

The Role of a Home Care Assistant

The use of a Home Care Assistant (HCA) is an alternative to receiving homemaking services through a contracted provider agency. HCA services are intended to assist consumers in increasing or maintaining their independence.

Who is the HCA?

A Home Care Assistant (HCA) is an individual (other than a family member) who is hired by a consumer to perform homemaking tasks authorized by the MRC Home Care Assistance Program (HCAP). The HCA is considered a self-employed independent contractor.

Recruiting and Hiring a HCA

There are different approaches to finding a HCA. One method is for the consumer to consider a friend or neighbor who would be able to do the work well. Consumers can advertise for HCA's in local newspapers, grocery stores, and at community organizations. Since many consumers are responsible for any costs involved in their recruitment efforts, many have found "word of mouth" and networking within their church, school or social organizations to be helpful in locating a potential HCA.

As soon as a consumer has interviewed and selected a HCA candidate, the consumer and the candidate should contact their HCAP case manager at 1-800-223-2559. The case manager will explain the program and gather necessary information to start the contract process. Before a contract is approved, a CORI (Criminal Offender Records Information) check must be completed. Candidates are also checked against the Department of Public Health's Patient Abuse Registry.

HCA Tasks

The HCA is responsible for the individual homemaker service plan for the consumer with whom s/he will work. This could include grocery shopping, meal preparation, light house cleaning and laundry.

Universal precautions (use of gloves) must be used whenever necessary. Tasks the HCA CANNOT perform for a consumer are:

- Personal care, including feeding, bathing, shampooing and transfers
- Companionship
- Heavy Spring cleaning, polishing furniture, waxing floors, cleaning walls and dry cleaning
- Transportation and post office mailings (pick up or drop off)
- Pet care
- Packing or unpacking for a move
- Cleaning windows and hanging curtains
- Ironing
- Exterior home maintenance
- Homemaking/housekeeping for others in the household
- Organizing closets or home
- Banking

Communication

Communication between the HCA, consumer and HCAP Case Manager is an essential component of the program. After choosing an HCA, the consumer should explain job duties and discuss any questions, concerns, or difficulties to ensure that the HCA understands the responsibilities of the position.

The HCAP Case Manager is available to facilitate communication and assist in problem solving between the consumer and the HCA. The Case Manager will contact both the consumer and the HCA initially to review the job duties and breakdown of authorized hours and will review services periodically.

The Consumer and the Case Manager: The consumer should contact the Case Manager when s/he:

- Chooses to change to a new HCA or homemaking agency
- Seeks an outside opinion for resolution of an issue with the HCA
- Has questions on HCA duties
- Needs to report an interruption of services for any reason (e.g., hospitalization)
- Feels a need for other independent living resources
- Feels the hours authorized are inappropriate or there is a need to change the assigned tasks.

The HCA and the Case Manager: A Home Care Assistant should contact the HCAP case manager when s/he:

- Needs to report an interruption in services for any reason (e.g., hospitalization)
- Wants to discuss authorized hours or change assigned tasks
- Believes the consumer may need other resources to maximize independence
- Experiences difficulty in providing services to the consumer due to non-use (not being home for service), misuse (requesting tasks outside of the homemaker's duties) or abuse (yelling, swearing, being intoxicated, making inappropriate sexual comments, using illegal substances in front of the HCA).

ANY SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT OF THE CONSUMER MUST BE REPORTED TO THE CASE MANAGER AND TO THE DISABLED PERSONS PROTECTION COMMISSION (DPPC) AT 1-800-426-9009

Payment Information

To be paid for services provided to the consumer, the HCA must have an approved contract and a verbal authorization from the HCAP Case Manager to start services. To receive payment, the HCA must mail the completed timesheet (signed by both the HCA and the consumer) and a payment voucher to HCAP at the end of each month. Checks are processed and sent to the HCA approximately 2 weeks after receipt of the timesheet.

The State Treasurer's Office will send a 1099 form by January 31st of each year for the previous year for HCAs who receive \$600.00 or more. If an HCA receives any public assistance, s/he is responsible for reporting this income to the appropriate governing body.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment and public services provided by government agencies. If consumers or employees of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission believe that they have been discriminated against on the basis of disability, they should contact the Diversity Director,

Mary F. Connelly, Esquire

Director of Diversity, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

600 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111

617-204-3736 or 617-727-1354 (fax)