

Every consumer will have specific individual needs due to their specific limitations.

Therefore, your new employer will be in charge of providing you with the training and direction that you will need.

Learning about the Personal Care Attendant job

You have accepted a very important position as a personal care attendant to a person who has limitations in their daily living.

Now you may be wondering, “What does a personal care attendant do?” and “Am I cut out to be a personal care attendant?” This handbook will help answer some of those questions.

Mission of the Personal Care Attendant

One of the ways that people with disabilities are able to live and work independently is by employing a personal care attendant.

To empower individuals with the necessary resources and skills to live as self-sufficiently as possible through mutual interdependence between the employer and the personal care attendant.

Orientation

What does all this mean to you?

As a personal care attendant to a person with a disability you can play a vital role in helping your employer achieve independence and live a fuller life. You will not only be providing a valuable service to your employer, but also making a contribution to your employer's family and to society as a whole.

If you are an individual who finds a sense of purpose and meaning in serving others, then doing the job of a personal care attendant may be right for you. What's more, you may enjoy comparable pay and more flexible hours by working as a PCA when compared with other service-oriented jobs.

Purpose of the Personal Attendant's handbook

Many of us are ignorant about the needs of people with disabilities because we have not known a person with a disability. That's why IndependentChoices created this handbook. Its purpose is to provide you with basic awareness about people with disabilities and the types of assistance they may need.

One of the things you will learn in this handbook is that people with disabilities are just as unique as other people. This is why your employer will be responsible for hiring and training you in the specific tasks he/she wants you to perform. Your training really begins the day you go to work.

Orientation

Job Duties of a Personal Attendant

As a personal care attendant you will perform and/or assist with performing routine tasks of daily living for an individual with a functional disability.

As a PCA, you will be helping your employer perform activities that they would do themselves in the absence of a disability.

In general, a PCA may perform duties in these main areas.

- ◆ **Personal care, such as grooming and hygiene**
- ◆ **Mobility, such as transferring from place to place**
- ◆ **Household management, such as laundry, food preparation or dusting**

Using a “Needs Assessment Form” your employer will be able to explain to you in detail how much help will be needed for each task of daily living.

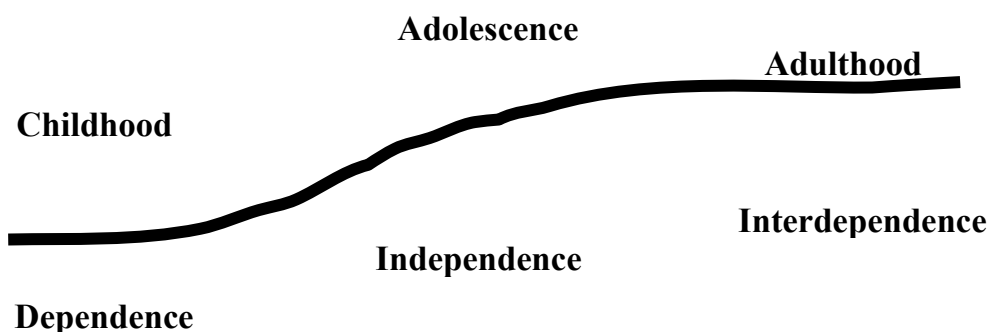
Orientation

The Employer - Personal Care Attendant Relationship

Your employer will be directly in charge of training you to meet their specific needs of daily activities. During this training a foundation will be laid for building successful work partnerships between you and your new employer.

One way of thinking about the employer - PCA relationship is to see it as an interdependent relationship, or partnership. Inter-dependence is working together and sharing responsibilities in order to reach a common goal. Both the employer and the PCA benefit from this kind of relationship.

Interdependence in relationships is a process that most people actively move toward as they mature. As children, we were dependent; in adolescence, we worked fiercely toward independence; but in adulthood, we recognize that meaningful relationships require interdependence.



Interdependent relationships work best when the employer and PCA establish:

- ◆ Mutual trust and respect
- ◆ Open communication
- ◆ Shared goals

Orientation

Rights and Responsibilities

Both personal care attendants and employers have rights and responsibilities. Of course, rights and responsibilities go hand-in-hand.

Personal Care Attendants have the right to:

- ◆ **Be treated with respect and dignity.**
- ◆ **Express reasonable concerns regarding working conditions.**
- ◆ **Express their feelings about work expectations.**
- ◆ **Be paid for services rendered.**

Personal care attendants have the responsibility to:

- ◆ **Perform all agreed-upon duties in a thorough and caring manner.**
- ◆ **Communicate clearly and honestly about feelings, needs, and routines.**
- ◆ **Treat all information learned about the employer in a confidential manner.**
- ◆ **Be dependable in the work relationship.**

Orientation

Employers have the right to:

- ◆ **Have time by themselves.**
- ◆ **Make their own decisions.**
- ◆ **Experience success and failure.**
- ◆ **Have their basic needs met.**
- ◆ **Pursue their own interests.**
- ◆ **Determine their own lifestyle and house rules.**

Employers have the responsibility to:

- ◆ **Respect their PCA's privacy.**
- ◆ **Respect their PCA's needs.**
- ◆ **Communicate clearly and honestly about feelings, needs, expectations, routines, and schedules.**
- ◆ **Be dependable in the work relationship.**

Orientation

Integrity on the Job

Respecting other people while remaining true to yourself and following your own moral path requires integrity.



What is integrity?

- ◆ Integrity is being honest with yourself and others.
- ◆ Integrity is doing the right thing even when it is hard or painful.

Why is integrity especially important for a personal care attendant?

- ◆ Employers stress integrity as one of the most important characteristics for a personal attendant.
- ◆ When you work in your employer's home, you may have access to your employer's money, personal possessions, and private information; therefore, integrity is essential.

What are some behaviors that show integrity?

- ◆ Following through by doing what you say you'll do
- ◆ Telling the truth
- ◆ Safeguard your employer's property
- ◆ Admitting your mistakes
- ◆ Treating other people with respect

Orientation

Strategies for Managing Stress

As a PCA, you will be very involved in taking care of another person, and this can be very stressful. However, you can learn to manage stress.



Healthy Approaches to Stress Management

- ◆ Exercise regularly and eat a well balanced diet
- ◆ Visit an old friend
- ◆ Participate in a hobby
- ◆ Take a hot bubble bath
- ◆ Accept a friend's invitation
- ◆ Rent and watch a funny movie
- ◆ Slow down
- ◆ Keep a journal
- ◆ Take a nap
- ◆ Read a favorite magazine
- ◆ Take a class to learn something new
- ◆ Play a game with someone
- ◆ Listen to a favorite piece of music
- ◆ Go out to eat at a favorite restaurant
- ◆ Learn to meditate or do yoga
- ◆ Laugh

Chapter Two

Training information

Your employer will be the one who trains you on your job duties. Be sure to ask questions along the way. This will reduce possible frustrations you or your employer may have about how the job will be done.

You will need to take this handbook home and read it before your employer starts training you. This will help you understand the information better and know what to expect in your training.

Day 1: Orientation

- ✓ Be sure to ask for a time sheet, so you will start getting paid while you are being trained.
- ✓ Make sure you fill out all other paper work required by IndependentChoices.
- ✓ Your employer will have a contract for you both to sign which states what your job duties and what is expected of you in your new position as a PCA. (Refer to the contract in this chapter.)
- ✓ Take time to ask any questions that you may have. This will let your new employer know that you want to have a good communication line between you. This way you can talk openly about the job duties and responsibilities.
- ✓ Be sure to ask any questions you may have about where things are around the house, so you will feel comfortable doing your job.
- ✓ Read your employee handbook completely. By doing so you will be prepared for each day of your training and it will allow you information that will help you do a good job as a PCA.
- ✓ Your employer will be covering Chapter 2 on day two of your training, so be sure you read this chapter before you go to work.

EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT

Employment Contract Between:

Employer _____

Please Print Name

Personal Care Attendant/Employee _____

Please Print Name

Work Schedule:

Fill in the time for each day employee will work

	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
am							
pm							

SALARY:

_____ per hour _____ per week _____ per month
 _____ cash _____ check _____ withholding tax

The following information will describe the things that the employer will allow the PCA to access in the household. Place an "X" in the agreed area.

Task	Yes	No
Room and board		
To do <u>personal</u> laundry		
To prepare food for <u>personal</u> consumption:		
Breakfast.....		
Lunch.....		
Supper.....		
Snacks.....		
To use the phone for <u>personal</u> calls:		
Local.....		
Long Distance.....		

The following is a list of Personal Property Items that the employer has agreed to allow the PCA use:

- 1. _____
(vehicle only as employer wants used)
- 2. _____
(T.V. or Radio)
- 3. _____
(Other)
- 4. _____
(Other)
- 5. _____
(Other)
- 6. _____
(Other)

ACCEPTABLE SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Swearing: _____ Yes _____ No Smoking: _____ Yes _____ No

Drinking: _____ Yes _____ No Drugs: _____ Yes _____ No

If personal items of value are damaged or broken, salary will be withheld until such items have been replaced.

EMPLOYER’S RESPONSIBILITIES: (Check appropriate items)

_____ Employer will not expect personal attendant to stay past the agreed-upon time.

_____ Employer will be ready for attendant to begin work upon PCA’s arrival.

_____ Employer will be responsible for finding an emergency back-up PCA.

_____ Employer will maintain records on PCA’s performance.

PCA’S RESPONSIBILITIES: (Check appropriate items)

_____ PCA will respect the confidentiality of the employer.

_____ PCA will complete the duties described in the “Needs Assessment” forms

_____ PCA will complete the duties described on the “Weekly Check-Off” sheets.

_____ PCA will be on time each day and will call if they are going to be late.

_____ PCA will give 24 hour notice that he/she will not be coming to work.

_____ PCA will perform all duties as outlined in the “Job Description”.

ABSENCES:

Both the employer and personal care attendant must give at least _____ (number) of days advance notice of an interruption to the work schedule. In case of emergency, the employer and PCA must notify each other as soon as possible.

