

Hiring Your Homecare Worker

STEPS Training

Module 2



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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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
- ❖ Communication and Safety in your Home

Ask your STEPS Trainer if you want more information.

STEPS TRAINING GOAL FOR MODULE 2

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 2 is to demonstrate the skills needed to find and hire a homecare worker.

Making choices + accepting responsibility =
EMPOWERMENT

OPTIONS FOR FINDING APPLICANTS

Now that you have a job description, it's time to find someone who can do the job. There are three basic choices:

1. Home Care Commission's Registry and Referral Service

The Home Care Commission provides a statewide on-line Registry and Referral Service. If you do not have access to a computer ask your STEPS Trainer to help you find a computer to use, and help you to access and use the registry.

The web address for the Registry and Referral System is:

<https://www.or-hcc.org>

The registry allows you to enter your name and information about your needs, and can match you with a homecare worker who can do the job. If a homecare worker is listed in the Registry, that means they have passed a criminal background check and are qualified to do the job. More information is in the 'Resources and Acknowledgments' section of the STEPS folder.

2. Help Wanted Advertisements

You can place "help wanted" ads:

- In newspapers
- On the internet
- On community bulletin boards at:
 - ◆ Churches
 - ◆ Senior Centers
 - ◆ Centers for Independent Living
 - ◆ Nursing schools and local colleges
 - ◆ Grocery stores
 - ◆ Shopping malls

3. Ask People You Know

Ask friends and family if they know of someone who may be interested in working for you. Don't forget to ask people you know because you interact with them a lot:

- Grocery clerk
- Hairdresser
- Gas station attendant
- Doctor/dentist/therapist
- Members of groups you may belong to

Safety Tips for Placing Ads and Screening Applicants

- Advertisements should NOT contain confidential information! Don't say where you live or give your name.
- If you want, give a fake first name ("Chester" or "Gladys") so that when someone calls and asks for "Gladys," you'll know it's a call about the job. You just say, "Are you calling about the help wanted ad?"
- You never have to give your name on the phone if you feel uncomfortable in any way. If you want to give your real name, say, "I am Joe, the one who will be hiring," then go ahead and begin the telephone screening process.

SAMPLE

ADS

Need to supplement your income? Enjoy working one-on-one with people? Part-time position opening in Bend. Flexible hours working with employer with a disability in reaching independent living goals. Experience not necessary. Training provided. Contact Gladys at 541-555-5555 between 6 & 8 p.m.

Help wanted, full-time live-in. Experienced, strong, non-smoking male to help male wheelchair user. Light housekeeping, cooking, help with transferring me from wheelchair to bed, bathing, dressing. Must pass criminal background check, have reliable car and clean driving record, excellent references. Days off negotiable. Call 202-456-1111, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Female assistant wanted for college student, daily, 5:30-7:30 a.m. and 9:30 - 10:30 p.m. Bathing, dressing, grooming, occasional laundry, light housekeeping. Must have exc. references, pass criminal background check. \$12/hr. Call 284-300-4444, leave message.

Older woman, smoker, needs female Saturdays, Sundays 8 a.m.-8 p.m. to give meds, fix meals, help w/bathing, dressing, laundry, housekeeping, shopping. Must love dogs, pass criminal background check, have exc. references, clean driving record, reliable car. 622-430-8411, 10 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.

SCREENING APPLICANTS BY TELEPHONE



The purpose of screening applicants is to avoid wasting time interviewing people who do not qualify for the job or are not a good match for you.

You might want to ask a few basic questions (a mini-interview) during the first telephone conversation to get a sense of the person.

For instance, you might ask:

- Do you have experience working with people with disabilities?
- How would you describe your personality?
- Are you comfortable taking directions?
- Are you open to new ways of doing things?
- The state will need to conduct a criminal history background check on you. Is that a problem?
- Do you have references?
- Are you willing to take a drug test?

Illegal Questions

Various civil rights laws make it illegal to ask certain questions. At this stage of the hiring process, do not ask questions about:

- Age
- Race
- Gender (male or female)
- Marital status
- Height or weight
- Religion
- National origin
- Children (or plans to have them)
- Any injuries they may have had
- Disability

Of course you will want to know if the applicant is able to do all the tasks you need help with (like getting food down from a high shelf), but you are not allowed to ask if the person has a disability (like a balance disorder that keeps them from using a ladder or stepstool of any sort).

You may ask only, "Are you able to do this job **with or without** a reasonable accommodation?" (A "reasonable accommodation" is any equipment or gadget or change in the way things are done that allows a person with a disability to do a task.) Asking the question that way allows a person with a disability to truthfully answer "yes," because there are reaching gadgets (retrievers) that they can use.

