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Self-Directed Handbook



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**Aetna Better Health[®] of Ohio
a MyCare Ohio (Medicare-Medicaid) Plan**

**Waiver Member Self-Direction
Handbook**

(Revised July 2020)

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What You Must Know

This handbook is being provided to you because you have expressed an interest in directing your own care.

Self-direction may sometimes be called Participant-direction, or Consumer-direction. These all refer to the same idea. You are the one who best knows your needs and how they should be met. So you, or someone you name to act on your behalf (your Authorized Representative), can be the one in charge of how your services are delivered. That is what self-direction is all about.

Overview of What is Required to Self-Direct your Care

This is a broad overview of key things that are required to direct your care. The rest of this handbook describes more important details. Please read this entire manual before deciding if this is right for you, and ask your Waiver Service Coordinator if you have any questions.

You may have Budget Authority and/or Employer Authority over certain services.

BUDGET AUTHORITY:

The option to have Budget Authority may only be available if your Waiver Service Coordinator and Care Manager have determined that you have a need for any of the following services; and this authority **only applies to these services:**

- **Choices Home Care Attendant service**
- **Alternative Meals service**
- **Pest control jobs, and maintenance/repair jobs furnished under the Home Maintenance and Chore service**
- **Home modification**
- **Home Medical Equipment and Supplemental Adaptive and Assistive devices service**
 - **You will be able to schedule when services will be delivered.**
 - **You will be able to set rates for these services.**

EMPLOYER AUTHORITY:

The option to have Employer Authority may only be available if your Waiver Service Coordinator and Care Manager have determined that you have a need for either of the following services; and this authority **only applies to these services:**

- **Personal Care services provided by a Consumer-Directed Personal Care provider.**
- **Choices Home Care Attendant services provided by a Consumer-Directed Individual provider.**
 - **You will be able to schedule when services will be delivered.**
 - **You will be able to set rates for these services.**
 - **To have Employer Authority, you must be willing and able to perform the responsibilities of an employer or have an Authorized Representative to act on your behalf, which includes establishing an eMail account so you can access and use the on-line Financial Management Service (FMS) vendor's timesheet approval system. If you are unable to establish an eMail account of your own, you may appoint a trusted friend or family member as your authorized representative who has eMail to help you set up your account with the FMS vendor and help you approve timesheets (however, this may not be your employee).**
 - **You will need to identify a provider that you want to work for you.**
 - **Provider Certification: Before the provider you identified may begin to provide services to you, he or she must have a Medicaid provider agreement.**
 - **You will carry out the responsibilities of an employer, such as, train, supervise, sign time sheets, problem-solve issues as they arise, provide feedback to your worker regarding his or her performance, and even fire your worker if necessary.**
 - **You must make a back-up plan in case your worker calls in sick or has an emergency.**
 - **You must work with the Financial Management Service who will pay your provider.**

Two Kinds of Authorities for Directing Your Services

Self-directing services is only an option that is available if your Waiver Service Coordinator has determined that you are eligible for one or more of the services described above. Self-direction in the MyCare Ohio program includes **Employer Authority and/or Budget Authority**.

Employer Authority means that you will assume responsibilities of being your worker's employer. You will be responsible to recruit, hire, train, direct, [approve time worked](#) and terminate that worker from providing care to you if necessary.

Budget Authority means that, you will assume responsibility to establish a rate of pay with the service provider(s) within certain guidelines, and schedule when and how services are to be provided to you, within the budgeted amount established by you and your Waiver Service Coordinator and Care Manager.

Your Care Manager will monitor the claims paid for services to help ensure that you are able to get the necessary services within your authorized budget that you and your Waiver Service Coordinator and Care Manager will establish together.

Some of the differences between an Agency being the employer and the Consumer being the employer are shown in the chart below:

Provider-Managed	Self-Directed
Agency is the employer and is responsible for recruiting, hiring, training, and supervision of the direct service worker.	You are the employer and you are responsible for the recruiting, hiring, training, and supervision of the direct service worker.
Agency delivers service in accordance with MyCare Ohio Plan service authorization.	You establish the tasks and schedule for service delivery within the parameters of the services authorized by the MyCare Ohio Plan.
Agency is responsible for approving time sheets, submitting claims to the MyCare Plan for payment.	You are responsible for approving time sheets and ensuring invoices get sent to the Financial Management Service for payment.

How will Self-Direction Work?

The Dignity of Risk

Everyone takes risks. You must know that dignity of risk is a freedom you have that could create situations that could jeopardize your own well-being. You must understand that there may be consequences to taking risks, including medical or financial. Therefore, you must accept the responsibility of possibly making bad choices and being held accountable for a negative outcome. Your chosen provider also must have the opportunity to refuse to assist with any task that he or she may consider unsafe or risky, abusive, or neglectful by legal standards.

When considering whether to self-direct your care, you must know your needs and strengths, what you are capable of, and how much time you have to deal with directing your own care. However, you will not be alone in this. Your Waiver Service Coordinator can assist you, if need be.

There are positives and negatives of being the employer. It gives you more freedom and choice in choosing your worker, but also with this choice comes responsibility. The process of hiring someone on your own can be time-consuming and it may be difficult to find someone you can trust and depend on. If you go through an agency, the agency will handle the tasks of hiring, firing, and payroll but you may have less freedom in the choice of a worker, scheduling and more.

Assuming Employer Authority means that you will be responsible for recruiting, interviewing, hiring, training, supervising, and if needed, firing your own worker. The worker you hire may

include friends, neighbors and certain family members. **You may not hire a spouse, parent, or step-parent as your service provider.**

When you are the employer, you must use a Financial Management Service entity (FMS) to work with your employee to help fulfill your responsibilities as an employer.

The FMS will handle the payroll, tax-related responsibilities, including writing the paychecks to your worker, paying the appropriate payroll taxes to the government, submitting IRS reports, and collecting the necessary paperwork. As an employer, you will be responsible for ensuring that all of your employee's paperwork is completed and provided to the FMS as required by the FMS. You will also be obligated to sign your worker's payroll timesheets to verify that your worker provided the services that you hired him/her to provide. You will only approve timesheets that accurately reflect that services were actually delivered to you. This gives you the ability to help prevent fraudulent billing and waste of your taxpayer dollars. Your Waiver Service Coordinator can explain more about this.

How will I benefit from directing my services?

You will be in charge of your services. You will be able to choose the best times and manner in which to receive those services that fit your identified needs to include:

- **If personal care services are part of your authorized service plan, you may choose your consumer-directed personal care provider.**
- **If Choices home care attendant services are part of your authorized service plan, you may choose your consumer-directed individual provider.**
- **You will choose where and when the services are provided.**
- **You will train and supervise your worker.**
- **If you have Budget Authority, you will create and manage your own spending plan within the authorized budget amount that you and your Waiver Service Coordinator establish for the services over which you have budget authority.**

I've never directed my own support services. How will I know what to do?

Directing your services may involve learning new skills, such as managing employees, following regulations and controlling your expenditures. Your Waiver Service Coordinator will help you develop service plan and will be available to help you master the skills required.

You or your authorized representative may contact your Waiver Service Coordinator at any time to pose questions or request additional information, or additional training as needed.

What abilities and skills will it take to self-direct my services?

The responsibilities of directing your worker requires certain abilities. As a part of this process, and, before you may self-direct your care, your willingness, strengths, weaknesses, and general

ability to learn and carry out the expectations of an employer must first be considered. Your Waiver Service Coordinator will work with you to assess your ability to do the following:

- **Understand methods for selecting, managing, and dismissing employees;**
- **Understand what service activities are allowed;**
- **Budget for service delivery;**
- **Participate in the development, monitoring, and revision of the service plan, including reliable back-up plans;**
- **Negotiate rates for the provision of your choices home care attendant service with your consumer-directed individual provider;**
- **Understand provider requirements, including ensuring that criminal records check procedures are followed;**
- **Work with the Financial Management Service.**
- **Establish an eMail account so you can access and use the on-line FMS vendor's timesheet approval system. If you are unable to establish an eMail account of your own, you may appoint a trusted friend or family member as your authorized representative who has eMail to help you set up your account with the FMS vendor and help you approve timesheets (however, this may not be your employee).**

For some individuals, an Authorized Representative may be required. If you require an Authorized Representative and one cannot be found, or you do not want one, you will not be able to self-direct your services, but you can still receive the services you need through an Agency provider.

Advocating for Yourself

Advocacy is one the most important tools of self- direction. In order to effectively advocate for yourself, you must have or learn certain skills, such as, communication, problem solving, and monitoring the quality of your services. These skills work together. Communication is vital to solving problems and quality monitoring is directly linked to communication. The sections that follow will offer you some tips about how these might work. We'll deal with quality monitoring a little later.

Even though you may be doing more for yourself than you have done before, it is important to remember that *you are not alone*. Your Waiver Service Coordinator is available to help you through the process of self-direction if you need help. The two of you should work together with the Care Team to make sure you are receiving the care you need.

Self-directing services may not be for everyone. If you try it and it is not something you wish to continue, you may voluntarily terminate participation in self-direction at any time by telling your Waiver Service Coordinator that you no longer want to self-direct your services.

Authorized Representative

As mentioned earlier if you are unable or unwilling to manage and direct your services, you may choose someone to represent you. In some cases, your Waiver Service Coordinator and Care Manager may require that an Authorized Representative take on these responsibilities.

Having an Authorized Representative does not mean that you are not participating in self-directed services. You are choosing to have, or directing someone you trust, to handle certain tasks, which means you are still directing how your services are to be provided.

