

# Communication and Safety in Your Home **STEPS Training**

Module 3



# **STEPS**

**to Success with Your Homecare Worker**

**This publication was made possible through the joint efforts of**

- **The Oregon State Independent Living Council (SILC)**
- **The Oregon Home Care Commission (HCC)**
- **SEIU Local 503**



**If you have a disability and need this Handbook in an alternate format, please call 1-877-277-0513 and ask for the STEPS Project Staff  
orsteps.org**

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# Communication and Safety in Your Home



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## HOW THE STEPS PROGRAM WORKS

- ❖ Trainers are from a Center for Independent Living (CIL).
- ❖ STEPS information is presented in three ways:
  1. Through group workshops.
  2. Through one-on-one training. This is for people who cannot leave home or prefer not to learn in a classroom setting.
  3. Through "Guide on the Side" services. This is for people who need a guide's help applying what they have learned about the duties of an employer. While your STEPS trainer will coach you, he or she will NOT act as an employer for you.

In addition to this STEPS Module, more detailed training with worksheets is available on the following topics:

- ❖ Preparing to Hire Your Homecare Worker
- ❖ Hiring Your Homecare Worker

Ask your STEPS Trainer if you want more information.

## STEPS TRAINING GOAL FOR MODULE 3

Consumers who employ homecare workers will learn to be effective employers who direct their own services. Effective employers decrease employee turnover, because both employer and employee have a clear understanding of what is expected of each of them. The goal of Module 3 is to demonstrate the skills needed to communicate effectively and to provide a safe working environment for you and your homecare worker.

***Making choices + accepting responsibility =***  
**EMPOWERMENT**

## MANAGING YOUR HOMECARE WORKER IN A SAFE PLACE

Having a homecare worker to assist you with tasks in your home may be a big change. What will you do on the first day your new homecare worker reports for work?

Make sure you have the job description and employment agreement signed, take some time to establish an open rapport and talk about how you want things done in your home, be sure the schedule is clear, and plan for positive communication and making your home safe.

## WAYS TO TRAIN A HOMECARE WORKER

Common ways to train new homecare workers are:

- Giving verbal directions.
- Having the new homecare worker observe a worker who is experienced in your service tasks.

No matter how you choose to train your employee, good communication is important. Your new employee may not get everything right the first or even the second time, so plan to be patient.



### Training Tips

- Begin by explaining your situation and service needs in as much detail as you can. This will help your homecare workers to understand what your needs are.
- Explain any medical or technical words you may use (for example, "ostomy"). Be specific.
- Emphasize anything about safety or emergencies. If you want your employees to do something instead of calling 9-1-1, or in addition to calling 9-1-1, make sure your homecare workers know and understand how to do it correctly.
- Give step-by-step directions for any procedures your homecare workers will be helping you with. Explaining why things need to be done a certain way helps your employees be more aware and careful in doing the tasks.
- Have homecare workers repeat your directions back to you and

have them show you how to do the task, if you need to. This will help prevent mistakes. You may need to explain your needs, abilities, and limitations again with your employees during training.

- Make checklists whenever possible so that you don't need to constantly repeat yourself. Having checklists also helps your employee to do the tasks even if you aren't around to give directions. (A sample Daily Task Checklist is included in the Handouts.)
- Put the checklists on the wall near where the task will be performed. For instance, checklists about cleaning the kitchen could be put on a kitchen cabinet or on the refrigerator door.
- Encourage your homecare workers to ask questions if they are confused about what they are supposed to do.
- Make your priorities clear. Let your workers know what must get done, what you would like to get done, and other things to be done if there is time.
- Put up a schedule of your homecare workers' work hours and give them a copy to take home, so they can keep track of their time, schedule, and routine.
- Be patient. Give your homecare workers time to learn the routine. No matter how many people each homecare worker has worked with, working for you will be different.
- Have others help you with the training. Family members or former homecare workers can be a great help in training your new homecare workers.
- Explain procedures for emergencies. List the tasks and actions your employees are expected to perform in case of different types of emergencies. Don't forget medical emergencies you have experienced such as allergic reactions or seizures.
- Write down any allergies you have and symptoms of your disability that can be given to a doctor in case of an emergency.
- Put up a list of emergency telephone numbers including primary physicians, fire station, police, preferred hospitals, and person to



contact in case of an emergency, such as family member or friend. (A sample Emergency Plan is included in the Handouts and is discussed in greater details in Module 3 – Communication and Safety in Your Home.)

- To protect both you and your homecare worker, you should have latex or rubber gloves available to your homecare worker at all times. Your homecare worker should wear these gloves when giving any personal aid that involves contact with blood or bodily fluids. Ask your case manager if your health plan covers the cost of these gloves.
- Keep in mind that training will be an ongoing process as your needs, likes and dislikes change over time.
- The most important thing is to establish healthy, respectful communication so that you both feel comfortable asking questions and solving small problems that come up before they become large problems.