TERMINATION:

_____Number of days absent will result in termination.

_____Number of days tardy will result in termination.

PCA will be reminded _____ (number of times) of unacceptable behavior before being terminated. If the PCA's behavior is endangering the employer's health or safety, the attendant will be terminated without notice.

RESIGNATION NOTICE:

PCA shall give _____ (number) of weeks notice to employer before quitting job.

Signature of PCA

Date

Signature of Employer

Date

T raining information

Day 2:

- ✓ **Be sure to sign in on your time sheet daily.**
- ✓ **Make sure you have read this employee handbook, so you are ready to continue with your training.**
- ✓ **Again feel free to ask any questions you may have as you go over the information.**
- ✓ **Review the things on communication in Chapter 3 and work hard to apply it to your job.**
- ✓ **Keeping the communication line open with your employer is one sure way to help with your job satisfaction.**
- ✓ **It usually takes a couple of weeks to get a good routine going in your new position as a PCA. Be flexible and patient when learning information and directions about the job.**
- ✓ **Be sure to pay attention to the rules of the house such as eating food or using the telephone. Refer to the employment contract you and your employer signed earlier.**
- ✓ **Remember this is the home of your employer and it is their personal space. There will be certain rules to follow, just like you may have rules in your home.**

Personal space is very personal, so be sure to respect this aspect of your job.

T raining information

Day 2: (continued)

- ✓ **Your employer will fill out a “Needs Assessment Form” for each area of daily living. This will help direct you on how much you will need to help them.**

NOTE:

Reviewing the “Needs Assessment Form” with your employer will be one of the most important parts of your training. Ask your employer to keep a copy of these forms handy for you to refer back to as you do your job.

How to use the “Needs Assessment Forms”:

- 1. There are 12 different “Needs Assessment Forms”. One should be filled out for each area of home care need.**
- 2. Next the assessment form will have a list of suggested tasks for your employer to choose from that they may need help with. They will make a check in the boxes of the ones they need help with.**

Example:

- Help with getting my clothes ready to put on.
- Help with getting dressed in the morning.
- Have to be turned from side to side to get pants on.
- After I am dressed and am sitting or lying down, check for wrinkles or tight areas in my clothes (can cause pressure sores).

T raining information

How to use the “Needs Assessment Forms” (cont.) :

3. The last part of the form will give your employer space to write out any additional need or explain in more detail any need that they checked off on the list.

Example:

List any other needs and/or give details about this task.

Everyone has their own way about how to clean and cook. Be sure you take the time to listen to your employer when he/she explains their way of doing these tasks.

DON'T take it for granted that you will know how your employer will like things done without them telling you directly.

T raining information

Day three:

- ✓ **Your employer will also fill out a “Job Duty Weekly Check-Off List”.**
- ✓ **The list will tell you which days of the week you should perform certain tasks.**
- ✓ **There will be a blank square on the form for each day. You will initial this space as you complete each task.**

How to use the “Job Duty Weekly Check-Off List”

- 1. With a pen or pencil your employer will darken in the days that they do not want the task performed.**
- 2. Leaving a blank space for you to initial as you complete the tasks assigned for that day of the week.**
- 3. One of these forms will be filled out and posted each week to help direct you with your job duties.**
- 4. Your employer will be able to look at the form and see if you have been able to complete the tasks assigned for each day.**

NOTE:

If it is difficult for you to complete the tasks assigned to you each day, then ask your employer to talk about adjusting the schedule.

Remember to use your communication skills to let them know when there is a problem, so you can both be up front about it. This will prevent things from building up between you.

T raining information

Day three: (continued)

How to use the “Job Duty Weekly Check-Off List” (continued)

As the example shows you, for each day the task should be done there is a blank spot for you to initial. This will show completion of the task.

NOTE:

If your employer forgets to fill out a “Job Duty Weekly Check-off List”, you should help remind them.

You could even sit down with them and ask them if there are any other items you could add to the list to help them feel more comfortable at home.

You may be surprised at how the “little things” that you do will make a huge difference in your employer’s life and enable them to continue living at home.

See the following page for a sample of how one of these forms will look like once it has been filled out by your employer.

Example of Job Duty Weekly Check-Off List

Task	Description	Time(s) Daily	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
Personal Care	Bathing	1		VN		YB		AH	VN
	Shampoo	1		VN		YB		AH	VN
	Dressing	0							
	Personal hygiene	1		VN		YB		AH	VN
	Oral care	2		VN		YB		AH	VN
	Bladder care	0							
	Bowel care	1		VN		YB		AH	VN
	Transfers/rotate	0							
	Help exercise	1		VN		YB		AH	VN
Housekeeping	Meal preparation	3		VN		YB		AH	VN
	Meal prep. clean-up	2		VN		YB		AH	
	Feeding assistance	0							
	Encourage fluids	0							
	Wash dishes/counters	2		VN		YB		AH	VN
	Laundry	1		VN				AH	
	Make bed	0							
	Change bedding	1		VN				AH	
	Dust	1				YB			VN
	Sweep/mop	1				YB			VN
	Vacuum	1		VN				AH	
	Take out trash	1				YB		AH	
	Clean bathroom	1		VN		YB			VN
Home Management	Grocery shopping	1		VN		YB		AH	
	Open mail	1		VN		YB		AH	
	Paying bills	1		VN				AH	
Transportation	Errands	<i>As needed</i>							
	Medical	<i>As needed</i>							
	Recreation	1		VN				AH	VN
	Employment	0							
Other									

T raining information

Day three: (continued)

- ✓ Another very important part of your job is knowing the proper emergency procedures. Make sure you ask about all the details when it comes to this part of your training.
- ✓ Look carefully at the “Emergency Check-Off List” that your employer will have posted.

Make sure your employer includes EMERGENCY actions in your training! Discuss routine emergencies such as first aid for cut and burns. Your employer should also include emergency information that relates to his or her disability.

Make sure you know:

- ❖ What do you do in case of a fire?
- ❖ What do you do in case of a medical emergency?
- ❖ What medicines are they allergic to?
- ❖ Where are your employer’s medical supplies located?
- ❖ Who do you contact in case of an emergency?
- ❖ Where is your employer’s home phone and the following emergency numbers located?:
 - ♠ Doctor/ Pharmacy
 - ♠ Ambulance service
 - ♠ Fire department
 - ♠ Close relatives or friends

T raining information

Day three: (continued)

- ✓ **Make sure you and your employer have an emergency evacuation plan in case of a fire or tornado. This is an area where you and your employer can work together.**
- ✓ **Allowing each other to make suggestions will make the plan easier for you both to remember in the case of an emergency. Refer to the “Emergency Action Plan” found in Chapter 5 of your employer’s Consumer-Directed training manual.**
- ✓ **After you and your employer make an emergency evacuation plan, set up times to run through the procedures. Make time to do some drills!**
- ✓ **Read Chapter 4 for your next day of training.**

Day four:

- ✓ **Your employer will go over the section on “secondary conditions” that apply to them. Pay close attention to your employer’s disability and make sure you know about the information that applies to their health condition.**
- ✓ **You have some information on different types of “secondary conditions” in Chapter 4 of this “employee handbook”.**
- ✓ **Your employer will have more information to share with you in their Consumer-Directed training manual. Be sure to ask for more information if you need it.**

Remember, secondary conditions can be controlled with proper guidance and attention.

T raining information

Day four: (continued)

- ✓ **As a PCA you will establish a daily nutrition and physical activity program. Your employer will help train you on their individual needs.**
- ✓ **It is important that you are aware of your employer’s nutritional needs. Your employer will have different types of recipes to discuss with you to include in their diet.**
- ✓ **Ask about the “5 a day” plan and recipe information found in their Consumer-Directed training manual.**
- ✓ **It is also important that your employer is involved in some sort of daily physical activity. See Chapter 7 of your employer’s Consumer-Directed training manual for important information you need to know before your employer begins any physical activity programs.**
- ✓ **Be sure your employer consults a doctor before they start any physical activity programs.**
- ✓ **See the following chart to understand where your employer may be with their level of physical activity. Again, be sure to learn about physical activity in Chapter Seven of your employer’s Consumer-Directed training manual.**

NOTE:

Be sure your employer consults a doctor before they start any physical activity programs.

T raining information

Day four: (continued)

The table below provides recommendations on how to increase your employer's physical activity based on their current activity level. Set down with your employer and see where they are and how they may challenge themselves.

If...	Then...
You do not currently engage in regular physical activity,	You should begin by incorporating a few minutes of physical activity into each day, gradually building up to 30 minutes or more of moderate-intensity activities.
You are now active, but at less than the recommended levels,	You should strive to adopt more consistent activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • moderate-intensity physical activity for 30 minutes or more on 5 or more days of the week, or • vigorous-intensity physical activity for 20 minutes or more on 3 or more days of the week.
You currently engage in moderate-intensity activities for at least 30 minutes on 5 or more days of the week,	You may achieve even greater health benefits by increasing the time spent or intensity of those activities.
You currently regularly engage in vigorous-intensity activities 20 minutes or more on 3 or more days of the week,	You should continue to do so.

Chapter Three

Communication skills

Communication is one of the most basic skills we learn in a lifetime. From the time we are infants into our old age, we communicate with others in a variety of ways.

As a personal care attendant, communication is extremely important. It is the way you will get to know your employer and his/her needs. You will also communicate your own needs and preferences.

Communication can be difficult, but we can learn to be better communicators.

How often have you heard these comments?

“You’re confusing me!”

“That doesn’t make any sense!”

“What are you talking about?”

“Just tell me in plain English!”

- One definition for communication is the “art of developing and attaining understanding between people.”
- Of course communication frequently involves talking, but listening and observing are also usually required.
- Even when we are quiet, we are communicating.

Now let us look at different types of communication skills that will help you communicate more clearly with your employer.

Communication

Listening

Hearing is the first step in listening, but listening is more complicated.

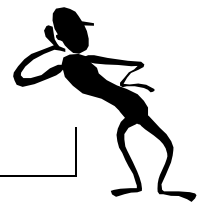
What's the difference between hearing and listening? The following story may help you understand the difference:

Imagine you are riding on a bus. You are tired and not really paying attention to things going on around you. You do hear some sounds like a horn honking, the bus doors opening and closing, and a child laughing, but it doesn't really sink in. This is hearing.

