



- YOUR PERSONAL CARE  
ASSISTANT (PCA) AND YOU

Senior and Disabilities Services  
Department of Health and Social Services  
State of Alaska

A training to help you learn more about  
choosing, managing and dismissing your  
personal care assistant.



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This is a voluntary training to help you learn more about how to choose, manage and dismiss your personal care assistant. You can take this training if you choose to do so. You can take this training even if you have other (not CFC) services and just want to learn more.

This training assumes that you are starting from the beginning – you need to find a personal care assistant (PCA). Even if you already have someone in mind, you will learn more about what the responsibilities are and ways you can help them be successful. You may review this training and decide to use only the parts that seem right to fit your needs.

Your personal care assistant is a very important part of how you receive your service. There is a lot you can do to find a PCA and help him or her do a good job for you. To give your care, your PCA needs to be in your home or sometimes helping you while you are in the community. This means that your home becomes the workplace.

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**After you finish this training you should be able to:**

- Plan for how you want to find your PCA.
- Make a list of interview/meeting questions for your PCA.
- Make a list of important things your PCA needs to know.
- Make a list of ways to make sure your home is ready for a PCA to work there.
- Know what you expect your PCA to do.
- Know what to do if things aren't working out.
- Know what to do if you feel unsafe.

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**This training is meant to help you learn more about:**

1. Knowing your support plan
2. Who could be a PCA
3. How to find a PCA
4. How to choose your PCA
5. What your PCA needs to know to do a good job
6. What you can do to help your PCA be successful
7. What your PCA should and shouldn't do
8. What to do if you have a problem with your PCA
9. How to get help

## Knowing your support plan

### **What is it?**

Your support plan tells about your services that are approved by the state. You should have a copy of your final approved plan for supports. If you do not have one or you are not sure, ask your care coordinator to give you one. It will list all the services you have. Your plan for support also describes the work your PCA will do to help you. It tells each task and how much time your PCA will likely spend on tasks each week.



### **Why is it important?**

Your PCA will be paid to do the tasks. He or she needs to know what to do, how to do it and be physically capable of doing it. Your personal care assistant needs to be able to write down what he or she did to help you.

Your PCA should not do other things that are not in your plan while working for you. You should not ask your PCA to do things that are not in your plan.

You will know what time of day and for how long you need the help that is written in your plan. This means that you will need to make a schedule for your PCA. You may decide that you need to find more than one PCA, depending on your plan.

## Who could be a PCA

A PCA gets hired and paid by the agency you choose. Your PCA needs to be age 18 or older, able to pass the state and national fingerprint and background check, have current 1<sup>st</sup> Aid and CPR training, and be physically able to do the work. Your PCA needs to be able to write down the care they have given to you and to fill out basic forms, like a timesheet.

If you have a person in mind, you can ask someone you choose to be your PCA. If this person is a family member, generally they cannot also be in charge of making medical or financial decisions for you.



The agency can help your PCA get any training they need. The agency can help your PCA if they have questions about what they need to have in order to be hired at the agency.

## How to find a PCA

It takes time to find someone who will be a good match for you. You can look to your community to find a PCA. You can ask friends or family members to help you when you interview someone you do not know already. Here are some ways to reach people who might want to work for you:

- *Ask your family and friends*
- *Talk with your church group*
- *Talk with your cultural or heritage group*
- *Place a flyer on community bulletin boards (grocery stores, coffee shops, church bulletin board, agency bulletin board, apartment building bulletin board)*
- *Put a free ad in an online network or in the local newspaper*

Stay safe - **NEVER** put your home address on a flyer, online, or in an ad! Give a phone number or an email address for people to contact you instead.

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## Getting ready to meet in person: Talk on the phone first

It's a good idea to meet someone you don't know yet over the phone or computer first. You can tell the person basic information and ask questions to help you decide if you want to meet them face to face.

Write down what you will say on the phone. You could make a script to read. You could email it to the person. Here is a sample script:

*Hello,  
Thank you for contacting me. Here is some basic information about the job.  
My PCA needs to work – days of the week, start and end times.  
I need hands on help taking a shower/bath, using the toilet, preparing a meal, etc. I need someone to help me learn how to – for example, cook a meal at home - more independently.  
(Use your support plan to fill in what you need help with).*

*Statement:*

*My PCA must be age 18 or over, able to pass the state and national fingerprint and background check, have current 1<sup>st</sup> Aid and CPR or get the training before working, and be physically able to do the work. My personal care assistant must be able to write down the care he or she does and to fill out basic forms, like a timesheet.  
My personal care assistant needs to be able to give me three references- someone I can call or email to tell me more about your ability to help me.*

*Question: Would you be able to do all this?*

You can decide who you would like to meet face to face based on the answers they give.