## ❖ Handout – Daily Task Checklist

### COMMUNICATION AND THE WORKING RELATIONSHIP

#### Tips and Techniques

Learning and using good communication skills are the keys to working well with an employee. A positive work setting is one of the most important parts of keeping great staff. Effective employers create a work setting that brings out the best a person has to offer. Healthy communication between you and your employee can help do this.



#### Ways to create a positive work setting:

1. Reward your employees for the work they are doing. It is important to tell them when they doing their work well. Thank them in a very concrete way so they will know that they have performed the task well. For example “You transferred me very well. I felt comfortable and safe.” [NOTE: Giving gifts or money to reward your employees is not allowed. Talk to your case manager if you have questions.]

2. When you need to address something your homecare worker has or has not done, it is important to be open and honest and to talk about the action, not the person. For example, the homecare worker has returned from running an errand for you an hour later than planned. They did not call to explain and you are quite concerned. You might say, "We agreed you would return an hour ago. I feel frustrated and concerned when people are late. In the future, I would appreciate it if you would call me and let me know you will be late."
3. Don't let small irritations build up until you explode with anger. Angry words are often hurtful and damaging. If you feel irritated about something that is happening, talk about it as soon as possible (but wait until you are calm). This may happen often, especially if you have just started to work together.
4. Respect your staff. They are human beings and should be treated with respect. Use the Golden Rule - treat your employee as you would like to be treated. Work hard at being honest, fair, kind, respectful and patient.
5. Homecare workers have their own lives, too. Especially for homecare workers who live-in, it is important to respect their privacy and allow them their time off. Flexibility and being willing to compromise are important qualities for both of you.
6. Ask your homecare workers how they feel about their work and about you as an employer. Set a regular time to share feelings about your working relationship. Then, both of you should be open to making changes in the routine, in attitude, or anything else that can correct a problem.



Summing it all up, you, as the employer, have the ability to create a positive work setting for your homecare workers. This, in turn, helps them to be happy, helpful and allows them to want to keep working for you. Constructive communication is the key to this working relationship.

### **Tips for Giving Verbal Directions**

- Make sure you have the person's attention before you give directions.
- Begin by talking about what task the directions are supposed to help with.



- Give as few directions at one time as possible.
- Give clear and specific directions, not vague ones. For example, instead of saying, "Be careful!", it is more helpful to say, "Set the pan on the hot pad!"
- Keep a positive tone when you give directions.
- Give workers the chance to respond to a direction. Don't give lots of directions at one time without giving your worker a chance to ask questions.
- Tell them the steps in the order to be followed.
- When appropriate, give choices and options for following directions. For example, say, "We have to wait for ten minutes for the cleanser to work. Would you like to sweep the floor now or make the bed?"

Sometimes employers and their homecare workers become friends. It is important not to let the friendship get in the way of the fact that you are 'the boss'. If the friendship grows so much that it overpowers your work relationship, you might want to re-think the working relationship and just keep the friendship. That would mean hiring a new homecare worker. Otherwise, getting your needs met as an employer may not be possible. It is hard to tell a close friend that they should come earlier in the mornings, or has done something wrong. Likewise, it strains a friendship for a friend to continuously act as an employee.

## **PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES**

What is a boundary? It is something that gives a real or abstract barrier between two things. Why do we need professional boundaries as a homecare worker employer?

Here are a few reasons:

- So my employee and I can be clear about what they are paid to do and what they are not paid or allowed to do.
- To protect myself in case something goes wrong.
- To prevent myself from getting so personally or emotionally involved that I might not be able to make good decisions.
- To help me separate my role as employer from the rest of my life.
- To keep from discussing my personal problems with my employee.

Sometimes it is hard to maintain a professional boundary with your employees. They may be a close personal friends or relatives. Maybe they have already been providing some help for you and now are getting paid for some of the tasks they do, which can be confusing as to when they are working and when they are in your home as a friend. When you spend lots of time together doing personal things, like dressing, feeding and bathing, you may begin to feel emotionally attached to the people who help you.

## **CONVERSATIONS THAT FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE**

People tend to avoid uncomfortable conversations. The reality is that the five minutes it takes to have the conversation usually takes less energy than avoiding the conversation altogether. Your employee is tasked to help you with things that you may have done by yourself in the past, and it may not be easy for you to direct someone else to help you with those tasks in the way that you prefer to have those tasks done. It is important for you to know how to start and have those discussions so you are able to direct the help you receive from your homecare worker.