Suddenly, you notice two people you know sitting in the seat behind you. They are enjoying a lively conversation, and you quickly become curious about what they are talking about. You concentrate trying to overhear their conversation. Now, you are listening!

As the PCA, you will want your employer to listen to you; but you will also need to be a good listener.

Learning to listen well requires practice. Practice the following good listening techniques in order to become a better listener.



Communication

Good listening techniques

- 1. Focus on the speaker, giving him/her your full attention.**
- 2. Pay attention to nonverbal communication (discussed later in this section on page 5).**
- 3. Ask questions to clarify**
- 4. Be patient and avoid interrupting the speaker.**
- 5. Participate as you listen by nodding in agreement, asking questions, and repeating key ideas.**

Communication

Good listening techniques: Asking questions

You and your employer will need to ask questions in order to obtain information. There are two types of questions: close-ended questions and open-ended questions.

Close-ended questions:

- **can be answered with a yes or no or a single word.**
- **can be used when information is needed immediately.**
- **can be used when a simple choice needs to be made.**

For example:

“Is the water too cold?”

“Do you want the salad or the slaw?”

“Is the brake on your chair locked?”

Open-ended questions:

- **must be answered using more than one word.**
- **are best used when clarification is needed.**
- **are best when feelings are important.**

For example:

“How do you like your new job?”

“What can I do to make you more comfortable?”

“Please explain to me how to operate your chair?”

You can use these five words to develop open-ended questions:

Who, What, When, Where and How

Communication

Nonverbal communication

Another important part of becoming a good communicator is understanding nonverbal communication (also called body language).

You should be aware of your own body language. You should also be aware of other people's (especially your employer's) nonverbal communication.

Even if you are quietly sitting across from another person you are communicating by your facial expressions (or lack of them), your body movements, and even the clothes you are wearing.

Examples of Nonverbal Communication:

- A thumbs up sign completing a race
- A middle aged man wearing several earrings and a pony tail
- Several wide yawns while someone else is speaking
- Watering eyes and a quivering bottom lip



Practice by reading the following examples of nonverbal communication and think about what they mean to you.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| ◆ Extending a hand a handshake | ◆ Frequent yawning |
| ◆ Frequent eye contact | ◆ Smiling |
| ◆ Tapping the foot | ◆ Slumped shoulders |



Nonverbal communication can easily be misinterpreted. Make sure you take the time to understand the correct interpretation of your employer's body language. Also make sure you are being clear about your own body language.

Communication

M

anaging emotions

Another important aspect of good communication is managing your emotional responses.

When a conflict occurs in any relationship, it is a good idea to take the time to ask oneself what may be contributing to the situation.

For example:

- ◆ Could some of my own past experiences be contributing to my bad feelings about what may have been said or done?
- ◆ Could you or your employer be feeling bad and reacting outwardly?
- ◆ What do I need in order to let go of the angry/hurt/frightened feeling?
- ◆ Whose problem is this, really? How much is mine? How much is theirs?

Four goals to help with communicating your emotions properly:

1. Try to avoid the desire to blame or punish.
2. Take a time out to help prevent over reacting or becoming defensively aggressive.
3. Aim to avoid repeating or revisiting the same situations.
4. Aim to improve the relationship and increase communication.

Communication

Conflict management

Interpersonal conflict is to be expected in any relationship. Conflict can lead to change and improvement, as well as increased respect and trust.

Not talking about a problem can make it worse.

The situation can continue, resentment can build, and you can overreact at an inappropriate time and place.

Use the “Discussion Tips” as a guide to discussing interpersonal conflicts with your employer.

Discussion Tips

1. Examine and try to understand your own feelings before approaching your employer. For example, if you feel angry, think about where this feeling is coming from.
2. Be clear about what you hope to accomplish through a discussion. For example, do you want to problem solve, express feelings, make a request, etc.?
3. Choose an appropriate time and place for the discussion. For example, you might ask for time to talk close to the end of a work shift when you have completed all your tasks, so that you can sit down and talk.
4. Open the discussion with a positive statement. For example, if you want to discuss an issue relating to requesting time off, you might begin the discussion by saying, “I really appreciate this job and I enjoy working for you.”

Communication

Assertive Communication

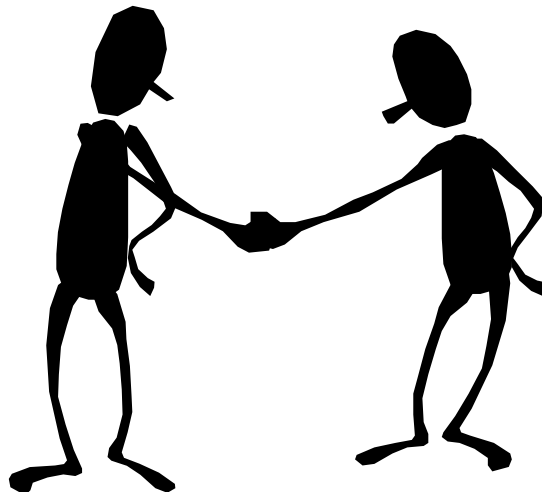
Using assertive communicating to solve problems:

*Kind words are the bright flowers
of earthly existence. . .*

Arthur Helps

Being assertive in communicating means being positive and thoughtful.

- ◆ **Problems can be seen as roadblocks or they can be seen as challenges. However, we can be certain that we will have problems as we enter into relationships with other people.**
- ◆ **Using strategies that enhance communication will also help you solve problems.**



Communication

Assertive Communication

Assertive Communication Strategies:

Think, act, and speak positively whenever possible.

For example:

Your employer may not want to know about your lost keys, your dog's flea problem, or your disrespectful teenager.

Use "I" statements when expressing feelings.

For example:

Say, "I need more instruction on how you want me to transfer you into the chair." Don't say, "You haven't given me enough information on how to transfer you."

Share your feelings. If your employer treats you in a disrespectful manner or talks to you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable take the time to share your feeling about the discomfort you feel.

Sharing your feelings as incidents arise between you and your employer will help to prevent emotional build up.

For example:

If you are feeling uncomfortable about a situation, you may say "I will try to turn you over gently, but I'm afraid I might hurt you."

Accept feedback.

When your employer makes suggestions or makes requests, listen to his/her point of view. When your employer has a valid criticism, acknowledge it.

For example:

If your employer says, "I prefer a small amount of mustard on my sandwich," you can respond with, "I will try to remember to put only a small amount of mustard on your sandwich next time."

Communication

Assertive Communication

Speak to the other person as an adult.

Do not use a parental tone or act as if you know what is best for your employer. You may express an opinion (Use an “I” statement); however, remember you are speaking to your employer.

Be able to give and receive compliments.

Some people are uncomfortable with compliments, but giving sincere compliments is an excellent way of expressing feelings and establishing rapport.

For example:

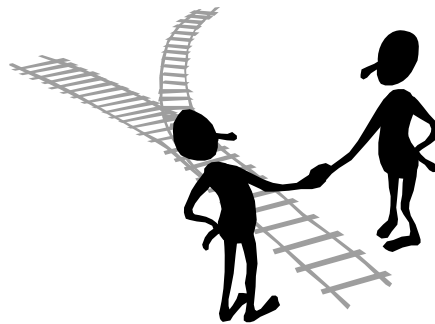
“I feel so comfortable in your home. It just feels cozy to me.”

Be open and honest in your communication.

Basic honesty is very important to relationships and to communication. Sometimes you need to discuss negative feelings in order to solve problems. Remember to use “I” statements.

For example:

“I feel like I’m not appreciated when you get angry and stop talking to me. What can I do to improve the situation?”



Communication

Practicing assertive communication strategies

Read the following situations and respond with an assertive communication strategy.

1. Assume your employer asks you at the end of the workday to stay an hour late, but you can't change your plans. *Write an "I" statement expressing your feelings.*

2. Assume your employer criticizes the way you made out a shopping list saying, "The next time you make out a shopping list, you must do a better job of organizing things." *Write a response showing that you can accept feedback.*

3. Assume you are unhappy because your employer sometimes becomes impatient with you when you ask questions related to your work. *Write a response showing that you can be open and honest in your communication.*

Communication

On the job

Mobility

Communication is especially important when helping a person with disabilities communicate to you how much need he or she may have in the area of mobility.



For example:

A person may walk with the aid of a walker or use a wheelchair. As the PCA, you will need to ask the right questions and listen closely to the answers to get a clear picture of how much you will need to help.

Adjusting and Repositioning to Make Your Employer More Comfortable

Sometimes people with disabilities need help adjusting seat cushions, pillows, or clothing. In addition, they may need assistance to reposition themselves while lying in bed or sitting in a chair.

Repositioning someone requires patience, gentleness, and good communication skills. A good rule of thumb is to imagine yourself in your employer's position and do what you would want done for you while receiving direction from your employer.

Follow these steps as you try to help make your employer more comfortable:

- Step one- Observe the problem
- Step two- Learn more about the problem
- Step three- Respond to the problem
- Step four- Evaluate your response

Step 1: Observe the problem

Listen:

Sometimes an employer may be able to say, "I'd like my head a little higher. Would you put a pillow under my neck?" Observation of the problem is fairly easy in this case.

Communication

On the job

Look for body language:

Sometimes an employer will not be able to tell you the problem.

For example:

If your employer has had a spinal cord injury, you will need to be very observant for signs of autonomic dysreflexia (a serious reaction to pain or pressure in the body). Examples include sweating, shaking, frowning, etc.

Step 2: Learn more about the problem

Ask close-ended questions:

Remember, close-ended questions are especially helpful when information is needed right away.

For example:

If your employer is attempting to sit up and begins to groan, you could ask, “Do you want to lie back down?” Close-ended questions are also useful when a person cannot speak.

Ask open-ended questions:

Remember, open-ended questions are especially helpful when something needs more explaining and feelings are important.

For example:

Your employer might say, “Please, pull me up in my chair.” You could respond with an open-ended question like, “After I pull you up, where do you want your hips to be?”

