



# **For the Lifespan: The Caregiver Guide**

## **Module 8**

### **Working Effectively with In-Home Service Providers**

#### **Participant Guide**

# Module 8

## Working Effectively with In-Home Service Providers

### PURPOSE

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In-home service providers or personal assistants may be one of the most important support systems available to you and the person you are caring for. Service providers can take over the tasks that are difficult, stressful, or time-consuming, which will make the rest of your job easier. Service providers can be utilized for all in-home needed care or just for select tasks.

This module is designed to help you think about the advantages and disadvantages of hiring service providers, understand where to find them, and learn how to effectively work with them from beginning to end. A more detailed list of what you will learn is shown below.

### WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

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After completing this module, you will be able to:

- Understand the benefits, potential problems, and different options related to in-home service providers.
- Learn how to interview and select personal assistants.
- Identify the steps needed to teach new tasks.
- Understand how to resolve conflict.
- Recognize how to fire, if necessary, and avoid theft.
- Learn about available funding.

## ADVANTAGES/BENEFITS



There are many good reasons to hire in-home service providers or personal assistants. They can provide you with a much needed break. Having other people provide caregiving services will lighten your duties and provide you with a chance to do other things. You can ask them to take over difficult, stressful, or time-consuming tasks. Using a service provider may prevent or postpone the person you are caring for from going to a nursing home, and may also help that person feel like less of a burden on you.

## DISADVANTAGES/POTENTIAL PROBLEMS



Of course there are also potential problems or disadvantages you will want to consider before you employ another person's services. There will be less privacy with another person in your home. Safety and security can also be concerns, but this module will provide you with some tips on those issues. You may feel like you're not fulfilling your duty or obligation, but your duty is only to provide support and make sure that your care recipient's needs are met. You don't have to do everything yourself. The person you are caring for may be resistant, but it will help if you discuss and make the decision together, if possible. You can offer to try using a personal assistant on a trial basis and see how it goes.

## OPTIONS FOR GETTING HELP

There are several different options to consider for getting help with caregiving services. They include the following:

- Home Health Agency.
- Recruit volunteers (family members, friends, church members, neighbors, volunteer organizations).
- Hire someone privately.

- Exchange services for room and board.



Any of the above options can work; there are advantages and disadvantages with each option. Some people prefer family members because of the personal nature of the job. They already know and trust the person. Others feel that hiring service providers preserves family relationships.

While paying an individual may be less costly than an agency, make sure that you get a background check and check all references. Check with your homeowners insurance to see if you have coverage. An agency generally conducts background checks, provides insurance, and can send a backup if the person gets sick.

## POSITIVE ASPECTS OF IN-HOME SERVICE PROVIDER EMPLOYMENT



There are positive aspects, benefits, or reasons why people may want to work as an in-home service provider. You might want to discuss the benefits of this type of employment when talking to the applicants you interview. These benefits include:

- Experience working with people.
- Opportunity for personal growth.
- Steady income.
- Generally flexible hours and often time for study.
- Usually available jobs.

## QUALIFICATIONS



What qualifications or personal characteristics are you looking for? It's best if a personal assistant is at least 18 years of age. However, some individuals who are 16 or 17 may be suitable. An in-home service provider or personal assistant should have the following qualities:

- Good communication and listening skills.
- A pleasant and positive attitude.
- Respect for your privacy and confidentiality.
- Be able to work closely with others.
- Accepts responsibility and wants to learn the job.
- Looks beyond the disability to see the person.
- Maintains clean personal habits.
- Has reliable transportation.
- An appropriate reason for applying for the job.
- Good personal and employment references.

## WHERE TO ADVERTISE



Many people start advertising through word-of-mouth by telling friends, family members, and other people who employ in-home service providers that you are looking for a good person to hire. The more people you tell, the more likely you are to find good applicants. Besides informal recruiting, you can use the following techniques.

Consider listing your job opening at:

- Schools and Colleges
- Local Workforce Services
- LDS Employment Offices
- Websites such as: [www.caregiveralliance.com](http://www.caregiveralliance.com), [www.caring.org](http://www.caring.org), [www.rewardingwork.org](http://www.rewardingwork.org), [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com), [www.ajb.dni.us](http://www.ajb.dni.us), <http://www.careerbuilder.com/?cbRecursionCnt=1>, <http://us.jobs>, <http://www.tweetmyjobs.com>, etc.
- Social Media Sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.).



You can develop flyers with a brief job description and your phone number and/or email address listed on tear-off strips at the bottom. Consider posting flyers at the following locations:

- Centers for Independent Living
- Senior Citizen Centers
- Aging and Retirement Organizations
- Hospitals
- Nursing Homes
- Rehab Centers
- Health Departments
- Library display areas
- Community centers
- Apartment buildings
- Grocery stores

## **SCREEN APPLICANTS CAREFULLY**

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Screen applicants over the phone first. Explain the job, the area where you live, and the salary. Ask if they have any experience with this type of work. If so, ask the applicant to describe their experience. Ask the person why they want to apply for the position.



Arrange for an in-person interview only if you like what you hear and don't have any doubts about the person. Be aware that many people make an appointment for an interview and then don't show up. Don't worry if that happens because you wouldn't want to hire someone who isn't dependable anyway.

## INTERVIEWING

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### Security/Safety

- It's safer to interview in a public location for safety measures and to protect your privacy.
- If you want to interview in your home, have another person there. Don't conduct interviews alone.
- Let the person know you are careful about security, which may include background checks, fingerprinting, and listing who you hire with the police or a security agency. This should discourage applicants that you wouldn't want working for you, but it shouldn't bother someone with nothing to hide.



### Common Interview Questions

Make a list of questions beforehand. Open ended questions are better than asking yes/no questions. They may include the following:

- Would you tell me something about yourself?
- What jobs have you had? How long did you work at these jobs? What did and didn't you like about your jobs?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- Why do you want to work as a personal assistant?
- Have you been responsible for assisting another person?
- Describe how you are dependable and reliable.
- How long do you plan to work in this position?

Ask lots of questions and watch the person's response. Be observant as you interview. Watch for nonverbal and personal traits. Listen to what is said, how it is said, and what is NOT said. Sometimes

silence is a good interview technique to get the person to talk and gather information.

## DISCLOSING AND DECIDING

- The applicant needs to know about all of the work. (It's better to be clear in the beginning than have someone quit later).
- Explain the job duties and the salary.
- Interview more than one applicant.
- Give yourself at least overnight before you make a decision.
- Call at least two business and two personal references.

## CONTACTING REFERENCES



Make sure to get at least two employment and two personal references from every person that you are considering hiring and call all of them. Some questions you can ask references:

- How long have you known the applicant?
- How would you describe the applicant?
- Is the person honest, mature, and dependable? Why or why not?
- Do you have any reservations about the person doing this type of work?
- Employers – Why did this person leave? Would you rehire the person?
- Do you have any additional comments?

## CHOOSING THE APPLICANT



Trust your instincts. You are your best detection instrument. Your first reaction to people will generally predict your future ease with them. Trust your “gut” reaction, the information you learned in the

interview, and what the references said. The person you hire should have:

- Good references and at least some experience.
- A positive and pleasant attitude.
- Good communication and listening skills.
- An appropriate reason for applying for the job.
- A clean and trustworthy appearance.
- Respect for your privacy and confidentiality.

If you have doubts, keep asking questions, checking references, or consider hiring the person on a trial basis. Decide how long the trial will be with the person. At the end of that time, you can decide if you want to keep working together.

## PROVIDE WRITTEN MEDICAL INFORMATION



After you have hired or recruited someone, you need to get ready. Providing medical information in writing will help the service provider understand what your care recipient's needs are and what to expect. It is also helpful to have a list of emergency contacts.

Suggested written medical information includes:

- Basic information about disability or limitations.
- Medication and possible side effects.
- Diet restrictions, if any.
- Equipment and home arrangements.
- What to do in case of medical situations.
- Name and contact information for doctor.
- Ensure all of the above is in written form.