Not all participants want or need an Authorized Representative, but such a person can be very helpful and necessary. If you want or need an Authorized Representative, you should identify that person in consultation with your Waiver Service Coordinator.

If an Authorized Representative will be directing your care for you, it is required that they are present during all required self-direction trainings / orientations. Your Waiver Service Coordinator will tell you what trainings and orientations are required.

An Authorized Representative must meet all of the following:

- **Be at least 18 years old.**
- **Show a strong personal commitment to you and have knowledge about your preferences.**
- **Be willing and able to fulfill all the identified roles on your behalf. This may include employer and budgetary duties.**
- **Agree to a face-to-face visit with you every pay period.**

An Authorized Representative **cannot**:

- **Be paid to be your authorized representative.**
- **Also be one of your paid workers.**
- **Be known to conduct illegal activities.**
- **Have a history of physical, mental or financial abuse of others.**

Identifying your Service Needs

Whether you are interested in having employer authority or just budget authority, it will be necessary to first identify what is most important to you. In addition to addressing your health and safety, what do you need to maximize your independence? An important thing to keep in mind is that any service paid using your MyCare Ohio budget must relate to needs identified in your service plan. Your Waiver Service Coordinator will help you put your vision into words and help you in setting a budget and rates of pay.

The following list is not all-inclusive, but gives you an idea of the tasks that Choices Home Care Attendant and Personal Care services include:

- **Assisting with personal activities, such as eating, bathing, dressing, personal hygiene, grooming, etc.**
- **Planning and preparing meals.**
- **General household assistance, such as, laundry, vacuuming, housecleaning, etc.**
- **Personal Care service can include help with handling personal affairs, and provide respite to your caregiver.**
- **Choices Home Care Attendant service can also help you with money management and correspondence as directed by you, as well as seasonal yard care.**

Figuring Out What You Need and When You Need it

Be realistic about your needs, preferences and priorities. Here are a few questions to ask yourself:

- **What do I need help with?**
- **How many hours will my care take?**
- **When do you need your provider to work?**
- **Are there duties, times or days that are non-negotiable?**
- **Have I considered the pros and cons of hiring a friend or family member?**
- **What qualifications am I looking for? Do I want someone who has worked with persons with my needs, has had formal training, or would I rather hire someone with little or no experience whom I can train myself?**
- **What personal qualities or habits (timeliness, neatness, ability to communicate well etc.) am I looking to find or to avoid?**
- **What are my priorities and how flexible can I be if I do not find exactly what I want?**

By answering these questions, you will have a more realistic idea of your needs, priorities and degree of flexibility. You will avoid setting yourself up for failure and bad experiences. And you will increase your chances of finding someone who meets your most important needs and who works well with you.

It will be helpful to think about the types of services that you need and what your preferences are. For example, if you need help with bathing and dressing, you may want to have your worker help you in the morning. If you just need someone to help you with things around the house, the time your worker comes may not matter and you could be more flexible with regard to scheduling. You may also want to think about condensing the hours of help that you need into some reasonable blocks of time.

When identifying tasks and needs, consider making a check list so you have something to work with when interviewing prospective workers. Make sure your list is in accordance with the Ohio Administrative Code (in the “Finding Providers” section of this handbook) so you are not asking your worker to do more than he or she is allowed. Samples of checklists are available through many disability related organizations or centers for independent living.

It is also important to identify what is negotiable and non-negotiable. For example: If you need to start your morning routine at 6 a.m. to be able to get to work or appointments at 9 a.m., you should not hire someone who cannot get to your home until 8 a.m.. If you allow a provider to talk you into changing a task or time that should be non-negotiable you may be setting yourself up for failure or a potentially unsafe situation.

It will be a lot easier to find someone who can come for 1 or 2 hour blocks of time than it will be to find someone who can come for a half-hour here or there.

Scheduling and Budgeting

Now that you know what you need, you will need to figure out the schedule for having the services delivered, working within the budget that you and your Waiver Service Coordinator have established.

Scheduling

Scheduling is simple if you have only one provider. If you have more than one, it becomes more complicated. You must balance your needs to have reliable, timely support with your providers' needs for specific work hours.

Who decides on the schedule? Ultimately, you do. Remember, that you and your provider must be concerned with the schedule. You will have a better relationship with your provider if he or she believes you have thought about their needs when putting the schedule together.

Talk to your provider about the schedule as you are putting it together. As much as you can, include their input into the final schedule. Try as you might, you may not meet everyone's scheduling needs. Here are some things to consider.

- **Discuss the importance of respecting the schedule. It is important that you clearly talk with your provider about your expectations. Stress that everyone must respect the schedule.**
- **Get input from your provider as you prepare the schedule. Ultimately this schedule is designed to suit your needs; however, they may have positive suggestions that will make your life easier. Seek their input, and consider providing a draft for him or her review.**
- **If you cannot meet certain needs of the providers explain how and why you developed the schedule the way that you did.**
- **Remember that the schedule may change. While items and tasks may be changed or added, try to remain consistent in your schedule format. This makes changes in scheduling easier to recognize.**
- **Decide on a process to follow regarding making changes to the schedule. There could be times when you or your providers need to change the schedule. Decide how much notice you need before changing the schedule, as well as how much notice you will give them when making a change. Of course, there are circumstances whereby little notice is able to be given, but usually people know when vacations or doctor visits are planned. In these cases, communicating known changes in schedules should happen as quickly as possible. If you must change the scheduled hours of a provider, be prepared to have a "Plan B" in case the provider is unable to work the new hours.**

- **Post your schedule in a place where all can see it. Be sure to have your schedule in a place that allows for everybody to check it.**
- **Tell your provider what to expect when they do not follow the schedule. Realizing that sometimes events are out of our control, it is important to discuss the expectations and consequences of being late, not providing appropriate notification of inability to work, etc.**

Budgeting: Setting a pay rate

The amount of funding available for these services will be determined together by you and your Waiver Service Coordinator. Together, you must be sure that the services and spending amount achieve the following:

- **Help you meet your functional, medical and/or social needs.**
- **Help you to reach the goals you may have set for yourself.**
- **Not be prohibited by federal and state laws and regulations.**
- **Ensure your health and welfare.**
- **Do one or more of the following:**
 - Make it easier for you to do things that are hard because of limitations caused by your disability or health issues.
 - Increase your safety in your home environment.

You will need to think about how much you will pay your workers. You'll need to consider whether you will offer to pay more for services to be provided during unusual working hours (e.g. early morning/late night/weekends), more difficult tasks, or on an emergency basis. Your workers are considered domestic service workers and therefore must be paid at least minimum wage, but also no higher than the established maximum rate allowable for the service. Your Waiver Service Coordinator can help you with figuring out appropriate rates.

Your Waiver Service Coordinator will help you estimate the costs of the services/items so that they can be prioritized within the budget you have available. You will include in your Service Plan, those supports/services you can get with resources other than MyCare Ohio dollars. This stretches your budget and provides you with a more comprehensive plan of what need to reach the goals you identified.

Finding Providers

If you are assuming Employer Authority, you may already have someone in mind to be the worker that you wish to self-direct, such as a family member or friend. It will be necessary for that person to pass a criminal background check, and be certified by the Ohio Department of Aging, and obtain a Medicaid provider agreement with the Ohio Department of Medicaid.

If you do not already have someone in mind, you can ask your Waiver Service Coordinator or Care Manager for a list of currently certified consumer-directed providers who are willing to work with additional consumers, or you can find a person on your own.

Recruiting Providers

Creating a Job Description

The first step in the hiring process is developing a job description. You already have some idea of the kinds of assistance that you need and of what you want and don't want from working with your Waiver Service Coordinator during the service planning process. Now you just need to put that down on paper. This will help you later on when it comes time to develop the advertisement for the position. It is also good for clarifying exactly what you want and don't want in a worker.

When developing your job description, you should think about the following:

- **The tasks you will want your worker to perform that are authorized on your service plan (e.g. personal care, such as assistance with bathing and dressing, light housekeeping, cooking, laundry, shopping, transportation to medical appointments, etc.).**
- **The hours you will want him/her to work not to exceed the authorized amount on your service plan.**
- **Discuss about any special requirements, such as ability to lift "X" number of pounds, etc.**

While not typically included in a job description, be prepared to address the following in the interview or initial contact:

- **The pay you will offer.**
- **Acceptable and unacceptable behaviors (e.g., smoking in your house, eating your food, swearing, bringing children with them to work, etc.).**

Keep in mind that the responsibilities of your worker and the tasks they may do are defined in Ohio Administrative Code. The provider must meet the requirements of Chapter 173-39-02

<http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/173-39-02> of the Ohio Administrative Code and depending upon the service, the provider will furnish services under Chapter 173-39-02.4 <http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/173-39-02.4>, or 173-39-02.11 <http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/173-39-02.11> of the Ohio Administrative Code. You can ask your Waiver Service Coordinator for help, if needed.

Consult with your Waiver Service Coordinator to make sure you are not expecting the worker to do something that they are not certified to do and to ensure that they are doing everything that is needed in accordance with your service plan.

Advertising

The next step in the hiring process is getting people to apply for the job. You may already have someone in mind for this position. If not, you will need to advertise. First you must come up with an ad. The job description you developed should help you with this. Keep it brief and to the point, but make sure to include all the necessary information (type of job, hours, pay, and where you can be reached).

Before you decide to advertise publicly, on a bulletin board or in the newspaper, you may want to try one of the best ways to locate workers; word of mouth. Tell your family, friends, neighbors, or others that you trust that you are looking for some help at home. They might know of someone who is looking for work (Or they can at least keep you in mind if they hear about anybody). If you know of people who are already receiving help at home you might ask them if they are pleased with their workers and if their workers are looking for some additional hours or know of another potential worker.