Communication

On the job

Step 3: Respond to the problem

Follow directions:

Remember, you do not know how your employer feels. You may like two pillows under your head when you are sleeping, but another person may like only one.

Be gentle and patient:

Take your time, and be sensitive to your employer's feelings.

Communicate:

Talk to your employer while you are adjusting or repositioning. You and your employer will be more comfortable when communication is open and honest.

Step 4: Evaluate your response

Observe your results:

Look to see if you have improved the situation. Notice your employer's nonverbal cues.

Ask for feedback:

In order to determine if your response to the problem was effective, you may need to ask, "How do you feel now that I have pulled you up?"

By asking for feedback you get information about how to do a better job, as well as you are communicating that you care.

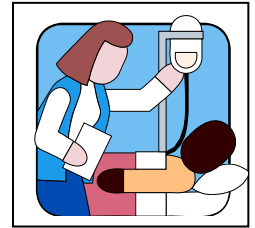
Communication

On the job

Proper Transfer Methods

A **transfer** is helping a person move from one place to another, like from the bed to a wheelchair, from a wheelchair to a toilet, or from a wheelchair to a lounge chair.

Your employer will teach you how to transfer the way he/she is most comfortable. Once again, communication skills are very important.



General Guidelines for Transferring	
1.	Be sure to discuss the transfer before doing the transfer. You will want to know how much weight your employer can bear, where he/she prefers to be held, if a 1-2-3 count is helpful, etc.
2.	Before starting, make sure everyone and everything is ready. For example, if you are transferring your employer to the bed, you'll want to be sure the bed has been turned down. If you are using a wheelchair, be sure the wheels are locked.
3.	Make the transfer as smoothly and as quickly as possible. Sometimes transfers are painful for people with disabilities; however, most people would choose a smooth, gentle transfer over a fast, uncomfortable one.
4.	Know your limits as a PCA. Do not try to do more than you can.
5.	Always use proper body mechanics. (See the next page in this chapter.)
6.	After the transfer, discuss what went well and what might need changing. Remember, be honest and open in your communication. By doing so, you will have less conflict and <i>better job satisfaction</i>.

Communication

On the job

Proper Body Mechanics

Using proper body mechanics means using lifting and moving techniques that will reduce stress and strain on your body. Proper body mechanics are necessary when transferring a person from one place to another.

Techniques for Proper Body Mechanics	
1.	Plan the job before starting.
2.	Never try to lift beyond your strength – get help.
3.	Maintain a broad base of support. Keep feet apart, one foot slightly ahead of the other.
4.	Keep the back straight, with knees and hips flexed; keep your heels on the floor.
5.	Get a firm grip (fingers under the load whenever possible) with your body as close to the load as possible.
6.	Use the large muscles of the legs to lift – not the small muscles of the back.
7.	Never bend from the waist; instead bend the knees.
8.	Keep your head up and your back slightly arched while lifting.
9.	Lift smoothly, letting your shifting weight do the lifting; if possible, avoid jerking.
10.	Pivot with your feet or shift your feet to turn and set the load down.
11.	Shift your weight backward slightly and bend your knees to set the object down.

Chapter Four

Secondary Conditions

In Chapter 4 you will learn about secondary conditions and how you can help your employer control or eliminate these secondary health problems.

People with disabilities often develop additional medical problems that are causally related to their disability. These conditions may cause the person more pain and suffering than their disability.

We say casually related because the medical problem would not occur if they didn't have a disability. These medical concerns are called "secondary conditions".

Your handbook will give you basic information on what signs to look for on each secondary condition. If you recognize a symptom of a secondary condition, discuss what actions to take immediately with your employer.

It is up to your employer to give you specific information on secondary conditions.

Be sure to ask your employer to go over any specific areas of secondary conditions that may be a concern to their health. This will give you the knowledge you will need to help control and prevent the secondary condition.

In this section we will discuss the characteristics of each of the following secondary conditions:

Pressure Sores/Ulcers	Fatigue
Chronic Pain	Spasms/Contractures
Migraines	Respiratory Problems
Stress & Anxiety	Skin Problems
Urinary Tract Infections	Depression
Nutrition/Obesity	Bowel Dysfunction
Dental Disease	Medication Side Effects

Secondary Conditions

As a PCA, you will have the most hands on and constant contact with your employer. If you are trained to understand what secondary conditions are and some good methods of prevention or treatment, then you will be your employer's best defense for not getting any.

The information found in your employer's training manual (chapter 6) is not there to teach you and your employer how to conduct the treatment. However, the section on prevention can be good training for you to help reduce the chances of your employer getting secondary conditions.

Helping your Employer with Personal Care

Some people with disabilities need help with personal care. Dressing, bathing or showering, managing bladder and bowel routines, and eating are specific tasks included in personal care. While your employer will teach you how to perform the personal care tasks required, communication and sensitivity are critically important.

Understand that personal care is personal.

- ◆ **Be aware that these tasks require a level of intimacy and that you may be uncomfortable at times. Pay attention to your feelings and communicate with your employer about the situation.**

Respect your employer's privacy.

- ◆ **A person with a disability needs privacy just like a person without a disability. Do not repeat what you see or hear in your employer's home. Be sensitive to private conversations, personal belongings, etc. If you are unsure about something, ask.**

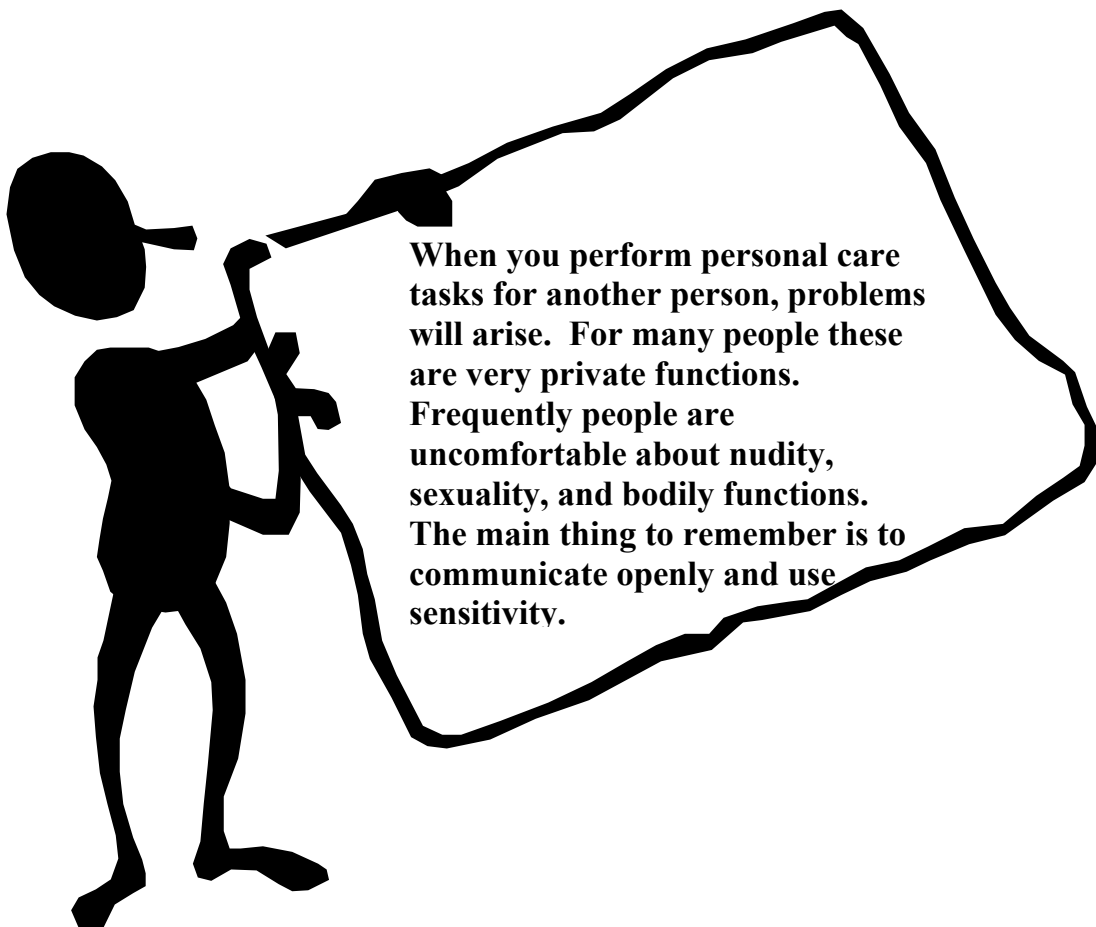
Secondary Conditions

Maximize your employer's independence.

- ◆ Remember, your job as a PCA is to help out in areas that your employer asks you. You should allow your employer to do as much as possible for him/herself. Take your cue from your employer.

Show your employer that you want to learn how to do things his/her way.

- ◆ Just as you have your own way of washing your hair, brushing your teeth, or eating your lunch; your employer has his/her own way of doing these things. Work to demonstrate to your employer that you are eager and willing to learn his/her way. When in doubt, ask!



When you perform personal care tasks for another person, problems will arise. For many people these are very private functions. Frequently people are uncomfortable about nudity, sexuality, and bodily functions. The main thing to remember is to communicate openly and use sensitivity.

Secondary Conditions

Pressure Sores/Ulcers

A pressure sore/ulcer (popularly called a bedsore) develops due to poor blood supply to the area of the body.

When the pressure or force applied to the skin is greater than the blood vessels can take, it will cause the skin to go without oxygen and other nutrients and the skin begins to die.

- ◆ Pressure can occur due to sitting or lying in one place for too long. Damaged skin can also occur when clothing is worn too tightly.
- ◆ The sore can grow throughout all layers of skin and muscle, all the way to the bone.
- ◆ Dragging part of the body across bed sheets, a wheelchair tire, shower chair or commode seat when transferring can damage skin as well.
- ◆ Not eating the right foods or drinking enough water.