There are checklists and forms on the following websites:

- <http://www.slco.org/aging/pdf/CSCaregiversGuide.pdf>

- <http://www.slco.org/aging/pdf/CSCaregiversGuide.pdf>
- <http://www.caregiverforms.net>
- <http://www.caregiverslibrary.org>
- <http://www.homecare.com>
- <http://caregivers.utah.gov>

The Utah Coalition for Caregiver Support has a sample contract:

<http://utadrc.universaladsolutions.com/content/utah-coalition-caregiver-support>

## BASIC TEACHING STEPS



Decide which tasks you would like the person to do. Make a detailed checklist of tasks to be completed in the order you would like that they can mark off, including what, when, and where. Go through the list of tasks in order. The basic teaching steps include:

- Introduce the task.
- Provide written instructions/checklist.
- Explain the steps of the task in detail.
- Demonstrate the task (you or another service provider).
- Repeat the demonstration as often as needed.
- Have the new person imitate or try the steps of the task.
- Refine and correct all steps.
- Give feedback, praise, or gently correct any mistakes.

The training period will vary according to how many, how hard, and how urgent the tasks are. It could range from several hours to several weeks. Everyone learns at their own pace. You may need to demonstrate tasks repeatedly. Give clear directions. Be patient.

## EXPERIENCED STAFF

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- Don't assume someone can perform a task until you've seen it done.
- Supplies and equipment you've used for years may be new to someone else.
- You may like things done differently than people in prior jobs.
- When you teach, show how to do the task the same way every time.

## REVIEW WORK FREQUENTLY

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- The more often the work is checked, the sooner a small problem can be fixed. It's important to correct any mistakes right away.
- Review:
  - Daily tasks/checklists every two weeks (initially check more frequently).
  - Weekly tasks/checklists every month.
  - Monthly tasks/checklists every three months.
- If there is a problem, see if all the steps are included.
- Show which step is missing, ask them to demonstrate.

## TIPS FOR GOOD RELATIONS

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- Be patient with mistakes and questions. Something clear to you may not be clear to someone else.
- Once a task has been learned, do not keep telling how to do it.
- Show appreciation for what the person does well, praise often.

- Be kind and respectful but firm in letting them know that your relative's life IS his or her life and they are “assisting with” and not “directing” it.

## COMMUNICATION TIPS

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- Clearly explain any issues.
- Use “I” statements which focus on your feelings rather than “You” statements which focus on the other person.
- Highlight your reaction and feelings, rather than their actions.
- Listen to what your service provider says.

The way you communicate makes a difference. Saying statements like, “I feel that I am not being treated with respect,” is better than saying, “You treat me like a child.” Even though it is the same issue, focusing on your reactions and feelings is better than focusing on the other person's behavior, which may make the person feel blamed, criticized, and defensive. It is best to state how you feel when the person acts a certain way and why their behavior makes you feel that way.

## RESOLVING DISAGREEMENTS

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It is best to correct mistakes when they first appear before they become habitual. Face each issue as it appears. Be relaxed and clear when you talk about the disagreement. Listen to what your service provider has to say. Work together to resolve the problem. Focus on finding solutions rather than placing blame. Always attempt to create a win-win solution.

Try to remain calm even if the other person becomes upset. Ask yourself who was at fault. It is much easier to resolve conflicts when

at least one person is flexible, willing to listen, and consider alternatives.

If the other person is not willing to reach an agreement, it may be necessary to let the person go.

## WAYS TO END EMPLOYMENT

What are some reasons you might have to fire someone? These reasons include, if your care recipient's health is at risk, if there is any type of abuse (sexual, physical, emotional, or financial), or if the person is using drugs or alcohol on the job.

- Fire in private, with someone close, unless there are safety concerns.
- Provide clear, valid reasons.
- Use good eye contact and a firm voice.
- Practice what you plan to say.
- Ask for your keys and any other items that belong to you.
- Conduct the firing at the end of the shift, if possible.

## DISCOURAGING THEFT



What are some steps you can take to cut down on dishonesty? Know how much money you have and keep only a little on hand. If you must write a check, give out only one. If you have a live-in service provider, set rules about food, visitors, noise, etc. Setting rules, being alert, and carefully watching behavior will help discourage dishonesty.

- Gently let your PA know you track mileage, calls, drugs, etc.
- Never leave money, jewelry, and medications in plain view. Lock them up.
- Control your checks and cash.

- Ask for receipts.
- Don't give out your credit card or the number.
- Avoid letting a PA use your auto, phone, or home for personal use.

