



# Hiring Family or Friends as Your Caregiver

## A Guide for Adults Needing Care

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



Washington State Department  
of Social and Health Services

Aging and Disability Services Administration

## ■ Introduction

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

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

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

*Note: The term family member in used in the rest of the booklet. Substitute friend or neighbor if that is your situation.*



## ■ You're in Charge

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

## ■ Establish Ground Rules

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



- ? How can you make sure your family member is:
  - Helping you get tasks done the way you want them?
  - Respecting your role as employer during paid hours?
  - Supporting you in staying as independent as possible?
- ? Are there any personal care tasks that make you or your family member feel self-conscious or anxious? What would you like done to ensure your privacy, dignity, and comfort?
- ? What can you do to head off hurt feelings or misunderstandings? How do you want to handle things when one or both of you are upset; feel things aren't going well; or need to make changes?
- ? Do other family members have any problems, concerns, or issues that might affect your care? How can you and your family member work together to keep problems at a minimum?

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

## ■ Have a Written Care Plan

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

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



**DSHS consumers are people who receive personal care services through the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).**

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

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

## ■ Directing Your Care

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

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

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



## ■ Maintain Basic Job Standards

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

- Working the schedule agreed on.
- Doing work-related tasks during scheduled hours.
- Documenting hours worked (e.g. filling out a timesheet).
- Giving you adequate notice if he or she can't work as scheduled.
- Respecting your role as employer.

You should also maintain basic employer standards, including:

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



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

## ■ Have a Backup Plan

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

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

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

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

Your case manager is a resource to help find a replacement provider if you don’t know anyone. You can also contact the Washington State Home Care Referral Registry for a list of prescreened replacement providers in **some** counties. Call them at 1-800-970-5456 or visit [www.hcqa.wa.gov](http://www.hcqa.wa.gov) and click on “Registry Centers” to see if the Referral Registry is available in your area.



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## ■ Keep Track of the Hours Your Family Member Works

Your family member should document the hours he or she works on some form of timesheet. Filling out timesheets consistently promotes

accountability and accurate reporting. Review timesheets regularly and talk through any concerns or discrepancies you see immediately.



### **DSHS consumers:**

Your family member must give you a copy of his or her DSHS

timesheet each month to review. By signing the timesheet, you approve the hours your family member bills DSHS.

Keep your copies of the signed timesheets for two years. Your case manager will ask to see them.

## ■ Solve Problems Early

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

If you have a concern about job performance:

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



**Talk through  
how things are  
going on a  
regular basis.**

If things don't improve, it is your choice to fire your family member if you are not receiving quality care or feel unsafe.

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

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

- Are not receiving all of the services authorized in your care plan.
- Have any concerns about your care plan or the quality of the care you are receiving.
- Decide to replace your family member as your caregiver.

## ■ We Are All Partners Against Adult Abuse

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

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



## ■ Finding Support and Services in Washington State

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

### **Area Agency on Aging (AAA)**

The Area Agency on Aging is a tremendous resource for any adult over 60. AAA staff can help you assess your current situation, plan for what is needed and help find the resources and services that best meet your needs.

Find your local Area Agency on Aging office by looking in the yellow pages for the Area Agency on Aging under “Senior Services,” visiting [www.ada.dshs.wa.gov](http://www.ada.dshs.wa.gov) and clicking on “Local Services” or by calling 1-800-422-3263.

### **Home and Community Services**

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

Find your local Home and Community Services office by visiting [www.ada.dshs.wa.gov](http://www.ada.dshs.wa.gov) and clicking on “Local Services” or by calling 1-800-422-3263.

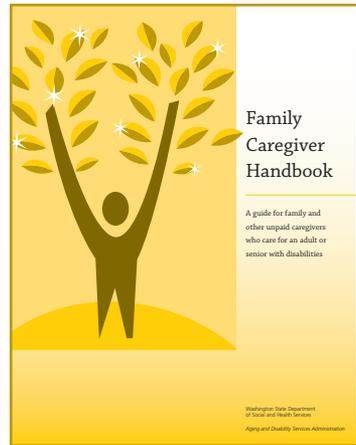
### **Benefits CheckUp**

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

## Get a Free *Family Caregiver Handbook*

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

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



To order a single copy, call 1-800-422-3263. Multiple copies can be ordered by calling (360) 570-3062. You can also read it on the internet at [www.adsa.dshs.wa.gov/library/publications](http://www.adsa.dshs.wa.gov/library/publications).

## ■ Find Information on the Internet

Find articles, booklets, tips, shortcuts, and information about services that can address your needs, questions, and challenges at: [www.adsa.dshs.wa.gov/caregiving](http://www.adsa.dshs.wa.gov/caregiving)



**ADSA** Aging & Disability  
Services Administration