

Hiring a Home Helper

- Identifying Your Needs
- How Much Will it Cost?
- Selection Worksheet

As a person grows older, completing tasks that are part of daily living often becomes more difficult. A home helper is someone who comes into your home to help with *personal care needs* (such as cooking, bathing, or transportation); and/or *household chores* (such as laundry, housekeeping, or yardwork).

Do you live on your own, but have needs like these? If so, finding the right home helper can help you to stay independent and to maintain your quality of life.

What Are Your Needs?

A good first step is to make a list of your needs. Then, for each item ask: who will be in charge...you, a family member or friend, or a home helper? Consider:

- *Daily needs*—food preparation and clean-up, personal hygiene, straightening up
- *Weekly or periodic needs*—grocery shopping, housecleaning, washing and ironing clothes
- *Quality of life needs*—transportation to and from church, social events, hair appointments, etc.; purchasing clothes

and other needed items; visiting and entertaining friends.

- *Seasonal needs*—yard maintenance; weatherization; snow and ice removal.

In listing your needs, be as realistic as possible. Plan on doing the things you can do. But be open to getting help with tasks you're having trouble with.



How Much Will It Cost?

The cost of home help can range from volunteer services provided free ... to basic help at minimum wage ... to higher skill services at a higher rate.

The best thing is to “comparison shop.” Call around to find out about who provides the kinds of services you need and how much they usually charge. (Don't forget to include

volunteer and government supported programs.) Then work out a plan based on how much you can afford to pay.

Choosing Carefully

Once you know your needs, the next step is to make a careful selection. Use the worksheet at the end of this brochure to organize your information.

A good place to start learning what's available is your local Senior Information and Referral. (You can get the phone number or web address in the phone book or by calling information.) Other places to look include: the Yellow Pages under "housekeeping," "home care services," or "personal care"; and church, senior center, or other neighborhood newsletters or bulletin boards.

In making your selection, be sure to:

- Ask lots of questions. Get a clear picture of the person's/agency's experience, training, standards, and pay expectations.
- Check references. Ask for the names of other clients the person or agency has served. Then, call them up, ask them to describe their relationship, and listen carefully to what they tell you.
- Be clear about what you expect. Get off to a good start by being specific about your needs, how much you are willing to pay, and issues like smoking/non-smoking, being on time, etc.

Should You Go Through an Agency?

Hiring someone directly has the advantages of a one-to-one relationship, and your cost may be less, with direct pay.

But going through an agency has some important advantages. The agency is responsible for screening, training, and supervision. If something goes wrong, you can look to the agency to fix it. And you don't have to worry about tax withholding and other responsibilities of being an employer.



Managing the Relationship

If you start out being clear and upfront, it will be easier to give regular feedback on how the person is performing. Deal with problems promptly, candidly, and in a constructive spirit. Any serious issues should be reported immediately to the agency, or to the person, if you've hired directly. *Remember, never tolerate any form of physical or verbal abuse.*

Promptly report such behavior to the authorities (Adult Protective Services or similar agency, or to the police). Positive feedback and expressions of appreciation, given promptly when earned, are also important.

Don't forget to give the helper the name, address, and phone number of other family members to contact if the person has questions or concerns. And give the helper's full name and work schedule to other family members, so when they call and the helper answers, they will be aware of the household support being provided.

Worksheet for Hiring a Home Helper

Name of Person or Agency: _____

Address/Phone: _____

Supervisor's Name / Phone (if Agency): _____

Services Needed:

- | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal care (help with bathing, grooming, getting dressed, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Laundry | <input type="checkbox"/> Yard upkeep |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Light housekeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Shopping | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heavy housekeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meal preparation | <input type="checkbox"/> Companionship | _____ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Home Improvements | _____ |

Compensation: \$ _____ Per Hour X _____ Hours per Week = \$ _____ /week

Other: _____

Name of reference

Name of reference

Address

Address

Phone number

Phone number

What services were provided?

What services were provided?

Quality of work?

Quality of work?

Reliability?

Reliability?

Would you rehire?

Would you rehire?

My Notes: