

# How to Hire In-Home Help

A Guide for Those Needing In-Home  
Services and Their Families



Published by the  
Information and Assistance Offices  
of the  
Olympic Area Agency on Aging

# Olympic Area Agency on Aging

## Administrative Office

Port Hadlock	360-379-5064
Toll-free:	866-720-4863

## Information & Assistance Offices

### *Clallam County*

Forks	360-942-3634
Toll-free:	888-571-6559
Sequim	360-452-3221
Toll-free:	800-801-0070

### *Grays Harbor County*

Aberdeen	360-532-0520
Toll-free:	800-801-0060

### *Jefferson County*

Port Townsend	360-385-2552
Toll-free:	800-801-0050

### *Pacific County*

Long Beach	360-642-3634
Toll-free:	888-571-6558
Raymond	360-942-2177
Toll-free	888-571-6557

<b>HOME CARE REFERRAL REGISTRY</b>	<b>800-970-5456</b>
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# IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

**Emergencies requiring fire, police or medical assistance, CALL 911 !**

**Local Sheriff or Police:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Local Fire Department:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Doctor(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Personal Telephone Numbers:**

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**The Olympic Area Agency on Aging** is a public, non-profit agency whose mission, vision and values are as follows:

## **MISSION**

The Olympic Area Agency on Aging exists to help older adults and persons with disabilities maintain their dignity, health and independence in their homes, through a comprehensive and coordinated system of home and community-based services. The Federal Older Americans Act provides O3A with the authority to deploy six broad operational strategies to advance its mission. These strategies include:

- **Advocacy**, which encompasses O3A's responsibility to represent the needs and concerns of older people in the policy, program and budget development processes at the local, state and federal levels, as well as their needs and concerns arising from service delivery;
- the dissemination of **Consumer information** and the conduct of **Public education** activities;
- the **Procurement of local services** through performance-based contract mechanisms;
- the **Provision of coordination and technical assistance** to community based entities and other stakeholder organizations that affect aging services, policies and programs throughout the service region;
- **Planning and program development**, based on local community assessment and including the application of evidence-based program and service models that improve

quality of life and enhance the delivery of health and human services at the community level; and

- **Oversight** of its programmatic and fiscal responsibilities.

## VISION

O3A believes that dignity is inherent to all individuals in our society, and that older adults and persons with disabilities should have the opportunity to fully participate in all aspects of society and community life, be able to maintain their health and independence, and remain in their own homes, supported by their communities, for as long as they choose to do so.

## VALUES

O3A is guided by a set of core values in developing and carrying out its mission. These values include:

- Listening to older people, those with a disability, their family caregivers, and our partners who serve them;
- Responding to the changing needs and preferences of our increasingly diverse and rapidly growing older population;
- Producing measurable outcomes that significantly impact the well-being of older people and their family caregivers; and
- Valuing and investing in our staff and provider network.

*Find out more about our agency at [www.o3a.org](http://www.o3a.org)*

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# RESOURCES FOR FINDING IN-HOME SERVICES

## Hire through an agency:

In your county there are several agencies through which you may acquire services. Please refer to the center of this booklet for a current listing.

This method will save time and the interviewing process, but expect to pay several dollars more an hour for services that are structured in graduating levels. Agencies may also have requirements for a minimum number of hours. Some may offer a flat rate for a particular service like bath assistance and a minimum hourly requirement for a home care aide. See page 12 for a list of questions you might ask when selecting an agency for your home care needs.

## Hire Directly:

Check employment listings at the Employment Security Department office (aka WorkSource), senior centers,



look for ads in the newspaper, or check religious organization's bulletins.

Friends and neighbors are also a good source. See page 8 for tips on advertising.

This method generally will save you money but it is more work to screen and interview workers, check references, hire them and deal with IRS issues.

## State-Paid Services

Low-income and functionally-eligible individuals may qualify for state-funded services. Call Information and Assistance (numbers listed on inside cover) for more details on the programs available.

For people who are receiving state-paid services, there is another option for finding a provider – the **Home Care Referral Registry**. The Registry is a web-based service, designed to match the needs of Washington State residents, both seniors and people with disabilities, who receive publicly funded long-term in-home care with pre-screened and pre-qualified in-home care providers. Call toll-free **1-800-970-5456** to find the office nearest you.

## TERMS USED IN THE HOME CARE BUSINESS

These terms are used by some agencies, which may give you an idea of the level of care you or your family may need. Most of these types of care are provided for an hourly rate. Twenty-four hour care rates are also available.