Here are two sample ads:

Aide needed to assist middle-aged woman.
Duties include personal care, errands and cooking.
Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings.
\$10/hour. Will train. Driver's license and insurance required.
Call 777-777-7777 before 7 PM.

Worker needed to help older man.
Duties include light housekeeping, and cooking.
2 afternoons a week
\$9/hour. Previous experience preferred.
Call 777-777-7777 before 7 PM.

(Check your local newspaper for other examples.)

Pointers:

Be careful about the type of information you put in the ad. Do not include your address or mention that you live alone.

Consider setting up a new eMail address just for the purpose of receiving resumes.

If you do not feel safe using your own phone number, consider asking a trusted friend or family member to use their number. They can then relay the messages to you for call-backs. They can even do initial information gathering for you if you wish.

If people have difficulty hearing or understanding your speech, consider faxing your ad, rather than phoning it in.

Newspaper want ads are usually alphabetized. Try starting your ad with a word or phrase that begins with the letter "A", such as "Aide Wanted" or "Attendant Wanted". This way your ad is one of the first to be listed.

If you run an ad in the General Announcements section and get little response, try putting it in another section, such as Medical, Social Services, or Domestic Help. There are no hard-and-fast rules about which section is most effective. It all depends on the type of person you are looking for and the area you live in.

Advertisement formats will vary according to where the ad is being placed. Remember the size and length of an ad may determine the cost of placement.

There are many ways to advertise for help. Some of these are listed below:

- **Colleges and universities can be good sources. Students often need money and want to gain work experience. Many colleges provide employment services. Contact the career center about listing an ad.**
- **Friends, family, neighbors, current workers, faith communities and area businesses may be good "word-of-mouth" resources. Let personal contacts know you are looking for a worker, but make it clear you will do the screening and hiring.**
- **Agencies that help people find jobs may be good resources. This might include public and private job service centers and vocational rehabilitation offices. Ask them if they have a place where you can post your ads.**
- **Church bulletins. You might consider contacting your place of worship or others in your area to see if they might be willing to run your ad in their weekly bulletin.**
- **Medical facilities, such as hospitals and clinics, may be good sources. Some of the staff may be interested in finding extra part-time work. Ask the personnel department.**
- **Local or city newspapers. Some newspapers will let you advertise for free while others may charge a fee. Smaller, local papers are likely to be less expensive to place an ad in than larger city papers. Consider listing your ad in the medical section. Also, listing your ad on weekends is a good idea because that is when most people tend to look at the want ads.**
- **Use bulletin boards to hang posters or index cards in high traffic areas. This approach seems to work quite well in small towns where people tend to know each other. High**

traffic areas might include supermarkets, drug stores, banks, laundromats, places of worship and community centers.

- **Electronic and Social Media are powerful tools to reach individuals quickly. Consider using your Facebook page and other types of social or electronic media to spread the word.**

After posting an ad, be ready to respond to people who contact you. Have the job description or basic checklist of duties nearby or easily accessible. Have it memorized, if necessary. You may be able to arrange with a friend or organization to take applications and handle questions for you. However, if you decide to handle recruiting, respond quickly to people who have contacted you about the job. Good workers may not wait around long.

The Hiring Process

Now that you have identified several people who sound absolutely wonderful, what do you do? At this point, you have the option of scheduling a face-to-face interview or conducting an initial phone interview. In either case, have a list of questions ready.

You should prepare a basic description of duties that can be read over the phone or provided in person. Descriptions of your care needs should be written in words that can easily be understood. When describing job duties, use specific action verbs, such as, bathe, clean, lift, transfer. Be realistic about the qualifications you need in your providers. For example, if they need to be able to lift 80 pounds in order to transfer you safely, do not accept anyone who cannot.

Interviewing:

Hiring Practices/Illegal Questions

It is illegal to ask applicants questions about their age, marital status, children, health, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation. It is also illegal to discriminate against people in hiring and determining wages because of their race, color, ethnic status/national origin, gender, age, disability, or pregnancy.

* According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Americans with Disabilities Act, questions about religious beliefs, gender, race or ethnicity, national origin, health, disabilities, sexual orientation, veteran status and age are considered discriminatory.

Certain questions may be considered discriminatory if they are asked prior to selecting someone for employment, even if that is not the intent. However, some questions involve issues that are valid concerns in looking for your workers. The best way to handle these issues, is to identify and state clearly from the beginning any specific requirements of the job that involve these topics. For example, if you are female and your workers will be assisting you with bathing or toileting, you may want to have female workers. Simply specify from the beginning that you are looking for female workers and why. Some sample questions that you may and may not ask can be found in

Appendix A – Interviewing Basics.

Using Phone Interviews to Pre-Screen

Phone interviews are wonderful tools because they allow you to pre-screen people and save lots of time. A percentage of your callers will have a problem with some part of the job (the hours are too long, too short, too early, too late; the pay is too low; they do or do not want taxes withheld, etc.).

Whatever you do, do not let the caller talk you into any changes that are unsafe or do not meet your needs.

During the screening process, eliminate people who are not appropriate or who do not meet your needs. As you talk with the people who sound like good candidates, schedule an interview.

Keep in mind that you do not have to interview or take an application from everyone. “Is this someone who sounds like he or she can work with me?” and “Is this someone I would get along with?” Screening will save time and effort for you and everyone else.

Face-to-Face Interviews

The face-to-face interview is an opportunity for you and your potential providers to get to know each other. Take time to plan your interview, which means planning the questions you will ask. Interviews should be face-to-face meetings. Remember, the interview is the time when you and the applicant see if the situation will work for both of you.

Keep in mind: About half the people with whom you set up interviews will not actually show up for the interview. Don’t worry; this is pretty common. Just keep looking until you find the right person.

Before you do your first interview, decide where and how it will happen. If you do not want strangers coming into your home, consider doing the interview in a public place, such as a restaurant or at the offices of an organization, if the organization agrees. If you hold an interview at your home, for safety reasons, consider having a friend or family member there as well even if they are in a different room. Most importantly, hold the interview when and where you are least likely to be interrupted.

Ask the person you will be interviewing to bring a picture ID to the interview, such as a driver's license or passport. Give all applicants clear directions to your meeting site and mention anything else you want them to bring, such as references and proof of insurance. Be sure to keep each applicant’s name and phone number in case you need to change the time or place.

Plan your interview questions. Use questions that will reveal abilities, skills and character. Once you have an idea of the questions you want to ask, write them down on paper (or computer), if possible. Suggestion: Ask questions where they will have to give full answers rather than answering “yes” or “no”. It is also helpful to have them give examples, such as, “give me an example of how you handled a frustrating situation”.

During the interview, get work references. Afterward, check them. You should not make a decision without obtaining input from others who have known the applicant longer or in a different capacity. Do not accept references that are friends and family members.

Again, more on interviewing can be found in Appendix A – Interviewing Basics. It is also polite to let your applicants know when you will be reaching your decision.

Next Steps When You Find Someone You Want as Your Provider

You must let your Waiver Service Coordinator know when you have selected a worker.

Before he or she may begin providing services, it must be verified that your worker is a certified provider with a Medicaid provider agreement. Your Waiver Service Coordinator can help find out whether or not the provider you identified already has one. If the person you've selected is not already certified or approved, he or she will have to apply to the Ohio Department of Aging. To apply, the applicant must visit <https://aging.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/aging/agencies-and-service-providers/certification/> Contact information can be found on this site if there are any questions about this process.

Once the Department of Aging certifies the provider, he or she will then be able to establish the Medicaid provider agreement with the Ohio Department of Medicaid.

The Medicaid application process for consumer-directed providers includes a criminal background check, checks against certain databases, and application to the Ohio Department of Aging.

Criminal Background Checks

State of Ohio has laws stating that any person providing direct care to a child or a vulnerable adult must be fingerprinted and checked through the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCII) to see if they have a criminal record. People with certain convictions on their records are not permitted to provide services to vulnerable adults. It involves having the person fingerprinted and then sending those fingerprints to an agency that will check their history for any criminal activity. If your prospective worker has not lived in the State of Ohio for the past five years, they must also have an FBI check. This is also processed by the BCII.

For your protection, this requirement applies to any consumer-directed personal care provider or consumer-directed individual provider you wish to employ, including family members and friends. It's the law!

If your potential provider is already certified by the Ohio Department of Aging and has a Medicaid provider agreement, then the criminal background checks will have already been conducted.

If your potential worker is not currently a certified provider, then you will need to ensure the following procedures will need to be completed.

Fingerprinting and Database Checks

The first step to the BCII check is to have your worker make arrangements to go to one of the Webcheck sites to get his or her fingerprints. The worker may want to call ahead of time to make sure that a technician will be available to do the procedure.

It will be up to you to inform each applicant of the following at the time of initial application for employment:

- **As the employer, you are required to ensure that a review of required databases (identified in Ohio Administrative Code 173-39-9) on the applicant is conducted to determine if you are prohibited from employing or continue to employ the applicant in this direct-care position.**
- **That, if you employ the applicant, as a condition of continued employment, you shall conduct the free database reviews to determine if you are prohibited from employing the applicant in this direct-care position, and that**
- **As the employer, you are required to ensure that the criminal records check is conducted to determine if you are prohibited from employing the applicant in this direct-care position.**
- **That the applicant is required to provide a set of the fingerprint impressions as part of a criminal records check.**
- **If the review of the databases listed discloses disqualifying information about an applicant or employee, you will inform the applicant or employee of the disqualifying information.**

As part of the certification process, the Ohio Department of Aging will need the results of the BCII check as part of the application process to certify your worker as a Medicaid waiver provider.