Prevention:

- ◆ Repositioning the body often to prevent circulation problems to any one part.
- ◆ Gentle massage of the area stimulates circulation to the areas most likely to be affected.
- ◆ If area has already reddened do not massage, because massage encourages tissue breakdown. Seek medical treatment immediately!
- ◆ Cleansing, especially to remove sweat, urine, and feces, helps prevent chemical breakdown of the skin and aids in the removal of bacteria.

Treatment:

- ◆ **Consult your doctor**

Secondary Conditions

Pressure Sores/Ulcers

Depending upon your employer's disability, you may need to observe his/her skin in order to prevent pressure sores. Remember these important points:

- ◆ A pressure sore occurs when there is too much pressure on the skin and the blood supply is cut off. This causes the skin to die and a sore to form.
- ◆ Pressure sores take a long time to heal and can cause serious medical problems.
- ◆ The best policy with pressure sores is prevention.
- ◆ If you see signs of a pressure sore, your employer should stay off of that area and a doctor should be called.

Ways to Prevent Pressure Sores

1. Change position frequently.
2. Use pillows and special mattresses as needed.
3. Inspect the skin daily and observe these areas closely:
 - Where pressure sores have been before
 - Over bony areas
 - In the groin area
 - On the feet, including heels and between the toes
 - Under splints and braces



Secondary Conditions

Bowel Dysfunction

The most common gastrointestinal problem reported in people with disabilities is altered bowel elimination - too much and too little can be a problem and make any condition worse.

Characteristics:

- ◆ **Feeling gassy or bloated**
- ◆ **Problems with bowel movement (either not having enough or having too many)**
- ◆ **Pain associated with hemorrhoids**
- ◆ **Rectal bleeding**
- ◆ **Problems with voluntary or involuntary contractions**

Prevention:

- ◆ **Daily physical exercise, moving around will help with digestion**
- ◆ **Avoid eating gas forming foods (brussel sprouts, peas, spinach, corn, cabbage, broccoli, radishes, string beans, dried beans, mushrooms, cucumbers, onion)**
- ◆ **Avoid drinking gas forming beverages (beer and carbonated drinks)**
- ◆ **Eat high fiber foods (bran - Read labels carefully on cereal boxes, vegetables, fruits and whole wheat breads.)**
- ◆ **See your doctor for medical care if problem persist**

Treatment

- ◆ **See a doctor**

Make sure that bowel movement is monitored daily, so if bowel movement isn't happening it will be recognized and treatment can begin.

Secondary Conditions

Bowel Dysfunction

Bowel Management

Sometimes your employer may need help with their bowel movements. A person may not know when a bowel movement is needed or may not be able to control when he/she has a bowel movement. Your employer may ask you to help him/her follow a routine or bowel program. He/she will teach you how to best assist with bowel management by using the “Needs Assessment Form”.

The acronym SELF will help you remember good habits to keep the bowels working well.

S is for schedule

- ◆ A bowel routine might involve using a suppository several times a week to make the bowels move or simply reminding your employer to use the toilet after dinner every day. Establishing and adhering to a schedule are very important.

E is for exercise

- ◆ Exercise helps the bowels work more regularly and efficiently. You will want to discuss exercise with your employer and follow his/her instructions.

L is for liquids

- ◆ Your employer may drink 6 to 8 glasses of liquids each day to help avoid constipation and help bowel movements be more comfortable.

F is for fiber

- ◆ Foods with fiber include fruits, vegetables and grains. Fiber helps the bowels work more regularly and efficiently. Your employer may want your help in planning meals which include healthy amounts of fiber.

Secondary Conditions

Chronic Pain

Chronic pain is long-term pain that may be mild, moderate, or severe. Chronic pain is defined as pain that lasts longer than three months. It may be caused by a physical illness or it may not be known what is causing the pain.

Treatment:

- ◆ **See a doctor who has experience in treating people with chronic pain or go to a pain management clinic.**
- ◆ **Use some relaxation techniques to reduce stress, such as visualization/meditation or exercise. (See chapter 1 on Managing Stress).**
- ◆ **Using physical therapy to relieve pain and improve movement and function or use complementary therapies (such as acupuncture) to reduce pain.**
- ◆ **Injection therapy (injections of certain medications can sometimes reduce pain and inflammation).**
- ◆ **Exercise regularly. Many studies show that exercise significantly reduces pain. Aerobic exercise, like swimming, stationary cycling, and walking, promotes good health. Water exercise may be especially helpful in reducing pain. When beginning an exercise program, try frequent short periods of exercise (5 to 6 minutes at a time) rather than long ones (20 minutes or more). If your joints are stiff, try taking a warm bath or shower beforehand to loosen up. Also, try to do some stretching exercises each day.**
- ◆ **Taking medications to relieve pain**

Secondary Conditions

Dental Disease

Cavities and periodontal disease are the most common forms of dental disease. Both are caused by bacteria in the mouth, which attach to the tooth, and form a sticky mass called bacterial plaque (the sticky, colorless film that constantly forms on your teeth).

Characteristics of tooth or gum problems:

- ◆ **Dark spot or pit that can be seen on tooth surface.**
- ◆ **Noticeable shadows between teeth or on surface of the tooth.**
- ◆ **Holes and weak spots.**
- ◆ **Persistent sore, swollen, red, or bleeding gums.**
- ◆ **Spaces between the teeth and gums.**
- ◆ **Tooth pain or sensitivity.**
- ◆ **Bad Breath.**

Prevention of dental disease:

A brushing and flossing routine, along with early and regular dental examinations and treatment will enhance good dental health. The development of mechanical toothbrushes, modification of toothbrush handles/grips, oral antimicrobial agents and fluorides, have all enhanced home care results.

The active participation of the caregiver and individual assisted will go a long way toward achieving and maintaining good oral health. Good oral health is an important part of total health. There is strong evidence that most dental disease can be prevented.

Treatment:

- ◆ **See a dentist.**

Secondary Conditions

Depression

Depression is not just "feeling blue" or being "down in the dumps." It is more than being sad or feeling grief after a loss. Depression is a medical disorder (just like diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease are medical disorders) that affects your thoughts, feelings, physical health, and behaviors.

Certain life conditions (such as extreme stress or grief) may bring on depression or stop you from recovering fully. In some people, depression occurs even when life is going well or after the stressful event has ended. Depression is not the fault of a person. It is not a weakness. It is a medical illness. Depression is treatable.

Characteristics:

- ◆ Loss of interest in things one use to enjoy and feeling sad, blue, or hopeless.
- ◆ Loss of energy or feeling tired all the time or restless and unable to sit still - anxiety.
- ◆ Increase or decrease in appetite or weight.
- ◆ Thoughts of death or suicide.
- ◆ Problems concentrating, thinking, remembering, or making decisions.
- ◆ Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much.

Prevention:

- ◆ Healthy diet and exercise.
- ◆ Get plenty of sleep.
- ◆ Know your triggers or what causes you to feel down.
- ◆ Get out and be around people.

Treatment:

- ◆ See a doctor for counseling or antidepressant medication.

Secondary Conditions

Migraines

A migraine is a type of headache that usually happens in episodes or "attacks." Attacks may last anywhere from 4 hours to as long as 72 hours.

Characteristics:

- ◆ Mild to severe throbbing/pounding pain
- ◆ Pain (on one or both sides of the head)
- ◆ Pain made worse with activity
- ◆ Nausea (upset stomach) or vomiting (throwing up)
- ◆ Pain may last from 4 hours to 72 hours

Triggers:

- ◆ Stress
- ◆ Glaring or flickering lights
- ◆ Changes in the weather
- ◆ Certain foods (yogurt, nuts, lima beans, aged cheese, alcohol, chocolate, onions, figs, liver, caffeine, [monosodium glutamate](#) (MSG), smoked or pickled fish/meat, [nitrate/nitrite](#)-preserved foods (hot dogs, pepperoni, salami)).

Prevention:

- ◆ If prescribed medication, keep it with you at all times and take it exactly as directed.
- ◆ Eat and sleep regularly.
- ◆ Eat a healthy diet and get enough exercise and try to lower stress (relax).
- ◆ Don't smoke.

Treatment:

- ◆ See a doctor.

Secondary Conditions

Nutrition/Obesity

Concerns about eating behaviors and patterns have grown in recent years due to increasing evidence that diets can have profound and long-term effects on health.

Until recently, a person was thought to be obese if he or she weighed at least 20% more than his or her ideal weight. This is no longer commonly used by doctors, but is still used by insurance companies.

The Body Mass Index (BMI) can be calculated by:
(Weight in Pounds X 700)
divided by
(Height in inches squared)

Desirable BMI 's are 19.1 to 27.3 for women and 20.7 to 27.8 for men. People who have BMI's of 30 or higher are obese.

Prevention:

- ◆ Pay attention to what foods you are eating.
- ◆ Cut back on fast foods and junk food.
- ◆ Try to eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day.
- ◆ Eat a moderate amount of dairy products – around 2 to 3 servings per day.
- ◆ Eat moderate amounts of meat and fish – around 2 servings a day.
- ◆ Be physically active (daily).

Treatment:

- ◆ Talk to your doctor.
- ◆ Watch the amount and type of foods eaten daily.

Secondary Conditions

Respiratory Problems

Respiratory problems can include the upper or lower respiratory system. The upper respiratory system includes the nose, ears, sinuses, and throat.

Characteristics of a respiratory infection:

- ◆ A runny or stuffy nose. This may lead to blockage of the nasal passages, causing it hard to breathe through the mouth.
- ◆ Coughing, especially when lying down
- ◆ Fever that occurs suddenly and may reach 103°F (39.44°C) to 105°F (40.56°C)

Prevention:

- ◆ Get immunized (get a flu shot each autumn if over age 65 or in a high-risk group).
- ◆ Wash hands often.
- ◆ Keep hands away from eyes, nose and mouth. These are the places where viruses are most likely to enter the body.
- ◆ If person smokes, quitting will help.
- ◆ Eat a healthy diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables, get regular exercise, and drink plenty of fluids to keep up resistance.

Treatment:

- ◆ Drink extra fluids. Hot fluids may help relieve congestion.
- ◆ Get extra rest to fight the infection.
- ◆ For a sore throat, gargle with salt water.
- ◆ Keep the room temperature comfortable. A hot, dry environment will increase nasal congestion.
- ◆ See a doctor.