## **Companion**

Social contact, an escort on walks or errands.

## **Chore Services**

Housekeeping tasks, grocery shopping, laundry.

Sometimes meal preparation, but not usually personal care.

## **Homemaker**

All the above chore tasks plus meal preparation and help with personal care needs like getting dressed, not usually bathing assistance.

## **Home Care Aide**

All the above chore tasks as well as personal care needs like medication reminders, assistance with hygiene and bathing, dressing, exercises, etc. This does not include skilled services that a licensed nurse must perform.

## **Nursing Services**

Skilled service requires a licensed nurse, including medication setup, monitoring blood sugars, and medical staffing.

# MEDICARE-COVERED HOME HEALTH SERVICES

To qualify for Medicare-covered services certain requirements must be met:

- A physician must approve and order each type of service received.
- The individual must be homebound; that is, have a medical condition which makes it difficult to obtain services outside the home.
- The individual must be in need of skilled nursing or rehabilitation services, not just help with personal care or assistance tending a chronic condition.

When services are obtained, the family members can ask the nurse to write the name of the person who provides the service next to the service to be provided. The number of providers can sometimes be confusing. Some of the professionals who may be providing services could include: a nurse, home care aide, occupational therapist, physical therapist, social worker and/or speech therapist.

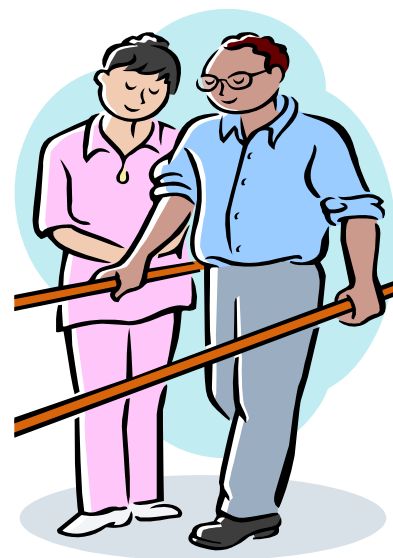
If you think you, or a family member, may qualify for these kinds of services, contact the primary care physician involved and request that Medicare nursing services be ordered.

# DETERMINING WHAT HELP IS NEEDED

At some point it may become clear that some routines of daily living are no longer being accomplished, or are done only with great difficulty. To determine what help is needed, you may want to list necessary routines and ask yourself what you can do alone, what your family members, or others, are able and willing to do, and what is not being done.

Household management assistance may include housework, cooking, meal planning, laundry, paperwork, errands, and transportation.

Personal care tasks may include help with dressing, ambulation (walking or moving around due to mobility impairment), bathing, toileting, personal hygiene, transfers (i.e., from bed to chair), and medication reminders.



You may want to consult with Information and Assistance to help you in this process. Once you have examined the needs, you can either approach a home care agency or you can develop a job description for hiring an independent privately paid provider.

Do not try to hire someone on a 7-day-a week basis. No employee can remain a good employee for long, if she/he does not have time for their personal needs and interests. Additionally, aides who live in or sleep over cannot be expected to be on call 24 hours a day. If you or your relative needs frequent help or supervision during the night, you should hire a second home care aide, or have a family member fill in.

If you or your relative needs a considerable amount of help, live-in help may be available, which can be less expensive than hourly or per day employees. However, keep in mind that you will be providing food and lodging and that it might be more difficult to dismiss live-in aides, especially if they do not have alternative housing available. It is also important to ensure that the aide has their own living quarters, and that they have some free time during the day, sufficient time to sleep and days off.

## **SELECTING AN AGENCY**

If you select an agency to provide your in-home services, you might consider asking the following questions.

- What type of employee screening is done?
- Who supervises the employee?

- What types of general and specialized training have the employees received?
- Who do you call if the employee does not come?
- What are the fees and what do they cover?
- Is there a sliding fee scale?
- What are the minimum and maximum hours of service?
- Are there limitations in terms of tasks performed or times of the day when services are furnished?

## **ADVERTISING FOR AN INDEPENDENT PRIVATELY PAID PROVIDER**

The best way to find an independent provider is to get a recommendation from a family member, friend or someone else you trust. Let people know you are looking. Your church group or other organization you belong to may be important resources. You may want to check the “jobs wanted” section of the classified ads of your newspapers. You may ask to put an ad on bulletin boards in facilities such as your local senior center, or place an ad in a local paper.