There is a fee that may range from around \$30.00 to about \$70.00 for the Webcheck service. Some local police departments, county justice centers and community agencies will conduct background checks for a small fee.

It is up to you to decide if this is something you or your worker will pay for, and you will need to inform the applicant right up front. You can ask your Waiver Service Coordinator if you have questions or need any assistance.

FMS (Financial Management System) Forms and Provider Application

Once you have determined that you have found a provider, please caution your chosen provider that he or she may not begin providing services to you and will not be reimbursed (receive payment) until he or she has received a Medicaid provider number, is authorized on your Service Plan as your provider, and all the necessary paperwork has been completed as required by the FMS. Certification time can vary on a case-by-case basis. Your provider can work with the Ohio Department of Aging to gauge how long it will take.

After your worker has been certified and had a Medicaid provider agreement, as an employer, you will need to complete several forms, and ensure that your worker has completed forms that will be provided to you by the FMS. Your provider will also need to register and use the FMS vendor's on-line timesheet system. The vendor will provide information on how to register.

You will also need to establish an eMail account so you can access and use the on-line FMS vendor's timesheet approval system. If you are unable to establish an eMail account of your own, you may appoint a trusted friend or family member as your authorized representative who has eMail to help you set up your account with the FMS vendor and help you approve timesheets (however, this may not be your employee

Orienting and Training Your Providers

Importance of Orienting and Training

Do not skimp on initial and follow-up training! This is an important step and basic training is required for participation on a waiver program. Training will be ongoing until all tasks and routines have been learned, or as needs change.

It may seem awkward to train someone to assist you, but you will have an easier time if you have a good understanding of what you need and how you want to have it done (how you want your bed made, where your cleaning equipment is stored, your bathing routines, etc.). You should also be open to any suggestions or new ideas that your worker may have.

What other training should workers receive?

As previously mentioned all providers must be certified and meet the program requirements to provide services under this Waiver. However, it is just as important that you train your worker about specifics that relate uniquely to you, such as the following areas as they relate specifically to you:

- **Orientation to your home.**
- **Emergency/safety procedures (including important phone numbers—police, fire, ambulance, hospital, doctor, poison control, and the person you want to be contacted if there is an emergency with you).**
- **Medication lists, if applicable (including the names of medications you take, dosage, times of day when taken, reasons taken and any special requirements).**
- **Your regular daily routines.**
- **Other “house rules” (don’t let the cat out, etc.).**

These are just some general guidelines to get you started. You may have some other areas in which you feel your worker needs some training. Feel free to add to your worker’s training as you see fit.

It is helpful to start training a new provider when there are no time constraints. Expect new providers to be nervous and everything to take longer than usual. Be patient while they are learning your routines, likes, and dislikes. Encourage questions and reassure them when they forget or make mistakes. Sometimes a written checklist helps.

The training process can be mentally and physically exhausting. It can also be a lot of fun as you get to know this new person in your life. You should notice improvements from one day to the next as you develop your working relationship.

If you notice your provider has a problem learning a particular task, skill, or sequence of tasks, try breaking it down into smaller steps. Once he or she has mastered one step, you can begin adding others. Have patience and keep your sense of humor!

Practical steps/hints for training and orientation include the following:

- **Schedule a time to formally orient and train your new provider. This gives you the opportunity to discuss your expectations and clearly explain job duties.**
- **Even if your new provider has experience, your situation is unique and different. Set a tone during orientation and training that you are the supervisor. Training a provider might be completely new for you. Your Waiver Service Coordinator may be able to provide some helpful advice.**
- **Sometimes it helps to have another person with you as you train on certain tasks. For example: consider someone who knows your routine to be available when you are training the new staff on transfer techniques. The extra person will be able watch for correct body mechanics, etc.**

Even though you may have discussed some of this information at the interview, orientation of a new provider should include:

1. Tour of the house showing where supplies and equipment are kept.
2. Information about your needs. Discuss your disability and any specific aspects about your disability that your provider should know (e.g., you get more fatigued as the day goes on, you are sensitive to cold, etc.)
3. Do you have days on which you can do more for yourself than other days?
4. If you have extensive care needs, you may want to take more than one day to demonstrate duties. Pay close attention to safety issues such as body mechanics when lifting or transferring and using gloves for personal care involving body fluids. *Do not fudge on safety issues because you are desperate for help. If you do not know about proper techniques, you should have another person with you who does know and can help you train your worker. You can ask your Waiver Service Coordinator to help you find someone if needed.*
5. Safety and Security. Again, for the following items, if you do not know about proper techniques and guidelines, you should have another person with you who does know and can help you train your worker. You can ask your Waiver Service Coordinator to help you find someone if needed:

- **Lifts and Transfers.** Review safe procedures for completing lifts and transfers. Due to the high risk of injury, if your provider is required to lift or transfer you, be sure that proper lifting procedures and/or equipment are used.
- **Reinforce safety guidelines for any disability-related equipment the provider will be expected to use.**
- **Reinforce safety guidelines for any household appliances or equipment the provider will be expected to use.**
- **Discuss your emergency plans with your provider.**
- **How will your provider get in and out of your home? If you are not able to open the door, you will need to set up a procedure so that the provider can get in.**
- **Universal Precautions:** Universal precautions are health practices that workers should use in and out of the home to prevent the spread of disease from person to person. Most people are free of blood borne infections and are not infectious, but these precautions are important to protect everyone's health all workers from that one exposure that just might be infectious. Some important areas include the use of gloves, hand-washing, proper disposal of disposable items that are not sharp, proper disposal of non-disposable items that may not be thrown away, how to handle spills.
- **If your provider is ill (contagious) but feels he or she is able to work, do you want him or her to come in or stay at home rather than expose you to the virus?**

6. Expectations - Review the following topics:

- **Routines.** Your daily, weekly and monthly routines.
- **Understanding of self-directed care and what that means in this business relationship.**
- **Confidentiality.** What you say and do in your home is your business. Be specific. Some people think if they are not saying something bad about you it is not a violation of confidentiality. Remind the provider that it is not only disrespectful, but that violating confidentiality can be grounds for termination.
- **Importance of being on time.**
- **Importance of asking questions rather than assuming.**
- **Notice of time off.** What are your expectations?
- **Mutual respect.** Let your providers know the kind of behavior you expect and the kind of behavior they can expect in return.

Discuss the boundaries, rights and responsibilities for both you and the provider. Some examples of this include the following:

- **Should your provider knock on your door before entering or just walk in when he or she arrives for work?**
- **If you** are making a personal phone call, do you want the provider to leave the room?

Thinking about these kinds of boundary issues and planning for them will help you avoid problems in the future. As a supervisor you should also be aware of how your interactions with your provider may be perceived. Any behavior that could be perceived as harassment or abuse could create legal problems for you.

7. Review the schedule and time sheet and other reporting and documentation requirements.
8. If possible, introduce your new provider to other providers as well as others living in the household.

Directing Your Provider

Personal Boundaries and Staff Relationships

The nature of providing personal care often blurs the lines between you as the supervisor and the provider as your employee. Your provider will be involved with many private and sensitive aspects of your life. The provider, in some instances, is more familiar with the intimacies of your life than some of your closest friends.

The longer a provider works for you, the more likely a friendship will develop. Because self-direction defines your role as supervisor, that part of the relationship *must* be maintained, even if you develop a friendship with your provider. There can be problems if you allow a friendship to interfere with your ability to make good decisions for yourself. If the provider comes to work late, leaves early, or does not complete tasks the way you want them, will you have trouble correcting these behaviors if the provider is a good friend? You will need to decide whether you can be a boss and a friend to the same person.

Defining expectations

Your expectations include your hopes and requirements for what you want from your worker. Expectations are two-sided. You have them for your worker, and your worker will have them for you. In order for the relationship to work well, you need to be clear about what you want and expect from each other right from the start. Both sets of expectations are important to the relationship. You will probably need to negotiate and compromise with each other to make sure your expectations are as close to one another's as possible.

Some of your expectations are non-negotiable. For example, you may need your worker to do your grocery shopping. That is not negotiable. However, there are some things that you may need to be flexible about. Your worker may not be able to do your shopping at the specific time you have want him/her to do it. But between the two of you, you can compromise about when he/she can do the shopping. Compromise is very important to the success of your relationship with your worker. But you also must know for yourself what your priorities are and what is non-negotiable.

You should talk openly with your worker about the type of help that you need. This discussion should occur up front, and you will also probably revisit this issue from time to time. Being completely open up front will prevent many problems from occurring in the first place.

Supervising Your Worker

You can expect a period of adjustment as you and your worker get used to each other. Both you and your worker have your own personalities and your own ways of doing things. You will probably need to negotiate with him/her to figure out the best way to get the job done. And keep in

mind...nobody's perfect! Both of you are likely to make mistakes in the beginning, so be patient with each other and keep the lines of communication open!

There are some things that you can do to make this adjustment period a little easier. Here are some tips for working with your employee:

Be reasonable in your expectations. Your worker may be working for multiple people or have family responsibilities that compete for their time. Therefore staying late or coming early on some days may be impossible, especially with little or no notice. Even if you hire someone on your own, working out the tasks that he/she will do may require some negotiation. Your worker may not be able to do everything you want in one day, so be fair and realistic about what you expect.

Make sure the job duties are clear. Your workers' job duties need to be clearly outlined. One of the top reasons that workers give for quitting their jobs is an incomplete or changing job description. No one likes surprises when it comes to their job duties! It is unfair to get upset with someone about things they were supposed to do when they haven't been informed of those duties. So, be up front with your worker about what you expect and do not expect.

