

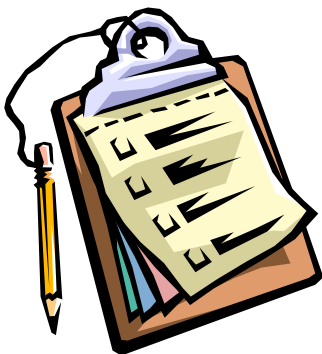
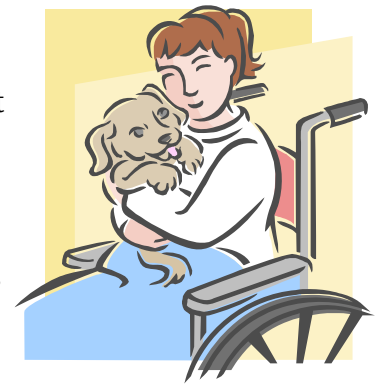
How to Train Your Personal Care Assistant (PCA)



By this time, you've already been through the self-direction hiring process in "How to Hire a PCA" and "Supervising your PCA," so your newly hired PCA should have a good idea of what you expect. Now, it's time to train your PCA!

General Training Tips

- ⇒ Go over the documents from your interview process.
- ⇒ Write down all the tasks and procedures you expect your PCA to perform. Be sure to include all tasks such as household chores (for example, washing dishes, doing laundry, taking out the trash or recycling) AND personal care tasks.
- ⇒ If you feel comfortable and confident explaining all the tasks on your list, including your personal care needs, then arrange a quiet time to meet with your new PCA and explain each of the tasks in general. This way he or she will understand the scope of your wants and needs and his or her responsibilities.
- ⇒ After this overview, decide whether you can train your new PCA as you go, or whether you would rather have the PCA watch and observe the first time.
- ⇒ Explain how to do the task while the new PCA watches. This also reinforces learning.
- ⇒ Try to have your new PCA watch an experienced PCA or family member / other non-paid caregiver go through your routine, as it makes the entire process flow better. It's much easier for the new PCA to watch, but if this is not possible, then make sure you can explain any difficult procedures. If you have your new PCA watch an experienced PCA, remember that Medicaid will not pay for them both at the same time.
- ⇒ If the new PCA seems to be comfortable with the tasks, allow him or her to perform some of them under the watchful eye of your "trainer." Performing the tasks also helps learning.
- ⇒ When you train the new PCA for the first time, it is helpful to explain why things are done a certain way. It is easier to learn when it makes sense.

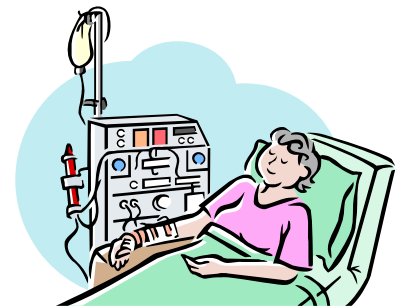


- ⇒ Share books, newsletters, and websites that provide learning and relevant information.
- ⇒ Invite professionals (your doctor, nurse or therapist) to meet with your new PCA if needed and if possible.
- ⇒ Drawings or pictures make good visual cues as to your needs.
- ⇒ Charts with lists are helpful and should be available.
- ⇒ Talk about whatever procedure you wish done prior to doing it.

- ⇒ Make sure your PCA has a clear understanding of your wants and needs.
- ⇒ Stress the need for safety precautions such as gloves, equipment, etc.
- ⇒ Make sure there are no questions and that your PCA knows not to be afraid to stop or ask if he or she is unsure of any task or procedure.
- ⇒ Make a “how-to” video.
- ⇒ Refer to the job description and describe activities in detail—verbally and in writing (using pictures, charts and diagrams as mentioned above).
- ⇒ If there are commercially available materials that would be helpful to your PCA, have them on hand.
- ⇒ If a community organization offers training that would be helpful to your PCA, encourage or require that he or she attend. It is possible that Medicaid will pay your PCA for attending such training, if your services are funded through Medicaid.
- ⇒ Go over any medical conditions that require special procedures (example: diet restrictions, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart condition, strokes, circulation problems, etc.).

Make sure your PCA knows how to work with your special equipment, including safety precautions.

- ◆ Be sure to explain how to use each piece of specialized equipment before allowing the PCA to use it.
- ◆ Explain all emergency safety procedures before allowing your PCA to use any equipment, and practice their use with your PCA.
- ◆ Make sure your PCA knows exactly what to do in case of an equipment malfunction which may render you unable to communicate.
- ◆ If there is a life-threatening injury resulting from an equipment malfunction, the PCA would need to call 9-1-1, but may also need to act first, if possible, before calling 9-1-1; so it's important to thoroughly understand the equipment in use and the appropriate steps to take in response to such an emergency.
- ◆ Go over who to call in case of an emergency and what family members, doctors, or friends to contact. Keep all contact numbers readily available.
- ◆ If there are commercially available materials about your equipment that would be helpful to your PCA, have them on hand.
- ◆ If a community organization offers training about your equipment that would be helpful to your PCA, encourage or require that he or she attend. It is possible that Medicaid will pay your PCA for attending such training, if your services are funded through Medicaid.



Your health and safety are very important!

- Explain how to document any health-related procedure that the PCA performs for you so that other PCAs and health professionals know exactly what you did (for example, blood glucose test results, insulin & medication doses, special diet meal log, etc.).
- You or your PCA should document any new or persistent areas of concern (for example, lack of energy, loss of appetite, sleep issues, behavioral issues). This is very important, especially if you are on new medications.
- Consider using a master schedule of any medical and other appointments and the days and times PCAs are scheduled to work.
- Also consider having a visual schedule of what tasks need to be completed by what time. This is very important if you are taking medication that must be taken at a certain time, such as with meals). A checklist works very well.
- You should always have an emergency / disaster plan, supply kit, and File of Life prepared. Make sure your new PCA knows where it is kept. For more information about this, see the chapter on “How Can I Prepare for Emergencies and Disasters?”
- Keep emergency contact numbers near all phones for quick reference in case of a medical emergency.
- Make sure your PCA knows to call 9-1-1 immediately in case of a life threatening emergency.

Make sure your PCA's timesheets are accurate.

- Purchase a notebook or folder for your PCA to write notes and instructions about tasks and procedures and to store timesheets and other payroll information. These folders can be stored at your house. Each PCA might have a different colored folder to prevent mistakes.
- Set aside a separate time to teach the new PCA about payroll information, keeping records and completing timesheets.
- You may want to have your PCA complete practice timesheets.

Communication is the key to almost any job, task, or instruction. Openly and freely communicating and exchanging ideas will take the stress off of the job and make it a happier atmosphere for all concerned.