## How to choose your PCA

Contact the people you felt you would like to meet in person and set up a time/day to meet. Ask each person to bring the following to the meeting:

- Current picture ID – driver's license or other picture ID
- References that you can call or email to tell more about their ability to help you

## Face to face meeting

You can meet at your home, or someplace in the community. You may choose to have a friend or family member present to help you when meeting with the person. It's a good idea to interview more than one person if you can. Make notes during the meeting to help you remember your thoughts. Think of what is important to you about your home environment.

### *At the meeting:*

- *Ask to see their identification.*
- *Ask for their references.*

### *Tell the person:*

- *Hours you expect them to work, including arrival and departure times*
- *How to communicate with you (phone, email?)*
- *How you expect them to treat your belongings and home space (Where to park? Where to smoke? Or no smoking? Expectations about other people living in your home? Using the phone/wifi while working? Expectations if you have pets?)*
- *Tell the person the services and tasks that are in your support plan.*
- *Ask the person if they have any experience in caring for people.*
- *Ask what questions they have about the job and the help you need.*

## Calling references

Look at your notes and decide which person or people gave you the best answers about how they could help you. Call the references they gave you. Make notes of the answers to your questions. Here are some questions you can use:

- *What kind of work did the person do for you?*
- *How long did they do this work for you?*
- *Did they show up to work on time and leave on time?*
- *What did they do well?*
- *What did they need to do better?*

## Choosing your personal care assistant

Look at your notes and decide which person you think can help you best. Contact your agency and let them know your choice. Give them the person's contact information.

Then, contact the person you chose to let them know.

Contact the other people you did not choose and tell them they were not chosen.

You could say or email:

"Thank you for meeting with me. I have chosen someone else to help me with my care."

## What your personal care assistant needs to know to do a good job



It's a good idea to meet with your new PCA. Your PCA needs to know more than what the support plan lists in order to do a good job. They need to know how to work in your home, how to use your property and belongings, and how you want the tasks done. You can meet with your PCA at your home. You can show them where they will be working in your home, and explain how you need tasks done.

Go over the tasks in your support plan. Remember the worker will do the tasks that are approved in your plan. Tell your PCA about how you want each task done. If the PCA will be using supplies while helping you (towels, washcloth, soap, tissues, wipes, etc.) tell your PCA where these items are. Your PCA needs to understand your preferences for all the tasks that are in your plan.

### Work schedule

Arrival and departure times. Tell your PCA what time to arrive and be ready for work and when to leave work. Decide what you want your PCA to do if he or she arrives early or must leave late. Keep a record of the hours worked so you can make sure the PCA timesheet is correct. You could use a calendar to write on.

### Helping you with medication

If your PCA will help you take medication, explain where the medicine is kept. Show the PCA how they will need to help you take your medicine. Tell them how to put the medicine away afterwards.

### Where to park

Your PCA needs to know where to park if they are driving to your home to work. Tell them the correct place and way to park.

### **How to enter and exit the home**

What entrance and exit do you expect your PCA to use? Will your PCA knock on your door, use a doorbell, or will the door be open? If they knock on the door, about how long does it usually take you to answer the door – so they know do not have to knock again, or leave. Do you expect the door(s) to be locked at all times? Tell the person what works best for you and what you expect.

### **How to communicate with each other**

Make sure your PCA knows how to contact you if running late for your schedule. Your support plan should tell what happens if your PCA does not show up.

### **Emergency information**

Share information your worker needs to know if an emergency happens. Include who to call in case of emergency and how to get out of the house. Keep emergency information in a place that's easy to see all the time.

### **Safety practices**

Tell your PCA if you have a special diet, any allergies, and other needs that require special care. Your PCA should know how to use universal precautions to protect him or herself and you from any infectious diseases while they are working. If your PCA has questions about this, the agency can help answer them. It's best for your PCA and you to tell each other if either of you have any infectious diseases. Examples are HIV, Hepatitis, Tuberculosis, and others.

### **Mobility and Medical equipment**

If you use mobility equipment, show how you use it. Examples include floor-standing lifts and ceiling lifts, stair chairs, wheelchairs, walkers, and platform lifts. Your plan may include help caring for medical equipment like oxygen. Tell your PCA how to help care for your equipment.

### **Kitchen**

If your plan has help with meal preparation, your PCA will be using your kitchen. Tell your PCA where items are stored. Tell them where and how food is stored. Show your worker how to use appliances like stove, oven, microwave, blender, toaster oven, and dishwasher, as needed. Show which cleaning products you want used and how to use them.



### **Bedroom**

If your plan has help getting into/out of bed, dressing, or cleaning, your PCA needs to know how to do this work in your bedroom. Show how to find the items you will need help with. Tell your PCA how you want these tasks done.