Do Your Part Too. The relationship between you and your worker is a two way street. You expect your worker to do his/her job. In turn, he/she has a right to expect you to do your part too. This includes things like: keeping to the hours and the duties that you both agreed to, signing timesheets on time so that your worker gets paid on schedule, and giving proper notice if your situation or needs change and/or you no longer need your worker.

Be flexible, but don't let anyone take advantage of you. Compromise is an important part of any relationship, even the employer-employee relationship between you and your worker. But you need to be able to strike a balance. If your worker has a problem or a concern, listen carefully. Be flexible and try to negotiate. But know your limits - don't let him/her take advantage of you.

Treat your worker with respect! Maintain a good relationship with your worker for a longer period of time. If you expect your worker to treat you with respect, then they deserve nothing less from you. This includes listening to your worker if he or she has suggestions or different ideas about how to do things. Though they work for you, keep in mind that your worker may be key to continued independence. At times, home care work can be frustrating and difficult, and there is a great deal of burnout among workers. By treating your worker with respect and keeping the lines of communication open, you can help to maintain the relationship with your worker, for a longer period of time.

Supervising an employee is more than just telling your worker what to do and what not to do. It's a process that involves give and take on both of your parts. As an employer, you need to try to help your worker perform his or her job to the best of their abilities. Good supervision benefits both of you. Your worker has a clear understanding of what needs to be done, and how, and you get things done the way you like.

Being a Good Supervisor

Be aware of potential problems. Beware of things that should send up red flags about your workers' performance. These may include: work not completed, repeatedly arriving late or leaving early without checking with you first. If you are the Authorized Representative, complaints from the person receiving care can be another sign of problems. These and other problems may suggest that you ought to meet with your worker.

Give prompt feedback in a positive and constructive way. All of us make mistakes at one time or another. You and your worker are no exception to that. When a mistake happens, prompt, constructive feedback can help to resolve the situation. Avoid making the issue personal. Saying, "This is how I like my bed made," rather than "You can't do anything right" is an example of a positive, constructive approach.

When reviewing problems with your worker, you should

- **Explain the problem behavior.**
- **Describe the change that's needed.**
- **Offer suggestions for improvement. You can also ask your worker for suggestions in problem solving the issue.**

A kind word can go a long way. When you are pleased with how your worker has done something, let them know. As with correcting your worker, it is helpful to describe the behavior that you liked. For example, "I liked the way you cooked the chicken today. It tasted delicious!" or "Thanks for cleaning the bathroom this afternoon. It really sparkles!" Even a simple "Good job" can go a long way in making your worker feel appreciated.

Have regular meetings. Even if you think everything is going reasonably well, it is a good idea to meet with your worker, regularly, to discuss how things are going. Try doing this once or twice a month (maybe more often when your worker first starts on the job). These meetings will give you both a chance to discuss how things are working and offer you both the opportunity to talk about any problems that might have come up.

Documentation: Record Keeping

You will need to sign your workers' time sheets to verify that he or she worked the hours reported on the time sheet. Some people use a clipboard that providers sign in and out on, so that they can then verify the hours when signing the time sheet. Others use a calendar for tracking this information. Samples of record keeping systems are available on the Internet or from local Centers for Independent Living. Find a system that works for you. Do not sign off for hours not worked.

When it comes to monitoring the quality of your services, you should always put things down in writing. This gives you documentation of how things are going and is a good record to have in case you and your workers have any problems down the road.

There are a couple of different ways of doing this. You could keep a worker log that shows what tasks were done each time the person was there. This may be a good place to write down how things went that day. For example, if your worker did the floors particularly well, you might write, “floors looked wonderful.”

Another option is to keep a journal, or an ongoing record of how your services are going, noting any problems or conflicts that arise, etc. This gives you something to refer back to when discussing your services with your worker or Waiver Service Coordinator. You can do this by writing it down in a journal, or by audio taping it. While this is more time-intensive, it will provide an accurate view of how service delivery is going.

Consider keeping all such documentation in a locked file cabinet or drawer to maintain confidentiality.

Be certain to keep all written correspondence to and from your provider, evaluations of your provider, and their contact information. If you have trouble setting up a system that works for you, talk with your Waiver Service Coordinator who may be able to help you or link you to other resources that can help.

Communication Skills

Communication is more than simply talking to another person. It involves the exchange of ideas, information, thoughts, opinions, and expectations, and is done in many ways: verbally, nonverbally, in writing, or through signs. Communication is an important and powerful skill, and it is the basis of any type of relationship – including your relationship with your provider. Many times when a problem arises in a relationship, it involves a miscommunication or lack of communication.

Communication involves being open and honest from the beginning of your relationship with your provider. But remember that while it involves your personal life, your relationship with your provider is based on business, and you must treat it as such. He or she is there to do a job for you.

Effective communication also means being non-judgmental. This means accepting and respecting people for who they are. You and your providers are different people, and you should not judge or make assumptions about each other based on those differences. Most importantly, you must treat your providers with respect, and likewise, they must treat you with respect. Your relationship is a two-way street – you are both giving and receiving.

Be aware of cultural differences between you and your provider. There is a good chance that you and your provider may have different backgrounds. Behaviors and communication styles that are acceptable in one culture may not be acceptable in another. If a behavior seems strange or different to you, do not assume it is because your provider is doing something wrong. It may just be a cultural difference. Try to explore differences with your provider when appropriate.

Non-verbal Communication

It is also important to remember the effects of non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication means the things that you don't say. The tone of your voice, the expression on your face, the volume of your speech, and eye contact will all communicate messages to your worker. For example, if you are a normally talkative person, and you become extremely quiet, this communicates to your worker that something might be wrong. Your worker may assume that you are angry with him/her.

This may or may not be true. You may be less talkative for any number of reasons. The important thing to remember is that problems arise when assumptions are made regarding what the issue is. If you don't talk about it, and confront the issues, then the problem grows and becomes more difficult to solve.

Feedback

Another important aspect of communication is feedback. Feedback about performance should be specific, timely, meaningful and constructive. Talk with and treat your providers as you would like to be treated. Do not talk negatively about other providers.

Be clear about responsibilities and be respectful when giving direction and feedback. “You are a lousy provider,” is unlikely to change anybody’s behavior. A specific statement like, “I need you to follow the procedure you were shown at training when you are doing a transfer. Otherwise, I am afraid you will drop me,” lets the provider know how you want things done and why.

Positive feedback should be specific. A statement like, “You’re a great provider,” might make your provider feel good, but doesn’t give him or her any information about what part of the job performance you are pleased about. “I appreciate the fact that you are always on time, and that you pay attention to detail,” provides better feedback.

Feedback is a type of follow-up. It is important to bring up issues as they arise, whether they are positive or negative. If your worker does a good job, giving compliments and pointing out exactly what he/she did well accomplishes two things:

- **It conveys appreciation to your workers, which will make them feel good about themselves and the work that they do for you. It sends a message that you are paying attention to the work they are doing or to what they are telling you.**
- **It helps to ensure that the worker will continue to perform those tasks in the same way.**

Feedback also plays a significant role when services are not going exactly the way you want them to. For example, if your worker doesn’t separate your laundry appropriately, it is extremely important that you communicate this to him/her. But remember to do it in a way that is not disrespectful or offensive. If this information has not been discussed or written down beforehand, tell your worker what was done right; what you would like to see changed; and how you would like to see it changed.

You can help prevent problems from building up by bringing up issues as they arise, whether they are positive or negative. Remember, your goal should always be to get the services you need, the way you would like them.

What communication is not...

It is also important to realize what effective communication is not. It is not yelling when you are upset, or if your worker did not do something right. It is also not placing blame on others. This does not solve anything, and leads to defensiveness, and then more blaming. Once again, your goal is to get the services you need, the way you would like them!

See Appendix B for Techniques for Good Communicating.

Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution

When problems arise, you will have to find a way to effectively resolve them. Here are some steps to help you.

1. Define the Problem

This seems simple enough, but everyone might not agree that there is a problem. It may be a problem for you that your provider uses his or her cell phone when she or he is working, but it may not seem like a problem to your provider because she or he is not using your phone.

While this may seem like an easy step, when you have more than one person involved, you are likely to have more than one thought on exactly what the problem is. Start with figuring out *Who owns the problem?* By that we mean, whose problem is it to solve?

Examples:

- **A broken wheelchair is your problem, but your provider and/or family could help you solve the problem.**
- **A provider who bothers you by talking too much is your problem, unless that behavior will lead to the provider losing his or her job. Then the problem belongs to both of you.**
- **A provider who has lost her child care and can't make other arrangements for a week. The problem belongs to both of you.**

Include everyone involved in the situation.

For the most part, this will be you (or your Authorized Representative, if you have one) and your worker. There may be times when other people (such as your Waiver Service Coordinator or a family member) may also need to be a part of the process. Everyone needs to discuss his/her ideas of what the problem is, and come to an agreement on a single problem to work on.

Confronting the problem should focus on how the issue affects you. “You do a great job getting me ready for the day.” “I am disappointed when you are late because it causes me to be late for my appointments. We need to find ways that we can come up with a workable solution so I am not late.”

It is important to remember that, no matter what, your worker is there to do a job for you and are being paid to do the job. Often people don't like to discuss problems with their workers, because they are afraid that their workers might quit. However, many times these are minor problems, which can easily be fixed if you talk to your provider and give immediate feedback about the issue to explain how it is affecting you. Your worker won't have any way of knowing that he/she is doing something that you don't like or are uncomfortable with, unless you tell them. Even if your

worker is having problems in his/her personal life, and you feel badly about having to discuss their poor work performance, you still need to have the discussion. It is better to resolve these problems sooner rather than later. You may find that your worker is aware there are issues and may feel relieved to talk about what is going on. From there, the two of you can work out a plan to remedy the situation.