## BE CAREFUL BUT DON'T STRESS

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- Don't let these last sections dampen your spirit.
- Setting rules and carefully watching behavior will help discourage dishonesty.
- It's better to be aware and take precautions.
- Be careful and do what you can to be safe, but don't worry needlessly.

## POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

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- Medicaid 800-662-9651
- Medicare 800-633-4227
- Insurance (private, retiree, employee, long-term care)
- Veterans 801-584-1294
- Division of Services for People with Disabilities  
800-837-6811
- Area Agency on Aging 877-424-4640



Medicare will pay for licensed nurses, therapists, and short-term care prescribed by a doctor for medical reasons. Medicare and most insurance will not pay for custodial care (bathing, dressing, etc.). Medicaid usually covers more. The Medicaid Aging Waiver or the Medicaid Physical Disabilities Waiver will pay for personal attendant services if: 1) an individual qualifies for Medicaid and 2) would need to go in a nursing home if they didn't receive the personal care at home. The individual has control over selection, supervision, and retention of the in-home service provider.

Your local Area Agency on Aging (there are 12 in Utah) knows about funding options and can help. These agencies are listed in Module 7, Community Supports for Remaining at Home. If the person you are caring for is not eligible for funding, consider bartering, using volunteers, or paying for services. For example, one person with quadriplegia has an arrangement with a friend who has a brain injury. The person with a brain injury serves as a personal assistant in exchange for organizational help. It sounds perfect, but there are challenges. “It’s difficult to live 24 hours a day with someone who has physical impairments and it’s difficult to live 24 hours a day with someone who has a brain injury. However, it can work.”

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

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- Where are some places to advertise for applicants?
- What are some ways to interview and select personal assistants?
- Identify the steps needed to teach new tasks.
- What are some methods to resolve conflict?
- How can theft be avoided?
- How should you fire a person, if necessary?
- What are some available funding options?

## REVIEW ANSWERS

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- **Know where to advertise for applicants** – Colleges, Job Service, CILs, Senior Centers, Libraries, Malls, Grocery Stores, etc.
- **Learn how to interview and select personal assistants** – Screen over the phone. Ask lots of questions. Select a person with good references and communication

skills, experience, positive attitude, good reason for applying, clean and trustworthy appearance, and respect.

- **Identify the steps needed to teach new tasks** – Introduce, explain, demonstrate, repeat, imitate, refine, and feedback – praise or gently correct any mistakes.
- **Learn how to resolve conflict** – Face each issue as it comes. Be relaxed. Explain. Listen. Work together. Try for a win-win solution.
- **Understand how to avoid theft** – Be alert. Put away money. Control cash. Don't give out credit card. Don't let the car be driven for personal use.
- **Understand how to fire** - Provide valid reasons. Use good eye contact and firm voice. Practice what to say. Ask for keys back. Fire at shift end with another person close by.
- **Learn what possible funding options are available** – Medicare, Medicaid, Veterans Insurance, Area Agency on Aging, DSPD.

## THINGS TO REMEMBER

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- Remember to take good care of yourself by staying positive, exercising regularly, getting enough rest, eating nutritiously, using good body mechanics, keeping a sense of humor, relaxing and doing some things you enjoy when you can.
- Always believe in yourself and your abilities.
- Remember that you have the strength, courage, compassion, insight, and wisdom to succeed.
- In-home service providers or personal assistants can help you do even more.
- We hope this information has been helpful and that all your experiences are positive.

## UCARE MODULE TOPICS

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1. Providing Personal Care
2. Dementia and Memory Loss
3. A) Caring for Older Adults with Chronic Health Issues
3. B) Caring for Children with Special Health Care Needs
4. The Accessible Home
5. Taking Care of the Caregiver
6. Caring for those with Depression, Anxiety, Stress, or Mental Health Issues
7. Community Supports for Remaining at Home
8. Working Effectively with In-Home Service Providers
9. Keeping Your Home and the Person You Care for Safe
10. Eating Healthy for Life
11. Assistive Devices: Tools to Help You
12. Legal and Financial Matters: What You Need to Know

For more information, please visit: <http://www.ucare.utah.gov>

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