

Hiring a Home Helper Guide



El Dorado County
Health and Human Services Agency
Information and Assistance Program
937 Spring Street
Placerville, CA 95667
(530) 621-6151 or (800) 510-2020



Hiring a Home Helper

Hiring a home helper may help you remain independent and maintain your quality of life.

At some point during our lives, all of us may need help to remain safely in our home. This may be the result of an injury, prolonged illness, disability or the frailty that comes with age. Everyday tasks that are part of daily living may become more difficult. Individuals may turn to family, friends or a home helper. Family caregivers may also reach a point when they realize they need additional help to care for a loved one. Routine housekeeping and errands may be neglected as the need for personal care increases. Also, family caregivers may be required to take care of business for their loved one outside of the home. Family caregivers may turn to home helpers for assistance. A home helper will assist you with activities such as cooking, bathing, household chores and transportation that can become a challenge. Hiring a home helper may help you to remain independent and maintain your quality of life. When defining the job, make sure you include at least the following:

- Detailed list of duties
- Hourly wage, mileage reimbursement and meals you will provide
- Hours of work, schedule and notification required to make changes
- Unacceptable behavior—smoking, abusive language

Determining this before you start your search will help you in the selection process. You will also be prepared to hire that “right” person when you find them.

Choosing Your Home Helper

Selecting the home helper that will work with you and/or your loved one is an important decision. During the interview process make sure to be clear about your expectations, ask lots of questions and check each candidate’s references. It is also important to consider the values and preferences of the person receiving care. They may be more comfortable with a home helper who shares their background.

- Ask lots of questions. Get a clear understanding of the person and/or agency’s experience, training, standards and pay expectations.
- Check references. Ask for the names of previous employers. Call each reference and ask them to describe their relation and experience with this caregiver.
- Be clear about what you expect. Be specific about your needs, how much you are willing to pay and preferences such as smoking/non-smoking.

What Are Your Needs?

In order to hire home help, you will need to know what kinds of activities you need help with. A good first step is to make a list of the tasks you will need help with. Then for each item on the list determine who will help you with that task...family member, friend or home helper. These are some of the tasks to consider when compiling your list.

◆ Daily needs

- ⇒ Food preparation and clean-up
- ⇒ Personal hygiene
- ⇒ Light housekeeping

◆ Weekly or periodic needs

- ⇒ Shopping
- ⇒ Laundry
- ⇒ Heavy housekeeping
- ⇒ Transportation for medical appointments

◆ Quality of life needs

- ⇒ Transportation to and from church, social events and other Activities.
- ⇒ Personal care appointments (hair salon, etc.)
- ⇒ Pet care
- ⇒ Seasonal needs
- ⇒ Yard work
- ⇒ Snow and ice removal

How Much Will It Cost?

The cost of home help can range from \$15 to \$25 per hour or more depending on the services your home helper is providing. There may also be a mileage fee involved with providing transportation.

Call agencies and/or private home helpers to determine which ones provide the services you need and how much they charge.

Hiring an Agency versus Hiring a Private Home Helper?

Both options have their advantages and disadvantages. Here are some points to consider:

Hiring an Agency

Advantages:

- The agency is responsible for screening, training and supervision. If something goes wrong, the agency is responsible for fixing it.
- Greater flexibility by assigning different persons to different needs.

Disadvantages:

- Increased cost.
- More turnover; expect different helpers for different tasks/needs.

Hiring a Private Home Helper

Advantages:

- One to one relationship
- Cost is usually less

Disadvantages:

- If problems arise, you are responsible to fix it.
- You must meet the legal obligations of an employer.

** California State Law and El Dorado County ordinance states:

All independent Home Care Aides must register with the California Department of Social Services Home Care Services.

For more information visit:

www.cclld.ca.gov/PG4881.htm or call 916-657-3570.

Managing the Relationship

Positive feedback and expressions of appreciation, given promptly, is very important. Exchange contact information between your home helper and family members so they will be familiar with one another. Deal with problems promptly, candidly and in a constructive spirit. Any serious issues should be reported immediately to the agency, trusted family member or friend. You should never tolerate any form of physical, financial or verbal abuse. Promptly report such behavior to the authorities such as Adult Protective Services at (530) 642-4800 or to your local police department.

Keeping your Home Helper

Open communication is very important. People appreciate being told when they are doing a good job. It is also important to inform someone when you are not satisfied with their job performance. Small annoyances can create larger problems when they are not addressed.

Here are some suggestions for building strong rapport with your home helper:

- ◆ Give praise for a job well done, remind them how valuable their services are to you.
- ◆ Respect your home helper's privacy.
- ◆ Give clear expectations and directions.
- ◆ After a regular schedule is agreed upon, respect those boundaries consistently.
- ◆ Inform your home helper of changes in the care receiver's needs. Should job duties increase significantly, be prepared to offer a corresponding salary increase.
- ◆ Protect the health and safety of everyone by making sure durable medical equipment is present and in good working order. Provide an ample supply of gloves, disinfectants and other necessary cleaning supplies.
- ◆ Address issues as they arise. Don't let small irritations build up.
- ◆ Be fair and kind in your criticism.
 - Provide feedback as soon as possible if you have a problem.
 - Describe what you did not like and why you didn't like it.
 - Criticize only one incident at a time, keeping it brief and to the point.
 - Criticize the action not the person.
 - Make a suggestion that would improve the situation next time.
 - Many times it is better to give praise first then follow with constructive criticism.
 - Remember to forgive and forget.

Don't give up! If you have a negative experience with a worker, it may be that the person you tried simply wasn't a good match. You need to be selective in your hiring decision and fair in the way you treat and evaluate the person. However if you feel it isn't going well after addressing issues, trust your instincts. It can be difficult emotionally to "fire" someone, but its much easier than being unhappy.