2. Find a Solution

The next thing to do is to look for solutions. Talk about all the different ways the issue could be resolved. It is important that each person suggests solutions or things to try.

Everyone involved should discuss the positives and negatives of each solution generated. Writing out a list of the pros and cons helps in the evaluation process. Write down every solution without evaluating it or criticizing it at this point, no matter how far-fetched it may seem.

Decide on the solution that will best solve the problem.

3. Make a plan

Based on which solutions you decide to try, plan with your workers how you will go about doing it. Write it down so you have something to refer back to. Consider having a Plan “A” and Plan “B”.

4. Put your plan into action

Decide how you will try out your plan, when you will start, and how long you will try it out.

5. Finally, you need to figure out if it is working

Evaluate your plan with your workers and decide if this has taken care of the problem or if more work needs to be done.

Monitoring Your Provider

Quality Monitoring

How do you know when you are getting good quality service? It seems like a simple question, but quality is sometimes difficult to determine. Quality monitoring describes the process by which you determine how things are going - that is, are your services being provided in the way you want them to be provided? Are tasks being done well?

You will play a very important role in making sure that you receive quality services. You are the one who can best answer the question of whether you are receiving the services you want in the way that you want. Your Waiver Service Coordinator, Care Manager, and other personnel are an important part of the quality monitoring process. They can help you with your worker and/or with agencies to make sure you get quality service and that your problems or concerns get resolved. Most importantly, you are obviously concerned about getting the services that you need and receiving them in the manner in which you would prefer.

What is involved in “monitoring quality?”

The first part of quality monitoring goes back to defining tasks, expectations and setting priorities. Working with the identified expectations, tasks and priorities, quality monitoring is asking what you like about how your services are being provided, what you don't like and maybe how your services might be improved.

Evaluating your worker

As you can guess, another critical part of monitoring your services has to do with evaluating your worker. As you may already know, a crucial part of any employer employee relationship is figuring out how things are going. Is your worker performing well on the job? On the flip side, are there things you, as the employer, can do to make his/her job go more smoothly?

Your worker may be a family member or you may have a close personal friendship with your worker. This relationship can make it hard to evaluate his/her performance objectively and act like a “boss.”

Some questions you may want to keep in mind when monitoring the quality of your services or evaluating how things are going is listed below. This list is a complete list, and there may be other items that are important to you as well.

- **Is your worker on time?**
- **Does your worker show up every time as scheduled?**
- **Does your worker call you, in advance, if he/she is unable to come?**
- **Is the work being done the way you ask?**
- **Do you have to instruct your worker constantly?**
- **Are you being treated with respect?**

Sometimes you may find that problems arise, with your services that you and your worker cannot resolve. When this occurs, be sure you double-check the following:

- **Have you documented your expectations clearly?**
- **Have you communicated your expectations with your worker?**
- **Have you consistently monitored your worker's performance?**
- **Have you provided appropriate feedback to your worker?**
- **Have you attempted to negotiate and compromise when possible?**

Performance Management:

It is a good idea to sit down with your workers periodically to discuss how things are going and to work on any issues that may arise. Even if everything is going well, it's still worthwhile to have regular meetings. You know how you take your car in periodically for preventive maintenance such as oil changes and tune-ups? Even though you may not be having any problems with your car, you still do it to keep your car in good working order and so that you can avoid future problems and break-downs. Think of these meetings as "preventative maintenance" for your relationship with your workers. The meetings will keep things running smoothly and hopefully prevent problems further down the road!

Hint: Consider keeping a file or journal on each worker which contains notes about positive things they are doing as well as issues encountered and/or addressed. This gives you something to refer back to when discussing your services. If you have difficulty writing or typing you can also audio tape your notes. While this is more time-intensive, it will provide an accurate view of how service delivery is going.

When you sit down to review services with your worker, it is a good idea to have the services that your worker is providing written down as well as the worker's file with you. Giving good feedback to your employee is an important part of any evaluation. During the meeting, topics to discuss include:

1. **Job Knowledge.** Does your provider knowledgeable on tasks and safety issues involved in the assigned duties? Do they understand how to bill for services and know what kind of documentation they need to keep?

2. **Job Skills.** Does your provider have the skills to perform all aspects of the job?
3. **Time Management.** Does your provider get to work on time, have good attendance, not take unnecessary breaks, and not conduct personal business at work, etc.?
4. **Ethics and Integrity.** Does your provider demonstrate honesty, integrity, confidentiality, and respect towards your role as supervisor?
5. **Communication.** Does your provider communicate clearly, follow instructions, and not use language that you find offensive?
6. **Commitment.** Does your provider show commitment to providing services in a professional manner and accept responsibility when you provide feedback?
7. **Flexibility.** Is your provider willing and able to learn new ways of doing things as you need and prefer them to be done?

Remember to write down what you discussed and the outcome of your discussions.

You may decide how frequently you would like to have these meetings, but it will probably be more helpful to have them more often in the beginning of your relationship. Consider having both you and your worker sign any performance review paperwork, with copies to both parties.

If you have done all of the above and the situation hasn't improved, you may want to call in another party. This may be your Waiver Service Coordinator, Care Manager, or someone that you believe can help you mediate your conflict. The Waiver Service Coordinator will routinely check in with you, anyway, to see how things are going. This is a good time to report any persistent problems with your workers or to report any changes with regard to your worker.

Dismissing (Firing) Your Provider

Unfortunately, you may need to fire workers because you are dissatisfied with their performance. It is certainly a difficult thing to do, especially if you and your worker have gotten to know each other or if your worker is a friend or family member. But sometimes working relationships don't work out, even between friends or family members. No matter what the relationship is, the worker is there to provide your services. If you are dissatisfied with the work that they are doing, then it may be necessary to terminate their employment.

It is important to be clear about your expectations and determine whether problems with the provider can be resolved. In some situations, you can work through the issues, but other times, you may have to realize the relationship does not work and you must dismiss the provider. You should think about what is best for you as the consumer to avoid firing a good provider in the heat of a disagreement.

Some Grounds for Firing

There may come a time when you may need to let a worker go. Here are some of the most common reasons:

- **You may no longer have a need for these services.**
- **You may move out of the area.**
- **The relationship between you and your worker may simply not work out.**
- **The provider is late or fails to show up too many times.**
- **The provider continues to violate your personal boundaries despite discussion about not doing so.**
- **The provider makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable.**
- **The provider brings other people into your home (friends, children or even pets).**
- **The provider's actions put your health and safety at risk.**

Grounds for Immediate Firing

Some actions by a worker may be grounds for firing right away. These grounds include actions such as:

- **Drinking on the job.**
- **Using illegal drugs on the job.**
- **Coming to work impaired by alcohol or drugs.**

- **Stealing from you or using your credit cards.**
- **Abusing you in any way, which includes verbally, emotionally, physically or sexually.**
- **Violating your confidentiality.**
- **Threatening you.**
- **Anything that impacts your physical safety and emotional well-being.**

If any of these things happen, be sure to tell your Waiver Service Coordinator right away!

How to Dismiss (or Fire) Workers

Before you take action to fire your worker, make sure your back-up plan is in place and your back-up provider(s) are ready to begin providing the services you need so your services can continue without disruption. Unless you have to fire your worker immediately, contact your Waiver Service Coordinator first. Your Waiver Service Coordinator can help you prepare if needed.

The time to plan for the dismissal or firing of your provider is before you run into trouble.

If possible, try to work things out first. As you already know, finding workers can be a difficult process. So you should try to work things out before letting your worker go. Find out what the reasons are for the problems that your worker is having in his/her performance (e.g., why he/she is arriving late, etc.). If your provider is doing something you believe is incorrect or annoying, gently explain how you would like it done instead. Sometimes it is just a matter of explaining the reason why you need something done a particular way. Listen with an open mind to your provider's suggestions as well.

Explain in a non-accusatory, factual way, your concerns about his or her behavior and why it is unacceptable to you. You can invite an explanation by making an observation or asking a neutral, open-ended question, such as, "I notice that you've been late a lot this past week. Is there something I should know about? I depend on you to be on time." Try to discuss the matter calmly and plan together how to improve the situation. You may issue a warning that if the problem continues, it may lead to dismissal. If the problem is serious enough, you may want to put the warning in writing and have the provider sign it. You should also continue to work with your Waiver Service Coordinator to let him or her know that you have a provider that you may need to fire.

Document any performance issues, reviews, and/or conversations that you have with your worker about his or his/her performance. It will help to have records of the performance problems and the interactions that you've had in the event that your worker files for unemployment and you are sent a notice of the claim. Some problems can be documented (for example, calling in sick a lot or often showing up late). In such cases, record the dates and details in a notebook. Later, if you do have to fire the person and he or she files for unemployment compensation or sues, this log may be able to show that you were justified in letting your provider go.

Notify your Waiver Service Coordinator about any serious problems that you are having with your worker. They may be able to assist you, if need be. He/she also needs to keep records of any quality problems with services received by MyCare Ohio consumers. It is also good back-up for you to have, in case you do need to let your worker go.

Telling your worker that he or she is fired. You may fire your worker by phone or in person, depending on the situation. If you are doing this in person and it makes you feel uncomfortable, have another person present (such as your Waiver Service Coordinator, a family member or friend). If you fire an employee in person, consider doing so at the end of a shift rather than at the beginning. Again, try to have back-up providers identified (even if they are temporary) and scheduled ahead of time so you are not left without help.