One way to start the conversation is to share your intent and ask the homecare worker if they are willing to have a discussion at this moment. This tells the worker the topic you want to discuss and gives them the opportunity to agree to the conversation or to suggest talking at a later time. You may also want to consider starting the conversation with a compliment to set a positive tone for the discussion. For example:

*"Donna, you do a great job cleaning my house and I appreciate your reliability. I am very modest and have been a little uncomfortable about privacy when you help me with my bath but I have some ideas to make it easier for both of us. Do you have a few minutes for us to talk about it?"*

*"Karl, you are very efficient in the work you do, I really enjoy your sunny attitude. There are some things I would like to have done a little differently in the kitchen. Is this a good time for us to talk about it?"*

*"Don, you have been with me for several years and I am so thankful for your loyalty. I just attended some training on how to be a better employer and have some ideas that might work well for you and me.*

*Could we talk about these ideas now or should we find a time to talk in the next day or two?"*

Here are some things to keep in mind when you need to have a conversation that feels uncomfortable:

- **Approach the conversation with a clear head.** Give yourself time to let go of any anger or frustration. Yelling will not help, it will probably make the process harder. You must remain calm for a productive discussion to take place.
- **Plan ahead.** Spend time getting your thoughts together, clarifying what you want, and planning how you will start the conversation. You may want to role play discussions with a friend, family member, or your STEPS Trainer.
- **Choose the right time and place.** The setting needs to be private, quiet, and face to face.
- **Use assertive statements.** Be respectful, clear and self-confident. Assertive statements are empowering. (1) Describe the behavior, (2) state how you feel about it, and (3) state what you want done about it. For example, "When you leave the tissue box where I can't reach it, I feel frustrated; please return it to the table if you move it."
- **Ask open ended questions.** These are questions that need more than a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Examples are, "Tell me about...", or "What do you think about ..."
- **Use 'I' statements.** "I feel frustrated when you interrupt me when I am talking" or "I feel annoyed when I find the kitchen is not cleaned as outlined in the task list and service agreement."
- **Be honest.** State your concern directly and simply. "I can't reach the items when they are placed on the top shelf" or "I found that the area behind the chair was not vacuumed."
- **Stay on track.** If you are talking with your worker about how to clean the kitchen, don't add a comment about how you can't stand their friends or that they forgot to charge your power chair the night before.
- **Avoid aggressive statements.** Aggressive statements are disrespectful, confrontational, domineering, hostile and/or sarcastic. If '*stupid*' fits easily to the end of a sentence it is probably an aggressive statement. For example, "What did you do that for

(*stupid!*)?" Instead, say something like, "I noticed you put the box outside, will you please tell me the reason?"

- **Avoid passive statements.** Passive statements are unclear, disempowering, do not clearly state the need or opinion, and often send mixed messages. Frequent statements like, "My opinion doesn't really matter", "Do whatever you want", or "I don't know" may indicate a pattern of passive communication.
- **Avoid assumptions.** Hesitate and ask clarifying questions instead of jumping to conclusions. Reflecting back what someone said is a good way to be sure you understand what was meant. Examples are: "Let me see if I understand what you are saying...", "So you are saying..."
- **Avoid using negative and judgmental 'you' statements.** "You are disrespectful and rude", "You put those items out of my reach on purpose", or "You are a horrible housekeeper."

Let's look at some scenarios and talk about some situations that may cross professional boundaries or feel uncomfortable.

1. Your employee asks if she can bring her laundry to work and do her laundry when she does yours. It's just one more load to add to what she is already doing.
2. You have been employing the same employee for a few years and have become like family. The employee suggests spending Christmas with you and exchanging gifts.
3. Your daughter doesn't think that you are getting enough hours of homecare and asks your worker to add a few hours a week. She says she'll pay the HCW privately on top of what Medicaid pays.
4. You have a bad chest cold. Your HCW has a lot of experience in dealing with colds and gives you some suggestions on how to relieve your congestion.
5. Your HCW is really short on cash. Her car needed some unexpected repairs and she has some plumbing problems at home. She has told all of this to you and asks if you can give her a loan of a few hundred dollars just to get through this rough spot.

6. Your HCW is going to be taking a vacation next month. Your HCW wants to interview and find a back-up person for you since he knows what you would like and what you need.
7. An emergency came up for your HCW and he missed his last day of work for this period and you have not signed the voucher yet. He has worked for you for 4 months and the hours are always the same each time. He asks you over the phone if he can just sign your name for you rather than coming all the way out to your house to have you sign it.

## HOW YOU SAY IT MATTERS

What is the best way to express your needs, ideas, or preferences?

### EXERCISE

#### EXPRESSING YOUR NEEDS

- Divide into groups of 3-5.
- Assign each group a scenario (below) to review and discuss within their group.
- Answer the questions at the end.
- Share at least one group's scenario and answers with the other participants.

Discuss what you like or dislike about the following examples:

1. **Mrs. Hernandez's task list includes bathing and washing her hair. When she took baths by herself, she always did her hair as the last thing, and likes her homecare workers to do it that way.**

Vera has been a worker for 6 years and is sure she has a better way to do things. "It just doesn't make sense to me to do it the way she wants it done. It's hard to do without making a mess. So I said to her, 'I'm going to do things a different way today. I'm going to wash your hair before I wash the rest of you'."

Another worker, Bea, doesn't think that Mrs. Hernandez's way of doing things is working out very well, either. She says to Mrs. H., "When I

wash your hair after I wash the rest of you, I think I'm making a mess and getting you all wet after I've just dried you off. Would you be willing to consider a different way to do this?"

- What do you like or dislike about the suggestions these homecare workers made?
- What is different about them?
- How do you think Mrs. Hernandez would react to either of them?