At a minimum, your ad should include hours needed, a brief description of duties, post office box or telephone number and time to call. You could also mention preferences such as non-smoker or male/female, and wages offered. Never put your home address in the ad!

## **SETTING UP A JOB DESCRIPTION AND CONTRACT WITH A PRIVATELY PAID PROVIDER**

The purpose of a job description or contract is to clarify the duties and responsibilities of both the employer and the worker. Having a formalized agreement is essential if there is a dispute about salary, hours of work, tasks, etc. A contract/job description can always be revised or updated as needed. It is important to be as specific as you can in a contract, to lessen the chances for confusion or disagreement. If the job involves special skills such as lifting into the bath tub or giving medications, the worker should be trained and experienced in those skills.



## **INTERVIEWING A PRIVATELY PAID PROVIDER**

You may wish to complete a screening interview over the phone where you will ask the most important questions. You

can call some references before you set up in-person interviews, as well as after you've made a selection.

For those individuals you feel are appropriate for the job, set a specific appointment time for an interview. It is recommended that you invite a family member or friend to be present for the interview. This can be very helpful both for moral support and in sorting out the information you obtain during the interview.

## For the interview

Have your sample contract ready for the applicant to read. Record name, address and telephone number of applicant. Below are some suggested interview questions. Make up your **own** list of questions which meet **your** particular needs.

- Where have you worked before? What kinds of things have you done?
- Tell me something about your hobbies, interests, etc.
- How do you feel about caring for an elderly or disabled person?
- Have you ever provided care for a person similar to what this job requires?
- How do you handle people who are angry or frustrated?

- Why are you choosing to do this kind of work?
- What makes you uncomfortable or angry?
- What is your attitude about smoking, drinking or using drugs?
- Is there anything in the job description which you would not do?
- What commitment to staying on this job are you willing to make?
- If you have a pet; Do you like pets?
- Please give me two work-related and one personal references.

Review the Interview Checklist on page 11 before ending the interview. If the applicant is obviously unsuited, do not commit about a future contact. Remind a suitable applicant that you will need to check references before making a decision. Make sure to get a number where they can be reached.

Notify anyone you liked, but didn't hire, that you may want to contact them again, and keep their names and a phone number where they can be reached in the future.

# NEVER hire someone *without* checking references!

## INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

- Was the person on time for the interview?
- Was his/her appearance and grooming appropriate for the occasion?
- Did the applicant and I agree on the terms and conditions of the contract?
- Do I need to modify my contract before employing this person? How?
- Did I get at least two references to call to verify his/her ability to perform needed services?
- Did I say when I would probably notify the applicant of his/her acceptance or non acceptance?
- Do I have the name and best phone number of the applicant?
- Did I feel comfortable or at ease with the person?
- Did I note anything that made me uncomfortable? (Dress, speech, behavior, etc.)

# QUESTIONS TO ASK REFERENCES

- How long have you known \_\_\_\_? Dates? In what relationship?
- Is \_\_\_\_ working for you now? Has \_\_\_\_ worked for you in the past? (If no longer working for reference, ask why not.) Why did \_\_\_\_ leave? Would you re-hire him/her?
- What was \_\_\_\_'s position with you? Can you tell me more about his/her responsibilities?
- How did \_\_\_\_ get along with you and senior adults, or persons with disabilities?
- What were your impressions of \_\_\_\_ as a worker?
- Did \_\_\_\_ show initiative or wait to be told what to do?
- Was \_\_\_\_ reliable/dependable?
- What were his/her strengths and weaknesses?
- Did you find \_\_\_\_ trustworthy and honest?
- Were you aware of any problems with drugs or alcohol?
- Any other problems that could interfere with \_\_\_\_'s performance?

At this time, briefly describe why you are looking for a worker and ask the reference if the applicant would be a good match for your situation.

You can also utilize, for a small fee, the Washington State Patrol Criminal History Background Check. For more details on how to do that, email [watch.help@wsp.wa.gov](mailto:watch.help@wsp.wa.gov) or call **(360) 534-2000**.

## SOME FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Once an applicant is offered the job and accepts, the contract should be signed before the worker starts. Each party should have a copy of the signed contract.