Secondary Conditions

Spasm/Contractures

A spasm is defined as a sudden involuntary contraction of a muscle or group of muscles. Spasms usually occur when the nerves supplying muscles are irritated, and are commonly accompanied by pain.

Characteristics:

- ◆ Spasms may be repetitive twitching motions, some of which are called tics.
- ◆ In a convulsive spasm the entire body is jerked by sudden violent movements that may involve almost all the muscles. These spasms may last from a fraction of a second to several seconds, or even minutes. Severe tonic spasms can be fatal if not treated promptly.

Things that can make it worse:

- ◆ Presence of pressure sores, bowel impaction, urinary tract infections or any irritant below the level of injury

Things that can make it better:

- ◆ Take measures to avoid urinary tract infections, bowel impaction, or ingrown toenails.
- ◆ Do full range of motion exercises to joints regularly.
- ◆ Apply of hot or cold packs.
- ◆ Lay in a prone position when in bed to counteract hip flexion contractures.
- ◆ Medical or surgical management by a physician.

Treatment:

- ◆ The treatment varies with the cause.
- ◆ Notify doctor when you have had a spasm and he or she should monitor all medications for spasms.

Secondary Conditions

Skin Problems

Healthy skin provides a barrier between the inside of the body and the outside environment. A rash indicates an abnormal change in the skin.

Characteristics:

- ◆ **Redness**
- ◆ **Swollen**
- ◆ **Itchy**
- ◆ **Sensitive to touch**
- ◆ **Pain**
- ◆ **Warmer to the touch than other unaffected areas**

Prevention:

- ◆ **Avoid bathing too frequently.**
- ◆ **Avoid contact with allergens.**
- ◆ **Avoid infectious diseases.**
- ◆ **Avoid scratching the skin or rubbing it vigorously with towels.**
- ◆ **Avoid exposure to chemicals that may irritate the skin, such as rubbing alcohol, soaps, detergents, or solvents.**

Treatment:

- ◆ **Try an oatmeal bath to help relieve itching.**
- ◆ **Dress in cotton clothing.**
- ◆ **Use as little soap as possible, and use gentle soaps (such as Basis, Cetaphil, Dove, or Oil of Olay). Do not use deodorant soaps.**
- ◆ **Avoid dry skin, which may worsen itching caused by a rash.**
- ◆ **See a doctor.**

Secondary Conditions

Stress & Anxiety

Stress is defined as a non-specific response of the body to any demand placed on a person to change, adapt or modify their existing sense of balance in life.

Anxiety is an emotional and physical reaction to stressful situations. Even though the physical reaction is related to stress it is real and should be treated as any other medical condition.

Anxiety attacks can resemble a heart attack or high blood pressure and should be treated with the same seriousness and sense of emergency.

Prevention for Stress & Anxiety:

- ◆ **Learn your employer's signs (people exhibit stress and anxiety in different ways).**
- ◆ **Learn your employer's limitations and ask for support before you get to your breaking point.**
- ◆ **Exercise and get plenty of sleep.**
- ◆ **Have your employer take time for themselves each day.**
- ◆ **Identify and use personal and community supports (family, friends, church, civic groups, volunteer work).**

Treatment:

- ◆ **See a doctor and/or counselor (talk about your stress and anxiety).**
- ◆ **Give your employer the opportunity to get out and be around others.**
- ◆ **Relaxation techniques (meditation, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and/or self directed guided imagery/visualization).**

Secondary Conditions

Urinary Tract/Bladder Infection

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are usually caused by bacteria. Bladder infections are the most common UTI, and primarily affect women.

If not treated, urinary tract infections (UTIs) may cause serious, possibly life-threatening problems and permanent damage to the urinary tract.

Characteristics:

- ◆ **Pain/burning upon urination or urge to urinate frequently**
- ◆ **Dribbling (inability to control urine release)**
- ◆ **Reddish or pinkish urine**
- ◆ **Foul-smelling and/or cloudy urine**
- ◆ **Pain in the back just below the rib cage, on one side of the body**
- ◆ **Fever and chills**
- ◆ **Nausea and vomiting**

Prevention:

- ◆ **Drink plenty of liquids, including cranberry or blueberry juice.**
- ◆ **Always wipe from front to back after using the bathroom.**
- ◆ **Change sanitary napkins often.**
- ◆ **Take showers instead of tub baths.**
- ◆ **Keep the tip of the penis clean.**

Treatment:

- ◆ **See a doctor.**
- ◆ **Uncomplicated urinary tract infections (UTIs) are treated with antibiotics and home treatment, which includes drinking lots of fluids.**

Secondary Conditions

Urinary Tract/Bladder Infection

Bladder Management

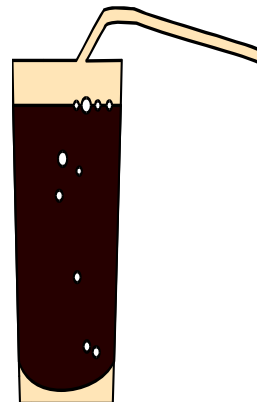
Sometimes your employer may need help urinating. They may simply need to have help getting on the toilet at certain times, or they may experience incontinence (the inability to hold urine.)

Your employer will teach you how to best help him/her (by going over there “Needs Assessment Form”), but listed below are some important questions you will want to discuss with your employer.

- ◆ If the toilet is used, how much help is needed to get on or off the toilet?
- ◆ Are incontinence pads or underpads being used?
- ◆ Is a catheter being used? (A catheter is a small tube that collects the urine.) What special care is required?

In addition, your employer should engage in the following habits which help keep his/her bladder healthy.

- ◆ Drink at least six glasses of liquids each day.
- ◆ Keep clean to prevent infection.
- ◆ Wipe from front to back (women) to prevent bacteria from the bowel from getting into the urinary tract.
- ◆ Drink extra liquids if the urine is dark, cloudy, or foul smelling.
- ◆ Call the doctor if chills, fever, or blood in the urine is present.



Secondary Conditions

Medication Side Effects

Some prescription medications can cause physical side effects that impact comfort levels. It's important to communicate with your employer any concerns you're having about their medications immediately! Your employer's healthcare professionals can help manage their treatment plan to minimize or avoid side effects.

To better understand your medications:

- ◆ **Have your employer tell you about what the doctor and pharmacist have said about the frequency and severity of any possible side effects of a new medication and what to do if they occur.**
- ◆ **If your employer experiences a new symptom, contact their doctor immediately.**
- ◆ **Read all the information supplied by the pharmacist and doctor.**

Between 30% and 50% of all patients fail to follow their prescribed medication therapy!

This contributes to:

- ◆ **Nearly 10% of all hospital admissions**
- ◆ **Nearly 25% of all nursing home admissions**

Chapter Five
Homecare training

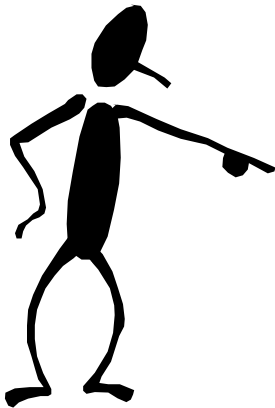
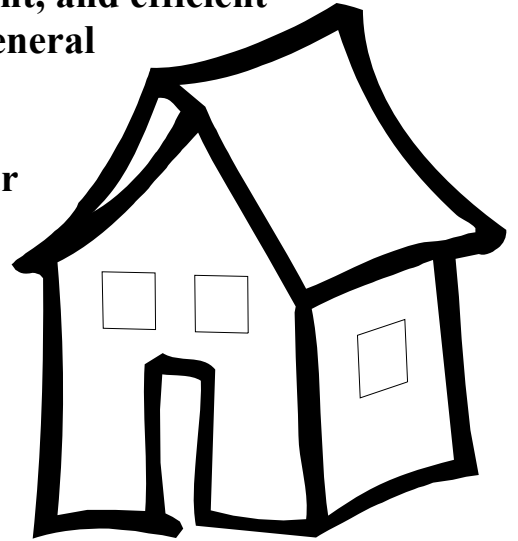
Things to know as a PCA

Managing a Safe, Clean, and Efficient Environment

Managing and maintaining a safe, clean, pleasant, and efficient household environment can contribute to the general well being of your employer.

Performing routine household tasks may appear to require little more than common sense. However, there are certain household management skills that can make your tasks more efficient and pleasant for both you and your employer.

Safety and cleanliness are two major components of a well-managed household.



It is important to *ask your employer* about his/her particular household preferences and practices before making changes to any household routines!

Homecare training

Things to know as a PCA

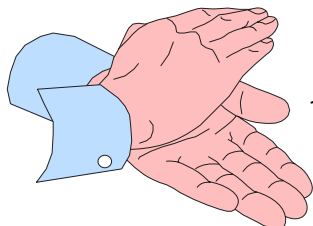
Maintaining a Clean and Pleasant Environment

As a personal care attendant, it is possible that many of your employer's requests will involve some type of cleaning; e.g., cleaning up around the house, cleaning the laundry, cleaning up after meals, and so on.

The importance of a clean environment can not be over-emphasized! The cleaning process not only eliminates unsightly dust, dirt, and debris, but proper cleaning cuts down on the growth of molds, germs, and infections.

Question:

To eliminate contamination, what should be washed more often during the day than anything else in the household?



Answer:

Your Hands !

Homecare training

Things to know as a PCA

Hand Washing

Hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of germs which cause infection. Hand washing helps to prevent infection from the PCA to the employer and from the employer to the PCA.