2. **Mr. Miller likes things clean and neat. His homecare worker prepares his dinner before she leaves, and he has dinner by himself in the evening. But he's just not able to clean up the dishes and kitchen by himself, so he leaves them for the worker to take care of in the morning. But his homecare worker just doesn't do it right!! Sarah, the HCW, comes in and makes his breakfast in the midst of all the leftovers and dirty dishes.**

One day Mr. Miller says to Sarah, "Clean the kitchen before you make my breakfast." She starts arguing with him about wanting to just do the clean up once. He's too tired to argue back, but he's not very happy.

The next day he tries again. "When you make my breakfast with dirty dishes in the kitchen, I feel like I'm getting germs in my meal. I'd like you to clean up some of the things left over from the evening before you start breakfast. Are you willing to do it that way?"

- Which approach would be better to get Sarah's help in solving the problem?
- Why?
- What is different about what Mr. Miller did the second time?
- If you were the homecare worker, how would you react to each request?

3. **Angela is very frail, but at 87 she still lives alone and manages pretty well with the help she gets from her homecare workers. She doesn't have a lot of money and so she doesn't turn the heat up very high. Other people say the house feels cold, but Angela must have gotten used to it, because she doesn't notice. She's pretty hardy!!**

Javier is her homecare worker who comes every Monday. He doesn't think Angela can take care of herself very well. He's always telling her, "You're going to get cold if you don't put on a sweater!"

Greta is the homecare worker who comes on Wednesdays and Fridays. She is also worried about Angela and wonders if there is something wrong since Angela doesn't think the house is cold. She says to Angela, "Your hands feel cold. I'm concerned that you don't notice the cold and you might get chilled. I can get you a sweater if you'd like one."

- Which homecare worker had a better approach to this? Why?
- What would you do in this situation?
- What other issues might come up by opening up a conversation with Angela, rather than telling her what to do?

4. **Mr. Jones has a schedule of when he needs to get up, take his medications, do his therapy, eat his meals, etc., and it's important to him that the homecare worker show up on time. Harry often calls to say that he is running late, or wants to switch to another time. Mr. Jones tells him, "You're always changing your hours. I told you to come at 7:00 and that's what I want!!"**

**Mrs. Smith also has a rigid schedule and she has had some problems with Harriet, her homecare worker. Mrs. Smith says to her, "When you change to a different time, it upsets my routine for the day. I'd appreciate it if you would be consistent. Can we find a solution to this problem?"**

- Which is a better way to get what you want?
- What is different about the way Mr. Jones and Mrs. Smith tried to address the problem?
- Which way would be more effective in working together to find a solution?
- Why?

5. **Jerry is a smoker and has been since he was 15. He has lung cancer now and his doctor told him he should stop smoking. But Jerry figures that he's had a good life and if he's going to**

**go soon, he wants to enjoy his smokes! He just wishes his homecare workers wouldn't nag him about it!**

Jeannie is so worried about Jerry. He's just sending himself to his grave, she thinks. "I just can't stand to watch him do this to himself. Plus, I can't stand being around the smoke. It's my job to take care of him. I am always telling him, 'You shouldn't be smoking. It's bad for you!!', but he just ignores me. I don't know how much longer I can stand this!"

Nikolas is Jerry's relief homecare worker. He too is concerned about the smoking and says to Jerry, "I worry about your health when you smoke and I worry about my own health since I get some of your second-hand smoke. Have you considered cutting down? Could we find a place for you to smoke that's far enough away from me?"

- Which approach is more likely to get Jerry to make some changes?
- Why?
- What is the homecare worker's role when the client/employer has a habit that may be harmful to her health?

No matter how well you think you are communicating with your homecare worker, there will be times when problems and conflicts will happen.

Let's look at how to solve those problems and conflicts.

## **PROBLEM SOLVING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Problem solving is a process. The same steps can be used for solving all kinds of problems, whether it involves a broken wheelchair or some interpersonal conflicts. The process below is a formal example that involves thinking about solutions and writing down ideas. You may not need to use the whole process to solve a problem, but it may be helpful to know all about it.



1. **Figure out what the problem is:** This seems simple enough, but everyone might not agree that there is a problem. It may be a

problem for you that your employee talks too much, but it may not be a problem for your employee.

2. **Define the problem:** Use the communication information we talked about in the previous section. "Maintain a Good Working Relationship through Communication Tips and Techniques." Figure out exactly what the problem is without involving personalities, motives, blame and value judgments. Ask open-ended questions and use active listening to get a better understanding and definition of the problem. Who owns the problem? By that we mean, whose problem is it to solve? What's the real difference between #1 and #2? Can we combine them?

### Samples:

- a. A broken wheelchair is your problem, but your homecare worker and family could help you solve the problem.
- b. A homecare worker who bothers you by talking too much is your problem unless you share that behavior. Then the problem belongs to both of you.
- c. Your homecare worker has lost their child care and can't make other arrangements for a week. The problem belongs to both of you. Each person involved should have input, but whoever "owns" the problem makes the ultimate decision.