### **Bathroom**

If your plan has help with using the toilet, hygiene tasks, and/or bathing, your PCA will be helping you in the bathroom. Tell your PCA where items they will be using to help you are stored. Tell them how to dispose of waste from the bathroom. Show your PCA how to turn the shower on and off, or fill the bath and how to adjust the water temperature. Show how to use appliances like a handheld or other showerhead, shower chair, shower doors if any, electric shaver, hairdryer, hair curler/straightener, as needed. Show your PCA what personal care products you want used and how to help you use them.



### **Utility Room/Laundry**

If your plan has help with cleaning the home and doing laundry, your PCA will need to know about the cleaning products you want used. Tell how you want your cleaning and laundry done. Show how to use your appliances like a vacuum cleaner, or washing machine and dryer (if applicable). Show where the cleaning products and tools (mop, bucket, broom) are stored. Show what you want done with any waste or trash made.



### **Personal Food/breaks**

Your PCA should bring his or her own food and beverage if they will be eating a meal during their time with you. Decide on how to handle any trash generated by the PCA's meal or break.

### **Smoking**

If your PCA smokes cigarettes/vapes or uses tobacco during the time working with you, tell your PCA what you expect. Will you allow smoking/vaping or tobacco use during the shift? If so, where and when? Decide on how the PCA will dispose of any trash generated during smoking (cigarette butts, tobacco chew).



### **Personal cellphone, wifi use, charging cellphones**

If your PCA carries a personal cellphone, agree on how or if they will be allowed to use it during the shift. Decide if you will allow your PCA to use your wifi connection if applicable and charge their cellphone while they are at your home. Tell your PCA what is allowed and not allowed.



### **Others who live in your home**

Tell your PCA who else may be in the home and what their relationship to you is. Explain what to expect for an average day with other members of the household.

### **Pets**

If you have pets make sure your PCA is comfortable being around them. Tell your PCA if they need to know anything about the pets and their habits. Introduce your PCA to your pets and make sure they are reasonable comfortable with each other. Caring for pets is not part of the support plan. You will need to make sure your pets are safe and taken care of. (If your support plan includes care for your service dog, your PCA will do this.)



### **What's off limits**

You and others living in your home should be able to move about the home as you normally do while your PCA is there. You can expect to be respected for your lifestyle and appearance of your home, and have a reasonable amount of privacy. Tell your personal care assistant what's "off limits" in or around your home.



## What you can do to help your personal care assistant be successful

Consider using a list of topics you have talked about with your PCA.

The agency also has employee policies that the PCA needs to follow. Your agency may be able to answer questions you have about your PCA's attendance and work performance. Ask the agency how to get in touch with someone who can answer questions.

Be respectful and expect respect. Your PCA has many responsibilities and so do you. It's a good idea to treat him or her as you would expect to be treated.

## What to do if you have a problem with your PCA

Contact a supervisor at your agency. Tell the supervisor about your concerns. The agency staff may be able to help your PCA with these concerns. If you have tried to give your PCA clear directions according to this manual, you may need the agency's help to dismiss the PCA from working with you. You could talk with your care coordinator about it if you have one.

Your PCA is hired by the agency. If there is a problem and you do not want the individual to work with you any longer, you will need to talk with the agency about it. The agency will take care of the employment part of being a PCA. You will take care of training your PCA on how to help you and what they need to know to be successful working in your home and other places you go in your community.

## How to get help



### SMALL PROBLEMS

Small problem example: Your PCA calls in late or sick, and you have a backup.  
If you have a small problem—talk with your PCA about it. You may be able to work it out together.



### BIG PROBLEMS

Big problem example: You feel disrespected by your PCA, and they don't seem to be a good match.

**If you have a big problem, talk with the agency supervisor and/or care coordinator about it.**



**REALLY BIG PROBLEMS**

Really big problem examples: You are sick or hurt and you need help right away; you are not safe because someone is hurting you, there's an emergency happening now which could hurt you, others or your property (like a fire, very cold weather and you have no heat, or a flood)

**If you have a really big problem, and you need help now, call 911 or your local emergency services!**

My agency supervisor contact info:

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My Notes:

### Checklist and Agreement

I have received instructions on the following topics:

- The individual support plan
- Expected work schedule and who to contact if I cannot come to work
- Where medication is kept and how to store it
- Where to park
- How to enter and exit the home
- Emergency contacts and how to exit the building
- Special diet and allergies (if applicable)
- How and where food is stored in the kitchen.
- How to operate all appliances I will be using
- How to work with supplies and equipment in the bathroom.
- How to work with supplies and equipment in the bedroom.
- How to operate cleaning appliances and supplies.
- How to use mobility equipment
- Medical equipment use and care
- Personal meals and breaks
- Smoking
- Personal cellphone/internet data use
- Others who live in the home
- Pets
- Places and times to respect privacy

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PCA Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant or Representative Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Your Personal Care Assistant and You

