



Employer Best Practices

These best practices can help you build a strong, long-term working relationship with your direct care workers.

Set Clear Expectations

Start setting expectations during the interview process. When a new employee begins, there should be no surprises about their tasks, hours, or other job details.

A useful tool for setting clear expectations is an Employment (or Work) Agreement. This agreement should include:

- Detailed work schedule - days of the week with start and end times. If applicable, indicate when meals and breaks are (must be paid if they are less than 30 minutes¹). Breaks are not required, but are encouraged.
- Detailed task list - tasks that the direct care worker is supposed to help with, how often, etc.
- “House Rules” - for example, is your employee allowed to use their personal phone during work hours, eat your food, etc.?

New Employee Orientation

You will share the responsibility of new employee orientation with the company that helps you pay your employees.

That company will give your new worker:

¹ Meals and breaks longer than 30 minutes might have to be paid if the worker is considered “on duty” ([Details](#))

- **Forms:** The forms will make sure that the payment process goes smoothly. They will include tax forms, bank deposit forms, and timesheets.
- **Training:** Some programs require all direct care workers to get training on certain topics, like basic safety. Your program outlines how much of this universal training is provided by you and/or by the company that's helping you pay your workers.

You will want to create a plan or schedule for:

1. The training that your program requires you to do
2. The training that is specific to your own personal needs

Think about spreading the training over a few days. Whether or not your worker is paid for training depends on the program you participate in.

Orientation should include:

- Getting to know each other a little better
- Showing them around the house
- Reviewing the Employment Agreement (if you have one)
- Discussing your “house rules”
- Reviewing emergency procedures (medical, tornado, fire)
- Training your worker on how to do their tasks

Set and Maintain the Personal/Professional Boundaries

Make it clear to your direct care workers that you are their boss. Over time, the relationship with your direct care worker can grow to feel like a friendship, but it's important to keep your role as the employer. Revisit the conversation if you feel boundaries are being crossed (you feel you're being taken advantage of), or if your worker expresses similar concerns.

Schedule Regular Check-Ins

Plan for regular check-ins with your direct care workers. These don't need to be long, but they're important for giving positive feedback, addressing concerns, and gathering feedback from your workers.

Create a Plan for Handling Conflict

Have a conversation with your direct care worker about how each of you handles conflict. Develop a plan based on this conversation, and follow it when conflicts come up. Update the plan if you feel that it needs improvement.

Discuss Communication Preferences

Let your worker know how you prefer to communicate (phone, email, text, written notes, or face-to-face). Find out your worker's preference(s).

Evaluate Worker Performance

Decide how you want to provide feedback about your worker's performance. Will you give immediate feedback, or use an evaluation sheet during check-ins?

Think about how you'll handle poor performance or unacceptable behavior. Will you give warnings? If so, how many?

Decision-Making

Discuss with your direct care worker when you want their input on decisions. Your preference may vary depending on the situation. Make clear which decisions you'll make on your own and which ones you might want their input on.