3. **Suggestions:** Do not focus on personalities or judgments, or use harsh words (for example, "Don't you ever shut up?" "You shouldn't be so lazy." "You shouldn't bother me with your babysitter problems.").
4. **Solutions:** Everyone involved should suggest solutions. Write down every solution, no matter how far-fetched it may seem. At this point, don't try to find fault with any of the suggestions or give your opinions about whether they might work.
5. **Discussion and Evaluation:** Everyone involved should discuss the pros and cons of each solution that was suggested. Writing down a list of the pros and cons helps the process.
6. **Choose a Solution:** Decide on the solution that will best solve the problem.

7. **Plan Actions:** Everyone involved works out who will do what, where, when, and how to solve the problem.
8. **Evaluation of Solution:** Set a date and time to talk about whether the solution is working and revise the plan as needed.

By working through problems with a positive approach, you can strengthen and improve working relationships. Employers and employees who use problem solving skills are more likely to continue working together and experience less stress.

## **Problem Solving**

Even if you do an excellent job of screening when you hire your employees, it's still likely that over time they may do or say something that makes you angry or uncomfortable. When this happens, it's a good idea to deal with it immediately, even if it seems small or not a big deal. If you don't address little problems, they may become big problems over time.

### **Things to consider:**

- These problem-solving suggestions are not meant to be used when a homecare worker is abusive, threatening, or intimidating. These behaviors are not acceptable under any circumstances and the employee should be terminated. The employee's behaviors and termination need to be reported to your case manager.
- When we talk about "conflict" or "problems" in this section, we generally mean problems that can be solved in a respectful work setting. By encouraging you to work through problems, we're assuming that the overall relationship is worth saving.
- It's up to you whether you want to try to solve the problem or whether you feel so frustrated by a homecare worker that you just want to terminate them.
- Many of us were taught that conflict is "bad" or "scary" or something to be avoided. Maybe we were taught that we should be "nice" and avoid conflict, or were taught to make people around us always feel comfortable. As adults, though, we learn that it's better for us in the long run not to avoid conflict.
- If we accept that conflict is natural and it happens once in a while, then we are more prepared for it and more comfortable handling it when it does happen.
- Conflict doesn't have to be a big problem as long as we face it and

handle it in a respectful way. Usually, working through conflict makes a relationship stronger because you learn to trust each other to make it through the difficult times.

- If you're not comfortable with conflict, you may want to mentally practice talking to your homecare worker and/or write down exactly what you want to say. You can ask your STEPS Trainer for suggestions in handling conflicts with your employee(s).
- If it's your first time dealing with a conflict, you can ask a friend or family member to practice discussing it as you would with your employee. Practice being firm, clear, and direct (without becoming angry and without apologizing for your feelings). **Remember, you have a right to have your needs met!**

### ❖ Handouts

- **Identifying and Resolving Conflicts**
- **Worksheet for Addressing Concerns**

# SAMPLE

## WORKSHEET FOR ADDRESSING CONCERNS

### Ground Rules (agreements):

1. We will allow each other to finish speaking (we will not interrupt each other)
2. We will use 'I' statements and avoid 'you' statements
3. We will use assertive statements and avoid aggressive or passive statements
4. We will be honest and stay on track

**When:** After lunch on Saturday

**Where:** In the living room (TV will be turned off)

**Concern:** I need assistance to get out of bed promptly at 8 a.m. in the morning. HCW arrived at 8:45 four of the previous five days.

### Ideas to resolve concern (no idea is a bad idea):

- ✓ Purchase new alarm clock
- I will call HCW at 7:30
- HCW will set alarm clock 45 minutes earlier and arrive at 8 a.m.
- HCW will not go to bed at night
- HCW will go to bed 1 hour earlier
- HCW has home health concerns, will see physician to seek resolution
- HCW has child care concerns, will seek alternate provider

1. Check those ideas you want to discuss or agree to
2. Rewrite if needed and use worksheet for discussion guide

Follow-up: HCW will purchase new alarm clock. We will discuss at next Performance Review.

## EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

How you solve problems and resolve conflicts with your employee will affect how you evaluate your employee's work. Employee performance reviews are an important step in managing your employee.



Review your employee's work on a regular basis to let them know what you think about their performance as a worker. Conduct an initial performance review; then review performance every month for three to six months, then every three months, and every six months thereafter. You decide how often you conduct a review based on your employee's performance. Documenting regular reviews can head off major problems, and can be helpful to refer to if you later decide you must terminate employment of the worker. Update the Employment Agreement and discuss it with your employee if you develop new house rules or expectations. This needs to be done well before the regular Performance Review.

Some helpful guidelines are:

- Base your performance reviews on your employment agreement and any rules you have put into writing.
- Identify and emphasize the positive.
- Point out areas you want to see improve, and move forward.
- Do not engage in debating or arguing about the performance review. If there are areas that need improvement, state it simply and move on. Refer to your employment agreement to support your position or opinion.