When you become an employer, you have some obligations in record-keeping. If you pay \$1,000.00 or more per year to an employee, you are required by law to withhold for Social Security benefits and make quarterly payments to the Internal Revenue Services (IRS). **(Exception: If the person you are hiring is self-employed, he/she is required to pay his/her own social security taxes. For bookkeeping reasons and less paperwork, many people prefer to hire only self-employed workers)**



Also be aware that accidents can happen to your employee while working for you and you need to have insurance coverage for such incidents.

### **Below is a checklist of considerations:**

- Discuss with your homeowner insurance agent about your liability coverage as it applies to someone in your employ.
- You should have a contract agreement detailing the rate of pay, days and hours of employment. (See example in the center of this pamphlet)
- To get IRS forms and publications about Social Security withholding requirements, call the IRS and ask for the current form for Household Employers. This number is 1-800-829-1040. The website for more information is [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).
- Set up a form for record of payments and deductions for your employee.
- When you file your own 1040 tax return, determine if payments to your employee qualify as a medical deduction for you.



- Be aware of possible legal and financial pitfalls of paying in cash instead of by check. Use receipt forms or other proof of payments to worker. (Receipt books are available where stationery supplies are sold.)
- Keep a record of any serious problems you have with your worker, in case of later disputes.
- Do not tempt human nature. Keep cash, jewelry, or other valuables in a location where a worker will not see them or have access to them.

## **SUPERVISING IN-HOME WORKERS**

- Make a list of the steps for each task, including preferences for cleansers, and implements to be used, the locations of these items, and reminder of parts of the task which could be overlooked, for example, “please separate the white wash” or “please sweep under the table,”
- Establish a regular task schedule, such as laundry on Monday, shopping on Friday, etc. This will provide you with dependability and will avoid constant giving and taking of directions, which is tiring and time-consuming for both you and your provider.

- Avoid following the worker around the home. Instead, ask to be notified after each task is complete. Then, check off each step that has been finished correctly. Simply remind the worker if any step has been left out.
- Be sure to acknowledge any extra effort or thoughtfulness, even if what has been done does not fit exactly with your specifications. It is important to focus on the person's good will rather than insignificant errors.
- Correct major errors by giving information rather than criticism. Unless an error occurs repeatedly, assume that the person has been lacking information about how something should be handled within the home.
- Keep track of hours worked. Regardless of whether your agreement is to pay in a lump sum rather than daily, you will want to keep track of hours worked. One good way is to ask them to enter their hours on a calendar each day; that way you both have a record available at all times.
- Do not ask your provider to work in your home when you are not there. If there are reasons why you will not be at home, cancel with advance notice.

- Be sure your provider knows your doctor's phone number; or anyone else to be contacted in an emergency.

## OPEN COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR IN-HOME CARE PROVIDER

Open communication between employer and employee can maintain a positive relationship. People appreciate being told when they are doing a good job. It is also important to tell people about factors that irritate you or unacceptable job performance. Small annoyances can often cause larger problems when not discussed. A good work environment will bring the best performance from an employee and open communication is a necessary component of a good work environment.



### **Praise a job well done. People need to be appreciated.**

Describe what you like and include your feelings. For example: “Thank you for putting non-skid strips in the bath. I feel much safer.” or “I really appreciate the extra care you take in cleaning under the furniture (around the

sink, etc.) Having a clean home feels wonderful, “or  
“Thank you for making the effort to be here on time.”

**Be fair and kind. Respect your employee’s privacy. Be honest. Be sure your expectations are clear.**

Give specific, written directions regarding duties to be performed by employee. Review privileges such as meals and use of telephone. Demonstrate difficult tasks and have employee practice for you. Develop a checklist to be completed by employee and yourself at the end of each shift.

**Get small irritations off your chest before they build up.**

In the event of irritations or problems, permit ample time to discuss and resolve them. Give criticism as soon as possible after the problem occurs. Mention one incident at a time and make a suggestion for improvement. Describe what you did not like and include your feelings. Criticize the incident or actions, not the person. Keep criticism brief and to the point. Forgive and forget.

# WHEN IN-HOME SERVICES ARE RESISTED

Even though in-home workers may be essential in maintaining individuals in their homes, these services are sometimes resisted. It is important to respond to this with as much understanding and consideration as possible.

## **Maintaining a sense of independence**

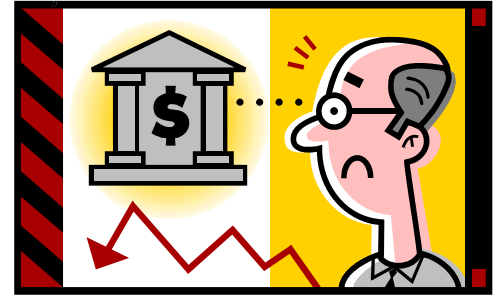
People may not realize that they have been accepting services (in the form of neighborly assistance or family visits in which chores are completed) for quite a while. To accept a stranger's help may be viewed as an acceptance of diminished capability.

It is important to involve the person needing care in the process: writing the job description, interviewing, checking references and hiring. Even if you are limited to providers through state funding, the person receiving the in-home care can maintain independence by using supervisory skills.

## **Worrying about depleting savings**

It may be helpful to multiply out the cost of in-home care over an entire year so that the exact cost can be seen relative to the benefits received. Comparing the annual

total to the cost of assisted living, or nursing home care, may also be helpful in obtaining a realistic perspective.



**Tip** – Listen to the worries as well as the meaning and emotions behind them.

## **Fear of reduced contact with family member**

Reassure the person receiving care that contact with the family will continue.

**Tip** – Offer frequent phone calls and set dates for social contact.

By stating clearly that the intention in hiring help is to prolong their ability to provide care, the family members can sometimes show the person needing in-home help that this action is the very opposite of abandonment. It may, in fact, allow for the family members to spend more quality time in social contact, instead of focusing on getting chores done at every visit.

## **Worry about lack of supervisory skills**

Persons needing in-home help may need to learn how to provide clear instructions and appropriate supervision to inspire confidence in his or her abilities.

**Tip** – Have a job description prepared before any interviews take place.

**Tip** – Compile a checklist of tasks to be performed: This checklist should be given to the worker before each session so that tasks are clearly stated and can be verified if not performed. This checklist also structures the relationship on a professional foundation.

## **Fear of victimization**

A new in-home worker may represent a threat to a person needing in-home help. After all, this is a stranger who is gaining access to household and personal items of the person needing care. People who may have hearing, vision or mobility deficits may feel very vulnerable.

**Tip** – Get referrals from friends: A trusted worker of a trusted friend can be an excellent prospect.

**Tip** – Be a physical presence: A family member or friend can be present during the first few sessions which can reassure the person receiving care and can also allow the observer to form their own impression of the caregiver. Later this person or others can make unplanned visits occasionally.



# ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND ABUSE PREVENTION

An important ethical consideration facing families, elders, persons with disabilities and their caregivers is that of gifts. An employee/caregiver should not accept gifts of money or anything else. It violates the professional relationship that should be established between a worker and the employer. This is a difficult concept for many people to accept. The caregiver/client relationship is by its nature one that has an imbalance of power. The caregiver is usually more capable physically, and often mentally. To receive gifts other than wages jeopardizes the “balance of power” and drifts into the area of elder abuse or exploitation of vulnerable adults.

Exploitation and abuse of vulnerable adults is all too common without proper advance planning, accountability and supervision. Abuse can take many forms including accepting gifts, theft of personal items, physical abuse or emotional battering and neglect.

If you feel unsafe or uncomfortable with a caregiver, contact a third party such as the **Department of Social and Health Service Adult Protective Services at 1-877-734-6277**, or your local Information and Assistance office at the numbers listed in the front of this pamphlet.

## **Become knowledgeable about common types of abuse:**

### **Misuse of time:**

- Using up time doing easier tasks first. (On your checklist, be sure the harder or more critical tasks are listed first)
- Taking frequent breaks, making phone calls, watching TV.

**TIP:** Use supervisory skills and a written checklist to maintain a professional relationship.

## **Taking advantage of the person needing in-home help:**

- Worker wins trust and then takes advantage of sympathy and/or friendship by sharing personal and/or financial problems.

- Persuades employer to sign for hours not worked, allowing late arrival/early leaving, bringing children to work.
- Soliciting “loans”.

**Following are possible signs of abuse or neglect:**

- Personality changes in your relative or friend needing in-home help;
- Whimpering, crying or refusing to talk;
- Unexplained or repeated bruises, fractures, burns or pressure sores;
- Weight loss;
- An unkempt appearance;
- Poor personal hygiene;
- Dirty or disorganized living quarters;
- Confusion, excessive sleeping, or other signs of inappropriate sedation.

If you need help with any of the topics in this pamphlet, please call your local Information and Assistance office at the numbers located inside the front cover.

A publication of the Olympic Area Agency on Aging and Information & Assistance  
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