The person you are firing may be upset. If you feel threatened in any way, call the police. If you feel that your safety or property is in danger, act immediately. Additionally, let your Waiver Service Coordinator know as soon as possible and alert your back up provider so they can cover the hours of the person you are letting go. That way you can concentrate on what you have to do rather than on who is going to put you to bed.

Once you fire a provider, contact your Waiver Service Coordinator right away. Your Waiver Service Coordinator will need to make changes to the provider's information, and to your Service Plan. Also, depending on the reason the provider was fired, action may need to be taken regarding the provider's certification to continue to provide services.

In addition, if you live in an apartment or where the worker has access to your keys, make sure they no longer have access to them. Depending on the situation, you may want to consider changing your locks.

After you have had time to consider the situation, think about what you have learned from it. Would you deal with the situation in a different way? Were you clear about your expectations? Was there a question you would have asked in the interview process that would have helped you realize that this was not the person for you?

Contingency Plans for Emergencies

It is important to plan for emergencies. You will need to think about how you will continue to get your personal care needs met in case something unexpected arises, for example, if your worker is sick or unable to work for some other reason. Your plan might consider using unpaid family or friends to help you, but typically, members utilize certified or approved agencies to provide back-up services.

What will happen if a worker calls in sick or has an emergency of some sort and can't come on that day, or for several days? In some cases, this may not be a problem. You may be able to put off having your laundry done until the next time he/she comes in. But what if your worker is responsible for helping to get you out of bed in the morning or for cooking your meals? Then just going without help isn't realistic. So it is absolutely critical that you come up with some sort of back-up plan in case of emergencies.

Planning for Provider Emergencies

No matter how carefully you plan, and no matter how good your providers are, you are likely to have some provider emergencies. Be prepared for this. Here are some ideas for covering provider emergencies:

- **Providers you liked, but could not hire as a regular worker. There may have been a person you liked but couldn't hire because their schedules didn't fit all the hours you needed them to work, etc. Maybe they could serve as a backup for you on occasion. Remember, in order for them to be paid, they will need to be a certified Medicaid waiver provider with a Medicaid provider agreement, and pass a background check.**
- **Consider family, friends or neighbors to fill in when you have an emergency. Even though they will not be needed on a regular basis, if they expect to be paid, they will also need to be certified as a Medicaid waiver provider with a Medicaid provider agreement, and pass a background check.**
- **Your back-up provider should be fully trained in how to support you as well as how to handle emergencies. Make sure they have proper training, and understand your routine.**
- **Be flexible. It may be that back-up providers are able to help but may not be available at the exact time your regular provider worked.**
- **Keep a list of your provider emergency contacts in case you need to contact them to alert them of your provider's emergency.**
- **Use a home health agency. Your Waiver Service Coordinator can help you with this.**

However you choose to handle this, you need to be prepared! Whomever you chose needs to be able to fill in promptly. Being prepared will be your best defense against some of the potential problems that may crop up.

Planning for Medical Emergencies

As you train your provider, make sure he or she knows what to do in case of medical emergencies. After all, if you have a medical emergency, you may not be able to direct your providers. Here are some tips related to medical emergencies:

- **Discuss both routine emergencies, such as cuts and burns requiring first aid, and other emergencies specifically related to your disability or medical condition.**
- **Create a waterproof container (such as a large plastic zip bag or sealable plastic box) that will hold copies of your important information. Place this marked container in an area that is easily accessible to your providers as well as emergency personnel. In this container make sure to have copies of the following:**
 - Emergency procedures.
 - Emergency contact information.
 - Medical insurance information.
 - Advanced health directives.
 - Current lists of all medications you take (including over-the-counter).
 - Lists of any known allergies and drug interactions.
- **If you have life support or medical equipment, make sure the providers know how and when to use it and what to do if the equipment fails.**

Planning for Weather Emergencies

As you train your provider, make sure you cover what to do in all types of weather emergencies. Topics may include:

- **Create a waterproof disaster preparedness kit. There are plenty of websites, such as the Red Cross, for ideas on what to include.**
- **Location of the clearly marked disaster preparedness kit. It should be kept in an easily accessible location (preferably by an exit), and checked or updated regularly (possibly each time you check your smoke detectors)**
- **Where and how to activate back-up power for equipment. Be sure to instruct your provider that in case of power loss to call the local fire department and power company to notify them that you are a priority because of your medical needs (such as ventilation or oxygen supplies)**
- **Where and how to turn off gas and water supplies to the house in case of line rupture.**

Appendix A - Interviewing Basics

Preparation

The face-to-face interview gives you the opportunity to learn as much as you can about the person who is applying for the job. It also gives the applicant information about the job requirements so that both of you can make a good decision. This works best if you are prepared.

Be Safe

- Hold the interview in a location that is safe for you.
- Your local Center for Independent Living, apartment building, or community library may have rooms available for you to conduct interviews if you do not want to use your home.
- Somebody else, such as a friend, can sit in with you for an interview. In addition to providing extra security, having a second person is recommended since she or he may notice things at the interview that you do not.

Be Prepared. Before the Interview, Make Sure You Have:

- A blank application form.
- A job description.
- A checklist (if you are using one) of duties for the shift(s) you are hiring.
- Information about your limitations.
- Information about special equipment you use.
- A way to record your impressions (write them yourself, have a tape recorder, invite a friend to act as recorder, etc.).
- A list of the interview questions you will ask (See below for suggested interview questions.).

Planning the Interview Questions

- Decide ahead of time what questions you will ask, and write them out. See the chart below for samples of allowable and illegal questions.
- Frame your interview questions to give you the information you need.

- Use the same list of questions for each applicant so you can compare their responses more easily.
- Don't ask illegal questions.

The following are some questions that could be used:

Suggested Interview Questions	Information You Are Seeking
Do you have questions about anything in the job description?	Applicant's understanding of the job.
Tell me about yourself and your experience, particularly with older people or people with limitations.	Experience, training, skills, attitude, opinions about disability.
Why are you interested in this type of work?	Attitude, compatibility.
What is your impression of people with older people or people with limitations?	Answers involving independence, choice, responsibility, right to live one's own life.
What qualities do you believe you could offer in working for me?	Realistic appraisal of his/her qualities.
Tell me how you have used that quality (named in the last question) in the past or give me an example of why you believe you have that skill.	Give you specific information about qualities and traits named. Allows you to evaluate how realistic his/her self-appraisal is.
How do you think you would feel about taking direction from me?	Willingness to take direction.
What kind of situations do you find stressful and how do you deal with stress?	Ability to handle stress.
What is your understanding of confidentiality?	Understands your right to privacy.
Situational Question: The food for the evening's dinner appears spoiled when you take it out of the refrigerator. What do you do?	Problem-solving abilities, ability to recognize an unhealthy situation, importance of taking direction from consumer.
Situational Question: On Sunday my wheelchair battery dies. Wheelchair service is not open on Sunday. What would you suggest to overcome this problem?	Problem-solving abilities, importance of taking direction from consumer.

Some questions are illegal. Sometimes consumers/supervisors ask illegal questions when they are simply trying to be friendly or make conversation. Following are some examples:

Illegal Interview Topics	You Cannot Ask	You Can Ask
Ethnic origin or background	Where are your parents from?	-----
Color/race	What is your racial	-----

	background?	
Nationality or national Origin	Where are you from?	-----
Religion	Where do you go to church?	This job involves work on Sunday mornings. Are you able to do that?
Age	How old are you?	Are you over 18?
Sex	What is your sexual orientation?	-----
Disability	Do you have a disability? Do you have a pre-existing health condition?	Transferring me in an out of a wheelchair is an essential function of this job. Is there any reason you could not perform that task?
Political belief	What political party do you belong to?	-----
Family or marital status	Are you married? Do you have children? Do you have childcare?	This job involves weekend, evening, and holiday work. Is that something you are able to do?
Source of income	Do you have any other income?	-----

What If You Are Nervous?

- Recognize that it is natural to feel nervous when interviewing.
- The prospective provider is also probably nervous.
- Breathing deeply is the quickest way to relieve anxiety. Be careful not to hyperventilate though!
- Being prepared for the interview will also lower your anxiety level.

Starting the Interview

- First impressions are important. Convey a sense that you are a capable individual able to direct your own care.
- If you have a friend or somebody else present, make sure it is clear that you are the interviewer.
- Think about the location of the interview. A living room is a better choice than the bedroom, which can convey dependency.
- Wear clothes that convey confidence. Don't wear sleepwear.
- Sit facing the applicant so that you can observe eye contact and body language.

- **Eliminate distractions. Turn the TV and radio off. Make sure pets and children will not interrupt.**

When you start the interview, try to put the person at ease. You are more likely to get a true sense of what a person is like if she or he is comfortable. Start with questions that are general such as, "What did you like about your last job?"

Then, move to more sensitive questions later in the interview like, "What do you see will be your biggest challenge working with an older person or person who has disabilities?" or "What will be your biggest challenge working with an individual who needs personal care?" There are many ways to interview. The process involves giving and receiving information on both sides.

While you have probably explained the job to applicants over the phone, it is a good idea to give them a copy of your job description and go over, in detail, the tasks they will be performing, the hours they will be expected to work, and the rate of pay. Do not let applicants talk you into a higher rate of pay unless you really want this person to work for you and you are sure you can afford it.