Regular Performance Reviews are intended to provide a time to talk about what's working well and what needs to be done differently. Reviews are an opportunity to establish communication and maintain a healthy working relationship.

When review of the Employment Agreement, regular Employee Performance Reviews, and conflict resolution efforts do not address major problems you may choose to terminate a worker.

## SAMPLE

### EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE REVIEW

**Employee Name:**      Mariah G.

**Job Title:**      Homecare Worker

**Performance Review Period From:** May 1 to May 31

<b>Task</b>	<b>Observations</b>
Work from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday	Arrives at 9:00 on Monday and Wednesday, on Friday arrives at 10:30. Agreed to address, not yet resolved.
Help with dressing, grooming, and personal hygiene	Helpful with dressing, personal hygiene and grooming. Agreed to be more gentle when brushing my hair.
Do laundry, including towels and sheets as needed.	Excellent!
Help with house cleaning and cooking from time to time.	Mostly well done. Needs to sweep behind chair in corner.
Help with transportation from time to time.	Well done, good driver.

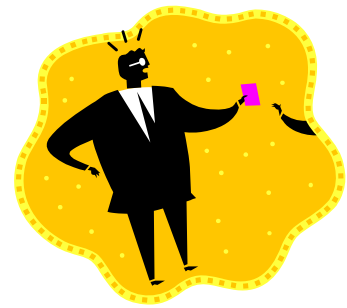
Employee \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Employer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

❖ **Handouts – Employee Performance Review**

## ABOUT TERMINATION

Terminating or 'firing' an employee is seldom pleasant. Although there are many reasons for termination, the decision to terminate the employment relationship is seldom clear cut. Is tossing you in bed too hard "physical abuse"? Do you terminate a homecare worker for "forgetting" to return the change after buying groceries? What about a worker who is consistently late 'because traffic was heavy'? These incidents may be mishaps and it is easy to let these things slide, but what happens when they occur a second or third time?



Use your regular performance reviews with your homecare worker to discuss and document your concerns, this also gives your worker an opportunity and reminders to change their behaviors.

The decision to terminate your employee is up to you, the employer. If you are not sure whether you should terminate your homecare worker or not, you may want to discuss it with a friend, family member, or your STEPS Trainer.

Here are some possible reasons for terminating a homecare worker:

- Involvement in criminal activity, use of illegal substances
- Providing poor care or putting you in danger
- Use of your belongings without permission (e.g., telephone, lotion)
- Use of work time for personal reasons
- Late arrival on a regular basis, frequent changes to the schedule that you have not approved, or not reporting for work

If you make the decision to terminate your homecare worker be sure it is final (don't use it as a threat) and that you:

- **Have your back-up plan** or replacement worker in place before you terminate your employee.
- **Begin with a positive comment before stating the reason for termination.** "Chris, I really appreciate how well you clean my house. Unfortunately, your many last-minute calls to cancel have caused real problems for me. I don't want to lose you, but we've discussed this in our performance reviews, I'll need to find someone else."

If you are anxious or concerned for your safety, consider:

- Having someone with you when you have the conversation to terminate the worker. You may want someone with you for moral support, as a witness, or to protect you if you are concerned about your safety.
- Making it clear that the homecare worker is to leave immediately and is not to return to your house.

## ❖ **Handout – Notice of Employment Termination**

### **SAFETY IN YOUR HOME**

#### **Your Home: A Safe Place to Live and Work**

Most of us would agree it is common sense to keep our homes safe to live in. When you become the employer of a homecare worker it also becomes your responsibility to provide a home that is also a safe workplace. You and your homecare worker should agree to work together to make your home a safe place to live and work.

In addition to making your home a safe place to live, it is important that you are prepared and have talked with your homecare worker about medical emergencies, personal safety and safety equipment, and your plan for what is to happen if you need to evacuate your home. Look in the handouts for an expel of checklists of things to organize for an emergency.

## ❖ **Handout**

- **Sample Checklist of Things to Organize for an Emergency**
- **Checklist of Things to Organize for an Emergency**

### **MEDICAL EMERGENCIES**

A suggested Emergency Plan is included in the Handouts portion of the folder you received from your STEPS Trainer. Complete the Emergency Plan and post it next to the telephone or on your refrigerator. If your homecare worker needs to request emergency medical assistance, it is

important that you have written down all contact information. This includes but is not limited to:

- The name(s) and contact information for friends or family who should be contacted in case of an emergency.
- Your name - It is common for an employee in an emergency situation to forget your name. Be sure your first and last name are legible.
- Your complete area code and phone number.
- Your street address - Employees may not remember your exact address.
- The major crossroad that is closest to your home and home direction from the crossroad.

Update the Emergency Plan as changes occur. Discuss the plan with your homecare worker regularly, at a minimum when changes occur and each time you discuss a Performance Review.

Be sure your homecare worker back-up plan is done (we discussed the back-up plan in Module 2). Post it with your Emergency Plan where your homecare worker can find it in case of an emergency.