When to wash your hands:

After using the bathroom

After handling soiled items such as linens, clothing, and garbage

Before and after meals and meal preparation

Before and after physical contact with your employer

After sneezing or coughing into your hand

After taking off gloves (if gloves are used)

How to wash your hands:

- 1. Use plenty of soap (antibacterial, if possible).**
- 2. Lather well by rubbing your hands together.**
- 3. Wash the entire hand and wrist area, including between your fingers and around and under the nails.**
- 4. Count to ten slowly (or sing the first verse of *Yankee Doodle*).**
- 5. Rinse well.**
- 6. Dry thoroughly with a paper towel.**

Homecare training

Things to know as a PCA

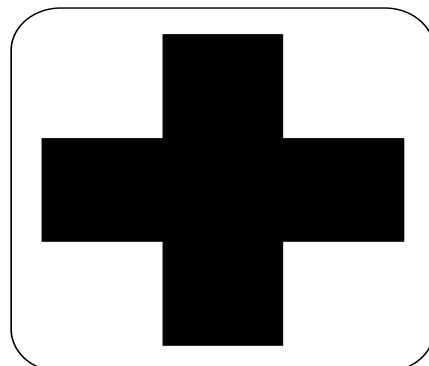
Universal Precautions

Universal precautions are practices that help protect against AIDS, hepatitis B and other infectious diseases. Universal precautions can help you avoid contact with blood and certain other body fluids.

Universal precautions must be followed with all people you come in contact with, since you can't be sure who is infected.

Universal precautions apply to body substances like:

- blood
- urine
- feces
- saliva
- sputum
- wound drainage
- tears
- sweat
- cerebrospinal fluid
- vaginal secretions
- semen
- anything wet that comes out of the body



Homecare training

Things to know as a PCA

Do's and Don'ts of Universal Precautions

1. **Do wash your hands with soap, running water, and friction prior to contact, immediately following contact, and after removing gloves. Wash hands immediately after contact with blood or any body fluids.**
2. **Do wear gloves when coming in contact with blood, body fluids containing visible blood, other body fluids, and when handling contaminated articles: lab specimens, dressings, linen, etc.**
3. **Do wear masks, gowns, and/or goggles in addition to gloves, to protect yourself during procedures that may involve splashing of blood and/or contaminated body fluids.**
4. **Do place used disposable syringes, needles, and sharp items into a puncture resistant container.**
5. **Don't disregard an accidental needle stick or other exposure such as a splash to the eyes or mouth. Do cleanse the site thoroughly with soap and water and contact your doctor immediately.**
6. **Do clean all blood and body fluid spills promptly. Use detergent and water followed by a disinfecting solution of one part household bleach to ten parts water.**
7. **Do dispose of articles (used gloves, dressings, bandages, etc.) contaminated with blood or body fluids into a plastic bag. Close the bag tightly, place into a second plastic bag, and discard into a plastic lined trash can.**
8. **Do treat all linen and clothing soiled with blood or body fluids (to which universal precautions apply) as infectious. Do wear gloves and gown when removing such linen or clothing. Do place the soiled articles into a plastic bag and later wash the articles in hot water (160 degrees F) with detergent for 25 minutes.**

Homecare training

Things to know as a PCA

Household Cleaning

The list below provides you with some general guidelines for household cleaning.

However, your employer will be training you with specific ways they would like you to do each task.

Kitchen Area

- ◆ Wash and dry (or place in dishwasher) dirty dishes and cooking utensils immediately after eating.
- ◆ Do not use kitchen sponges or wash cloths in any other area of the household. Never clean the floor or any bodily fluids with a kitchen sponge or dish cloth.
- ◆ Sweep kitchen floor daily or if dirty. Wash floor with hot soapy water.
- ◆ Clean counters, tables, and cutting boards where food is prepared. Food may be contaminated if placed on soiled working areas.
- ◆ Refrigerate foods after meal is completed. Do not let prepared food sit out if the food requires refrigeration.
- ◆ Keep lids or covering on food containers: close cartons and replace covers to prevent bugs or bacterial growth.
- ◆ Dispose of unusable food products properly. Use garbage disposal or wrap food waste in plastic/paper bag and put in outside garbage can with a lid.
- ◆ Wash trash and garbage cans with hot soapy water if dirty.
- ◆ Periodically, clean out the refrigerator with soap and water to remove molds or food spills. Remove outdated products.

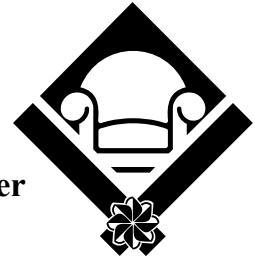


Homecare training

Things to know as a PCA

Living Room Area

- ◆ Dust furniture and windowsills.
- ◆ Vacuum/sweep floor regularly or if soiled.
- ◆ Straighten-up, empty ashtrays and wastebaskets, and water plants.



Bedroom Area

- ◆ Make beds and wash sheets regularly or if soiled.
- ◆ Dust and vacuum/sweep regularly or if soiled.
- ◆ Straighten-up, empty ashtrays and wastebaskets, and water plants.

Bathroom Area

- ◆ Check for necessary supplies, e.g., soap, toothpaste, shaving cream, etc.
- ◆ Clean sink area and tub regularly; if soiled with bodily fluids, disinfect with a 1:9 bleach solution. Clean fixtures.
- ◆ Clean mirrors regularly.
- ◆ Empty wastebaskets and “double bag” waste with bodily fluids.
- ◆ Scrub toilet with a disinfectant toilet cleanser regularly or if soiled.
- ◆ Scrub floor with hot sudsy water regularly; if soiled with bodily fluids, disinfect with a 1:9 bleach solution.
- ◆ Launder the bath mats regularly or as soiled.
- ◆ Maintain a clean supply of towels and face cloths.

Homecare training

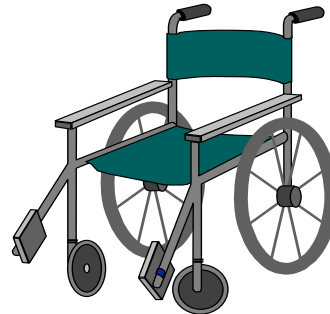
Things to know as a PCA

Laundering

- ◆ Wash clothes, towels, bedding, etc. regularly or if soiled.
- ◆ Linens or clothing soiled with blood or bodily fluids should be washed in hot water with the usual detergent and one cup of bleach.
- ◆ Fold washed items.

Cleaning Assistive Devices and Equipment

- ◆ Wheelchairs, handgrips, railings, boards, and other assistive devices should be washed with hot sudsy water; if soiled with bodily fluids, disinfect with a 1:9 bleach solution.

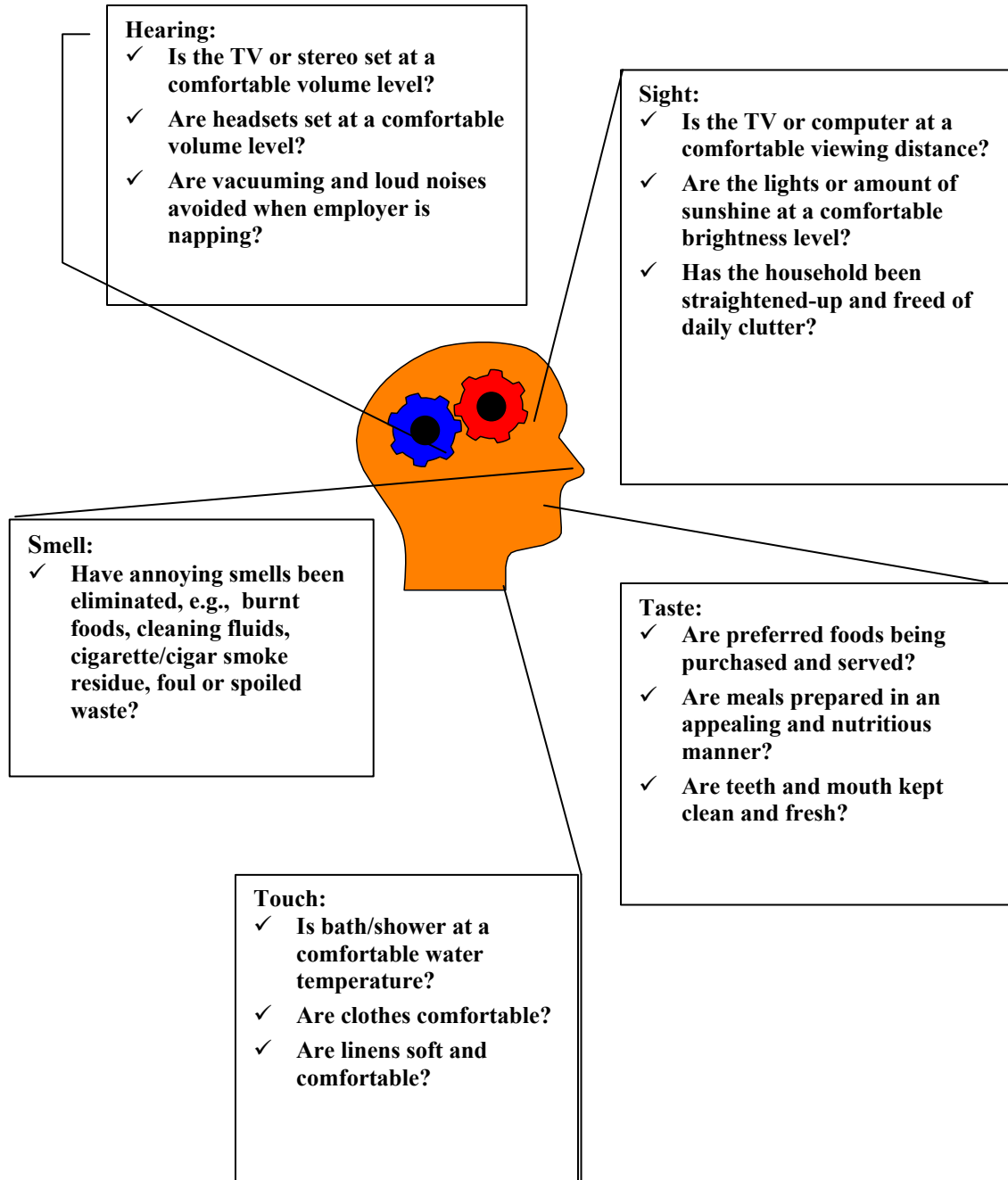


Homecare training

Things to know as a PCA

A Pleasant Household Environment

A pleasant household environment is simply one that appeals to your employer's senses.