During the interview:

- **Describe your routine and needs requirements in detail.**
- **Ask work-related, open-ended questions (questions that require more than a yes or no answer).**
- **Tell the person what you expect in a worker.**
- **Tell the person about the work schedule.**
- **Provide the person with a copy of the job description and provider rules. Your Waiver Service Coordinator can point you to the rules, if needed.**
- **Explain your disability, medical condition, or limitations as well as you can.**
- **Be up-front and clear, especially about duties that might make a person uncomfortable.**
- **Notice not only what the person says, but also how he or she says it.**
- **Give the person plenty of chances to ask questions and give honest answers.**

During the interview, ask for references and permission to contact them. Who are good references? The best references are usually those people who have used your applicant as a paid or unpaid worker. They know about the person's work performance and habits. If your applicant has no prior experience as a direct support worker, then other good reference sources are previous employers, teachers and former co-workers. Avoid using family members or friends as references. They will not know about the applicant's work habits and they are likely to tell you only good things.

Suggestions to Consider

- **Be careful of stereotyping people. Young people do not always change jobs frequently! Not all newlyweds rush to start a family! Older persons are not all close-minded! People from other cultures do not automatically consider disability to be a pitiable, shameful condition! Get the idea?**
- **Do not be afraid to ask for examples of how applicants would handle or have handled situations that you believe are important: “What would you do if you dropped me during a transfer?” “Give me an example of how you handle problem situations.”**
- **If transfers are part of the services you need, consider having applicants transfer you during the interview. Be sure to have another person present who knows proper transfer techniques. You can ask your Waiver Service Coordinator to help you find someone if necessary.**
- **If either you or the applicant has doubts, or if your needs for assistance are complex, consider having the applicant observe your routines before you offer them employment.**
- **If you are nervous or unsure of your interviewing skills, ask a friend or family member to sit in on the interview with you.**
- **While it is annoying, do not be discouraged if people do not show up for face-to-face interviews. You can expect about half not to appear. This gives you an important indicator of what they would be like as a provider.**

Generally you should interview more than one person. This is an important decision, and you want to have as much choice as possible. Keep notes on your thoughts and feelings about the people and their answers to your questions. This helps you avoid confusion about details. Use these notes to help you compare the good and bad points of the people you have interviewed. Give yourself time to think about who is most likely to meet your needs.

After the Interview: Check References

Some companies will ask for a written release before giving a reference. Others may have a policy not to give out any information other than the dates of employment. This is not a reflection on the applicant.

When talking to a reference, explain the type of work the job requires. Tell the reference that you will keep all information confidential. A reference must feel comfortable enough to give you an honest and accurate assessment of the person. Take notes of what the reference says. If you are checking many references, you can get confused about who said what about which person.

When checking references, briefly verify what applicants told you about their dates of employment and job title. Determine whether their job performance was satisfactory. If an applicant no longer works for a particular employer, ask about eligibility to rehire. Ask questions that will tell you specifically what you need to know. For example:

- **What can you tell me about his or her attendance?**
- **Can you describe his or her job performance?**
- **The ability to follow directions is important to me. What can you tell me about his or her ability to listen and follow directions?**
- **How responsible is he or she? Give me an example.**
- **Give an example of his or her ability to handle tense or emergency situations.**
- **How did he or she get along with others?**
- **Give me an example of how he or she handled constructive criticism.**
- **Would you consider rehiring him or her?**

You may not get many answers from references. Some people do not want to say anything bad about another person. If a reference does not give you much information, be thankful for what you do get, and move on to the next reference.

You cannot know why a reference gives you little information or if the lack of information means something negative. Successful reference-checking is mainly a question of balancing the information you obtain and is simply one way to get information you can use to decide about hiring someone.

Appendix B - Techniques for Good Communicating

Effective Listening

One of the most common listening mistakes is focusing on a response rather than really listening.

When you listen:

- **Give the other person your full attention. You may not be able to give your full attention if you are thinking about what your response will be while the person is talking.**
- **Pay attention to body language as well as spoken message.**
- **Maintain appropriate eye contact so the person knows you are interested. (Appropriate eye contact does not mean staring, but means making eye contact in a non-threatening way.)**
- **Encourage the speaker by nodding your head, saying, “Go on,” “Tell me more,” “Uh-huh” or something similar. Verbal encouragement will be especially important if you are speaking with someone with a visual disability.**

When the person is done speaking, **reflect back** to the person what she or he said to make sure you understood the content. This involves briefly summarizing what she or he said and capturing the emotional tone.

For example you can begin reflective listening sentences in this way:

- **Let me see if I understand what you are saying...**
- **So you are saying...**
- **You are angry because ...**
- **You are excited because ...**
- **I can see that you feel really...**

If you notice what the person is saying does not match his or her body language, you should address this:

- **Although you are telling me you are happy, you appear to be stressed.**
- **You are telling me you don’t mind working these specific hours, but you sound angry.**

When you take the time to reflect back what you think you are hearing, the other person has a chance to correct your thinking if you have misunderstood him or her. She or he can also give you additional information.

If the emotion is unclear, make a guess, such as, *“It sounds like maybe you were a little unhappy about all that...”*

Pay attention to whether the person speaking accepts your summary by saying things such as *“Yeah!” “You got that right,” “That’s right,”* and similar responses.

Reflective listening acknowledges the other person’s *thoughts* and *feelings*. It does not mean you necessarily agree or approve of what she or he said. You still have the option of agreeing or disagreeing.

Often, if someone feels heard, she or he is more likely to compromise or accept that she or he can’t have his or her own way this time.

Some examples of acknowledging feelings but not agreeing:

- **“I understand that you feel I am being unfair in the hours that I have given to you. Let me explain why I am making these decisions.”**
- **“I understand that doing my laundry is your least favorite part of this job. I know it is difficult because I am on the second floor and the laundry is in the basement. I still must insist that you do the laundry as indicated on the Service Plan.”**

Explain What You Want to Talk About

This step asks us to let the other person know what it is we want to discuss (our intent) and then ask if she or he wants to talk at this time. It will be helpful to use this technique when talking to any of your providers, especially about difficult situations.

Explaining intent allows listeners to prepare for what is coming, especially if the topic is emotionally charged, such as, your provider was late, not performing tasks as instructed, not listening, or even if you are terminating them.

Even if the subject matter is not emotionally difficult, some conversations require a lot more time, effort and involvement than others. Out of respect for the other person, tell him or her what the conversation is going to be about, and ask if she or he wants to take part at this time. Explaining intent helps listeners understand the “big picture.”

Examples of explaining what you want to talk about:

- **“Maria, do you have a minute? I would like to talk to you about your job performance so far.”**

- **“Carl, I’d like to talk with you about the housekeeping chores. There are some things I would like done a little differently. Is this a good time to talk?”**

Express Yourself Clearly by Using “I” Messages

This technique builds a common ground with the person you are speaking with. It can be used for pointing out problem areas or concerns. It allows the other person to see the problem from your point of view, which may lead to a more positive outcome.

“I” messages focus the speaker. You share how you are experiencing a situation with the other person. “I” messages are more effective than “you” messages, which focus on the other person’s faults or mistakes. “You” messages can sound like you are attacking the other person.

Here are some examples:

Try to use positive “I” messages	Avoid using negative “you” messages
I feel frustrated when you interrupt me when I am talking.	You are disrespectful and rude.
I feel angry when I can’t get in touch with you to discuss my care needs.	You are the worst service coordinator I’ve ever had.
I feel annoyed when I have to remind you to clean up the kitchen as outlined on the checklist.	You are a horrible housekeeper.

Use Requests Instead of Criticisms and Complaints

It seems to be human nature to complain and criticize when we are upset, rather than look for possible solutions. Often when others feel criticized they do not listen well. Their energy is taken up by defending their position or planning a counter attack to save face, so you are no closer to a solution.

When you have a complaint, think of how you can turn it into a request. This helps you meet your needs without hurting others.

When you have a request:

- **Be specific.**
- **Make the request action-oriented.**
- **Use positive language.**
- **Do not make comments about the person’s character.**

Avoid “blanket” statements like:

- **You always...**
- **You never...**

Help your listener comply with requests by giving reasons for the request.

In the examples in the chart below, the complaints focus on character traits and do not give the person any ideas on how to improve behavior or performance. The requests focus on specific action steps and the reasons why you’d like things done a certain way.

Don’t use the complaints below	Instead, use specific requests	With explanations to get results
I wish you would be better at household tasks.	I would like you to wipe the counters down completely with anti-bacterial soap after preparing meals.	This prevents germs from growing on the counter.
Can’t you try to be a better health care provider?	I would like you to follow the instructions for this task you were trained on.	This way I have less chance of infection.
You are so slow with the chores. Can’t you work any faster?	I’d like you to throw in a load of laundry as you are preparing dinner.	It will be more efficient to have the laundry being done while dinner is being prepared.

Think about some recent complaints you have had with someone you know. Can you think of ways to frame the complaints as specific, action-oriented requests with an explanatory clause?

Ask Open-Ended Questions

Asking open-ended questions helps you find out more about what people are feeling and thinking. Yes/no questions will give you short and abrupt answers. Open-ended questions allow the other person to give you a more in-depth response.

If you are trying to solve a problem or getting to know the people around you, open-ended questions give you more information.

Examples:

- **How are you feeling about all of this?**
- **Do you have any ideas for keeping the kitchen cleaner?**

Also, if you are trying to solve a problem, rather than pointing blame on your provider, try using open-ended questions that focus on how to solve the problem.

Examples:

- **What system can we put in place so this problem won't happen again?**
- **How could we work together to solve this problem?**

Learning better communication skills is a life-long process. It takes commitment and practice, but the rewards will extend far beyond this program.

Note: Some of this information was adapted from a manual on communication by Dennis Rivers, M.A. *Communicating More Cooperatively, The Seven Challenges Communication Skills Workbook and Reader.*