### **Emergency Planning: Advanced Directive**

An "Advance Directive" is a set of instructions that explain the specific health care measures a person wants if they should have a terminal illness or injury and become unable to direct their medical care, or to remove life support systems. The website listed below provides more information about advanced directives. If you choose to complete the advanced directive, a copy of the form should be stored with your emergency plan.

- Planning for your health care in emergency situations is a complex issue. Be sure to discuss your wishes with your doctor, family and/or close friends.
- Discuss all your emergency preferences thoroughly with your employee(s). Filling out an advanced directive is the clearest way to designate your medical decision maker and what you want to happen in various kinds of emergencies.
- For more information on Advanced Directives go to [http://www.oregon.gov/DCBS/SHIBA/advanced\\_directives.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/DCBS/SHIBA/advanced_directives.shtml)

## ❖ Handout – Emergency Plan

### Non-life Threatening Emergencies

Tell your homecare worker where to find your local, non-emergency telephone numbers. These numbers are usually in the front of your phone book. Be sure numbers are available for:

- Fire/paramedics
- Physician(s)
- Hospital
- Police/Sheriff
- Poison Control
- Other (e.g., medical equipment repair)

### **I C E (In Case of Emergency)**

Many fire department and emergency medical response agencies are promoting the ICE program, it asks all citizens to place an emergency contact person in their cell phone contact list.

The ICE, or In Case of Emergency, contact would be dialed by emergency responders when the patient is unconscious or otherwise incapacitated.

The ICE contact could provide some medical history regarding the patient and possibly go to the emergency department to answer any questions the hospital team may have.

For additional resources on the ICE program, go to:

<http://www.cityofsaalem.net/export/departments/fire/eod/ice/index.html>

### **PERSONAL SAFETY AND SAFETY EQUIPMENT**

Set aside some time to take a new look at your home with an eye on safety. It is easy to plug an extra chord into an electrical outlet, then another, and then one more. Before you realize it, you may have created a safety hazard by overloading the electrical outlet. Ask a friend or family member to walk through your home with you to help find tripping hazards (loose rugs), electrical issues (too many chords plugged in



to an outlet), sharp objects (knives, edges on counters), and possible fire hazards (smoke detectors, smoking).

Be sure to use safe ladders or step stools to reach things that are stored out of reach. If you have a pet, keep it safe and out of the area when your homecare worker is in your home.

Use the “Household Safety Checklist” in the Handouts Section as a guide to identify possible safety hazards in your home and workplace.

If you find hazards, correct them immediately. Talk with a friend, family member, case manager or STEPS trainer if you need help finding someone to help you remove hazards.

### ❖ **Handout - Household Safety Checklist**

## SAMPLE

### HOUSEHOLD SAFETY CHECKLIST -

<b>Emergency Planning</b>	
✓	Emergency number/ 9-1-1 posted or on speed-dial
✓	Other emergency numbers posted in clear view
<input type="checkbox"/>	Escape plan or emergency ladder for the upper floors of your home
✓	Household fire/emergency escape plan is posted
✓	Alternate routes are planned, and all persons know the routes
<b>General Household</b>	
Check with Apartment Manager	Thermostat on the water heater set below 120 degrees Fahrenheit
✓	Flashlights are available and ready to use
✓	Home is free of pests and animal waste
<input type="checkbox"/>	Animals are controlled
✓	Medications, chemicals, and cleansers are labeled and stored correctly
✓	Materials are safely stored at proper height
✓	Furniture arranged to allow for free movement in household traffic areas
✓	Adequate space to use special equipment
✓	Sharp objects are padded (bed frames, countertop corners, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Guns, ammunition and hazardous equipment kept in separate places under lock and key
<b>Tripping &amp; Falling</b>	
✓	Enough lighting to see steps, curbs, etc.
✓	Light can be turned on without walking into a dark room
<input type="checkbox"/>	Liquids such as water, ice, snow, grease are cleaned up immediately
✓	Outside walkways are cleared of trash, boxes, etc.
Check with Apartment Manager	Sidewalks and outdoor stairways clear of concrete cracks and missing pieces
✓	Stairs, halls, rooms, exits and pathways are free from clutter
✓	Stairs have sturdy handrails
✓	Rug edges are not frayed and are tacked down

✓	Throw rugs are removed or non-skid mats are in place
✓	Sharp objects are padded (bed frames, countertops, etc.)
✓	Stairs, halls, exits, and pathways are free from clutter
Check with Apartment Manager	Railings or banisters are securely placed along each stairway or other necessary locations
✓	Electrical cords are not a tripping hazard
✓	Sleeping pets are out of pathways
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bright contrasting color tape is on top and bottom steps of stairs
<b>Fire and Electrical Safety</b>	
✓	Smoke alarms and fire extinguishers installed on every floor and in the kitchen
✓	Smoke alarms are in working order, batteries are checked
✓	Fire extinguishers are in good working order, available, and serviced after each use
<input type="checkbox"/>	All working fireplaces have a screen
✓	No exposed electrical wires
✓	Electrical outlets and extension cord are not overloaded
✓	Cords and electrical cords are not frayed
✓	Cords or extension cords do not run across traffic path areas or wheelchair routing paths
<input type="checkbox"/>	Turn off appliances when they are not in use
<b>Medical Equipment and Safety</b>	
✓	Well-stocked First Aid kit available
✓	Protective equipment (gloves, masks, clothing, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Oxygen hoses are out of walkway
✓	Medical equipment stored properly
<input type="checkbox"/>	No smoking or open flames when oxygen is used
<input type="checkbox"/>	Used needles are placed in "sharps" container or closed durable container
✓	Medicines are clearly labeled and include directions
<b>Bedroom</b>	
✓	Night light provides light for your path to the bathroom
✓	Bed is at the proper height
<b>Bathroom</b>	
✓	Bath water temperature is checked by hand before bathing
✓	Non-slip rubber mat in tub or shower
✓	Handgrips installed at bathtub, shower, and toilet