Homecare training

Things to know as a PCA

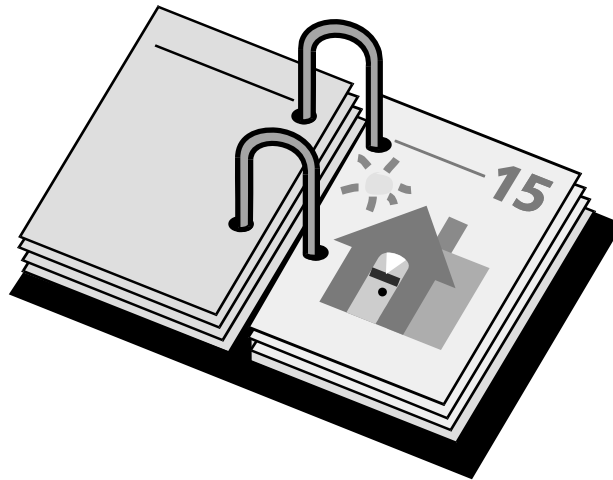
Organizing and Planning Daily Activities

Carefully planning and organizing errands, accessibility, and transportation arrangements can prevent minor and major inconveniences. Working with your employer to develop a consistent yet flexible daily schedule will increase stability and harmony in the household environment.

Your employer will inform you of his/her preferences about:

Planning errands, accessibility, and transportation arrangements.

Organizing schedules and paperwork.



Homecare training

Things to know as a PCA

Planning Errands, Accessibility, and Transportation Arrangements

Well-planned errands can save time and energy. Planning and organization can also help to ensure successful transportation experiences.

Regardless of the type of errand or the mode of transportation, there are a few basic planning tips to remember.

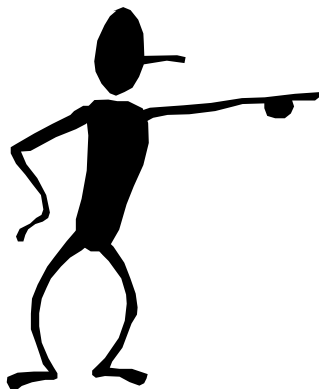
Plan in advance.

Organize your time and arrangements.

Call and make inquires and/or arrangements in advance. (Ask about hours of operation, schedules, inventories, pricing, and accessibility of accommodations for persons with disabilities.)

Route your errands and transportation based upon accessibility.

Make a back-up plan.



It is important to *ask your employer* about his/her particular transportation preferences before planning errands and accessibility!

Homecare training

Things to know as a PCA

Transportation and Traveling Guidelines

The list below provides you with some general transportation and traveling guidelines. Your employer will determine the accommodations that he/she prefers to use.

Public Transportation (Bus Service)

Ask your public transportation office if they offer door-to-door van service for persons with disabilities. Inquire about the eligibility requirements and the cost.

Check bus schedules in advance for run times and for availability of ramps or lifts.

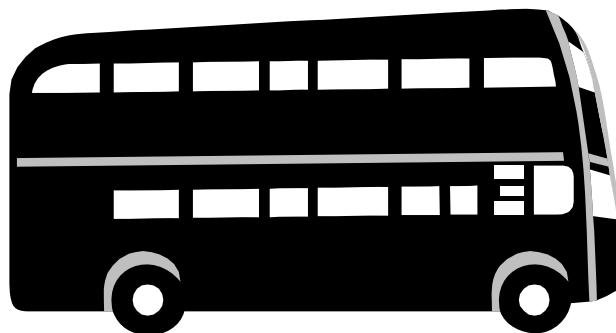
Two hours before the bus is scheduled to arrive, call to ensure that no changes have been made to the time or availability of ramps or lifts.

Private Vehicle (Cars and Vans)

Make arrangements with the driver in advance.

Check to see if the driver can accommodate your chair or other assistive device while carrying passengers.

Check driving credentials, if necessary.



Homecare training

Things to know as a PCA

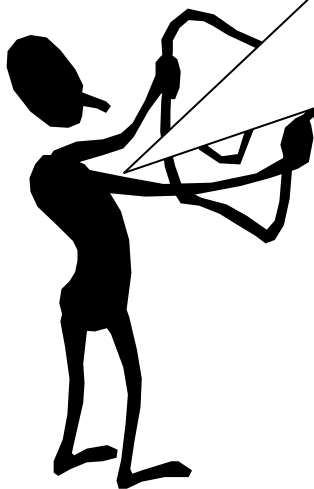
Organizing Schedules and Paperwork

Scheduling daily tasks and appointments helps to keep the day organized and allows for the efficient use of time.

A planner is a helpful tool for organizing and scheduling tasks and appointments.

It is important for you and your employer to coordinate your daily and weekly schedules. This coordination will help to eliminate conflicts in your schedules and will help both of you to accomplish your tasks and commitments.

Ask your employer to designate the tasks that he/she wishes for you to perform on a daily basis. Also, ask your employer to designate preferred times for the tasks to be performed, e.g., lunch at noon, bladder routine at 1:00 p.m., etc.



As a personal care attendant, you might be asked to process paperwork, bills, records, or correspondence in an accurate manner.

You might also be asked to answer the phone and to record accurate phone messages.

Homecare training

Things to know as a PCA

Caring to Give

There is a difference between giving care and caring to give.

wife of a man with a disability

In the book *Helping Yourself Help Others* by Rosalynn Carter, caring is defined as “feeling connected to another, but still appreciating that person as an individual with separate appetites, needs, and desires.” Some ingredients of caring are described as follows:

KNOWING: Knowing how to respond to your employer’s needs requires that you know your employer and his/her strengths and weaknesses. You must also know yourself and your own capabilities.

PATIENCE: Patience is constantly being learned and relearned. Many professional and family caregivers say that learning patience is one of the greatest rewards of care giving.

HONESTY: Honesty involves being honest with yourself as well as with your employer. You can be wrong, but honestly willing to learn from mistakes. Being honest with your employer also means being sincere in your desire to help.

TRUST: Trust your employer to be who he/she is. Allow him/her to do things independently or to seek help from others. Trust yourself to be able to learn new skills and handle new situations.



Chapter Six

A **abuse and Neglect**

As a PCA, you will have the most hands on and constant contact with your employer. If you are trained to understand what to look for in homecare abuse, then you will be your employer's best defense for helping prevent abuse from happening.

What is abuse?

Abuse is the infliction of physical, emotional, or psychological harm to a person. Abuse also can take the form of financial exploitation or intentional or unintentional neglect by the family, a friend or a caregiver.

- **Physical abuse can range from slapping or shoving to severe beatings and restraining with ropes or chains. When a caregiver or other person uses enough force to cause unnecessary pain or injury, even if the reason is to help the person, the behavior can be regarded as abusive. Physical abuse can include hitting, beating, pushing, kicking, pinching, burning, or biting. It can also include such acts against the person as over- or under-medicating, depriving the person of food, or exposing the person to severe weather — deliberately or inadvertently.**
- **Emotional or psychological abuse can range from name-calling or giving the "silent treatment" to intimidating and threatening the individual. When a family member, a caregiver, or other person behaves in a way that causes fear, mental anguish, and emotional pain or distress, the behavior can be regarded as abusive. Emotional and psychological abuse can include insults and threats. It can also include treating the older person like a child and isolating the person from family, friends, and regular activities — either by force or threats or through manipulation.**

AbusE and Neglect

- **Caregiver neglect can range from caregiving strategies that withhold appropriate attention from the individual to intentionally failing to meet the physical, social, or emotional needs of the person. Neglect can include failure to provide food, water, clothing, medications, and assistance with the activities of daily living or help with personal hygiene. If the caregiver has responsibility for paying bills for the person, neglect also can include failure to pay the bills or to manage the person's money responsibly.**
- **Sexual abuse can range from sexual exhibition to rape. Sexual abuse can include inappropriate touching, photographing the person in suggestive poses, forcing the person to look at pornography, forcing sexual contact with a third party, or any unwanted sexualized behavior. It also includes rape, sodomy, or coerced nudity.**
- **Financial exploitation can range from misuse of the person's funds to embezzlement. Financial exploitation includes fraud, taking money under false pretenses, forgery, forced property transfers, purchasing expensive items with the person's money without the his or her knowledge or permission, or denying the person access to his or her own funds or home. It includes the improper use of legal guardianship arrangements, powers of attorney, or conservatorships. It also includes a variety of scams perpetrated by sales people for health-related services, mortgage companies, and financial managers — or even by so-called friends.**

Abuse and Neglect

Signs of abuse

Cues That Cannot Be Explained Medically May Signal Abuse

Many of the symptoms listed below can occur as a result of disease conditions or medications. The appearance of these symptoms should prompt further investigation to determine and remedy the cause.

Physical Abuse

- Bruises or grip marks around the arms or neck
- Rope marks or welts on the wrists and/or ankles
- Repeated unexplained injuries
- Dismissive attitude or statements about injuries
- Refusal to go to same emergency department for repeated injuries

Emotional/Psychological Abuse

- Uncommunicative and unresponsive
- Unreasonably fearful or suspicious
- Lack of interest in social contacts
- Chronic physical or psychiatric health problems
- Evasiveness

Sexual Abuse

- Unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding
- Torn or bloody underwear
- Bruised breasts
- Venereal diseases or vaginal infections

Abuse and Neglect

Signs of abuse

Financial Abuse or Exploitation

- **Life circumstances don't match with the size of the estate**
- **Large withdrawals from bank accounts, switching accounts, unusual ATM activity**
- **Signatures on checks don't match employer's signature**

Neglect

- **Sunken eyes or loss of weight**
- **Extreme thirst**
- **Bed sores**

Abuse and Neglect

Who should be told?

The previously mentioned characteristics to look for potential abuse are intended to be used as a guide to help you recognize a potential abuser.

These suggestions are not all-inclusive nor does any one quality or combination of qualities, guarantee that the person is being abused.

However, be aware of these behaviors and know that you have a duty as a PCA to report any signs of abuse!

To report signs of neglect and/or abuse you can contact the Adult Abuse Hotline at 1-800-482-5964.