## Safety Equipment – Fire Extinguishers

There are four different types of fire extinguishers to put out different kinds of fires (types A, B, C and D). What works to put out general fires is not the same as what works best for electrical, flammable liquids or grease fires, such as kitchen fires. Be sure you have the correct type of extinguisher for the location.



- Include the locations of your fire extinguishers in your Emergency Plan.
- Your local fire department can advise how many and what types you need for your particular home.
- If you have to use your fire extinguisher, you will need to have it “recharged” afterwards.

## Substance Abuse

As the employer, you are responsible for providing a home work setting that is free from substance abuse (for example, illicit drugs or alcohol abuse).

It is against Oregon Administrative Rules for a homecare worker to violate the requirement to maintain a drug-free work place. Talk with your STEPS Trainer, case manager, a friend or family member if you are concerned for your safety and want help. If you have evidence or strongly believe that your homecare worker is abusing substances while at work, it is important for you to report the situation to your case manager. Substance abuse while at work is a valid reason to terminate a homecare worker.

The ‘Resources and Acknowledgement’ section ( page 30) of the STEPS training folder includes contact information for substance abuse treatment resources.

## Clarifying Abuse.....

Abuse is never okay. It is important that you and your homecare worker develop a respectful working relationship.

What IS “abuse”?

- Physical harm or injury

- Not giving basic care
- Making unwanted sexual contact (behaviors, words or touches)
- Taking advantage of someone financially
- Verbal or mental abuse
- Keeping someone by themselves when they don't want to be (involuntary seclusion)
- Being abandoned by the caregiver

Why people might NOT report abuse? They may:

- Feel ashamed
- Tell themselves it really didn't happen (denial)
- Feel dependent
- Be afraid the abuser will try to get back at them
- Blame themselves
- Feel helpless
- Not know how or not feel able to report abuse

How to Report Abuse...

- You can reach Adult Protective Services through your case manager's office.
- You can call the DHS Abuse Hotline at 1-800-232-3020
- After hours, call 9-1-1.

Consumer-employers and/or homecare workers can both be the recipient of abuse. If you think you or someone you know may be experiencing abuse you can talk with your STEPS Trainer, case manager, or read more about abuse in the 'Resources and Acknowledgement' section (page 27).

## **HOME EVACUATION**

For emergencies other than medical (such as an earthquake, volcano, major gas leak, severe windstorm, flooding, fire, etc.), you may need to leave your home. Be sure to draw an exit plan, including escape routes, and go over it with your employee.

- Where will you go if you need to leave your home? You may be directed to a community shelter by emergency radio/TV broadcasts.

- List places to go when it is unsafe to stay at home. Call your city offices for local information about accessible shelter locations.
- The 'Resources and Acknowledgement' section (in handouts of the 'Basics' folder) have information about Red Cross shelters and other safety information.

### **Other Emergency Equipment**

- It's a good idea to keep emergency supplies (first aid kit, clothing, radio, food, medicine, etc.) all together, so that you don't have to gather up supplies in a hurry.
- Some safety officials recommend getting a new garbage can that has wheels and putting emergency supplies to last three days inside (including a sleeping bag or blankets). That way, if you have to evacuate in a hurry, you are prepared to take the supplies with you.

Check any emergency supplies that may have an expiration date when you test smoke alarm batteries twice a year (or more often if necessary).

**Please contact me, I want more training on the topics that are checked:**

❖ **Module 1 - Preparing to Hire a Homecare Worker**

- Self Empowerment, Your Rights and Responsibilities
- In-Home Service Plan
- Activities of Daily Living
- Task List
- Assistive Technology
- Professional Skills, Experience and Personal Qualities
- House Rules and Expectations
- Job Description

❖ **Module 2 – Hiring Your Homecare Worker**

- Ways to find applicants
- Sample Ads to find Applicants
- Screening Applicants
- Interview Questions to Ask (and illegal questions)
- Guidelines and Practice for Interviewing Face-to-face
- Checking References
- The Employment Agreement
- Homecare Worker Back-Up Plan

The training I am interested in is not listed. I want more information on:

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Name

Telephone Number



STEPS training promotes empowerment and choice for people who use in-home services.