If you have a cat in your home and want to know if the applicant has allergies, you may not ask, "do you have allergies?" You might say, "I have a long-haired cat in my home, is that a problem for you?"

If some of your tasks require lifting, you may not ask, "have you had a back injury?" You might say, "this job requires lifting 50 pounds on a daily basis. Are you able to do that?"

Other screening tips:

As the caller answers your questions, you may want to keep notes about key questions:

- Do you feel you will get along well with each other?
- Is the caller willing to give you a list of friends and former bosses (personal and professional references)?
- Is the caller willing to have a criminal history background check?

Remember, you're in charge!

- You can choose to not set up an interview with the caller if they make you uncomfortable.
- You're not obligated to meet with every person who calls.
- Do you get a funny feeling that the person is not safe or not a good fit for the position?

Trust your intuition!

SAMPLE

TELEPHONE SCREENING QUESTIONS -

Name: _____

Yes _____ No _____ Maybe _____

Phone number: _____

Do you have experience working with people with disabilities?	
How would you describe your personality?	
Are you comfortable taking direction?	
How do you deal with feedback?	
Are you willing to have a criminal background check conducted?	
Do you have references	

❖ Handout – Telephone Screening Worksheet

GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWING FACE-TO-FACE



1. Be safe.
 - Hold the interview in a location that is safe for you.
 - If you do not want to use your home, try your local church, your apartment building or community library, which may have rooms available for you to conduct interviews.
2. You can invite a friend to sit in.
 - Having a second person there is a good idea because that person may notice things during the interview that you do not identify.
3. Set the tone of the interview.
 - First impressions are important. Dress comfortably, but be sure you look like an employer who knows exactly what you want.
 - Show that you are a capable individual, able to direct your own services.
 - Speak with confidence.
4. If you hold the interview in your home, think about where you will sit. A living room is a better choice than a bedroom, which could make you appear more dependent.
5. If you have a friend(s) sit in, make it clear to everyone that you are the interviewer.
6. Sit facing the applicant so that you can watch for eye contact and body language.
7. Get rid of distractions.
 - Turn the TV and radio off.
 - Make sure pets and children will not interrupt.
8. What if you are nervous?
 - It is natural to feel nervous when interviewing.
 - The applicant is probably nervous too.



- Having a friend or family member with you may help calm your nerves.
9. Be prepared. (Being prepared for the interview may help you be less nervous.) Before the interview, make sure you have:
- A blank job application form (in case the person does not bring a completed application)
 - The job description
 - Initial information about your needs or your disability (you can provide more details when you decide you want to seriously consider hiring the applicant)
 - Information about special equipment you use
 - Ways to record your impressions (write notes yourself, have a tape recorder or ask a friend to take notes). Taking notes about each applicant during the interview will help you remember each one's answers. This is important if you will be talking with several applicants
 - A list of the interview questions you will ask
10. Planning the interview questions
- Decide ahead of time what questions you will ask and write them down.
 - Be sure your interview questions give you the information you need.
 - Use the same list of questions for each applicant so you can compare their responses more easily.
 - Make sure you know the questions that are legal to ask. (Look back to page 5 if you are uncertain.)

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE APPLICANT ARRIVES

Find out as much as you can about each job applicant. You will be making a decision to hire someone based on just a few contacts, a job application, references and a background check. It is important to learn a lot in the interview. Your



health, safety and well-being depends the choice you make.

1. Remember your first impression.

- Do they look neat, clean and presentable?
- Do they seem comfortable around you?
- Do you feel comfortable around them?

2. Make the applicant feel comfortable. You can ask, "Did you have any trouble finding the house?" or "Isn't this a beautiful, sunny day?" A discussion about the weather is always safe and helps people relax.

3. Have the applicant fill out a job application if the applicant did not bring one for you to review.

4. Give them the job description to look over. This will give you time to review the job application.

5. Pay attention to:

- Past work experience
 - ◆ How specific is the information?
- How complete is the information?
 - ◆ Are all the blanks filled in?
 - ◆ Does it include work experience and education?
- The employment patterns
 - ◆ Are there frequent job changes?
- Personality
 - ◆ When choosing your homecare worker, find someone with a personality you can work with. For example, you may have a homecare worker who talks all the time, but is an excellent assistant. This might be a habit you could live with for a few hours a day, but spending a large part of your time with this person may be a different story!

6. Pay attention to these items on the application form:

- Gaps in employment (any time period of over one or two months - ask for more details)
- Things that are left out (education, former employers - ask for

details)

- Dates of employment that do not make sense - ask for details. If you have questions about any of the information on the application, the interview is the time to ask them.
7. **Explain your needs or disability** - Talk only as much as you feel comfortable talking about. Remember: This is a person you are interviewing and may not end up hiring. All details of your disability are not needed at this point.
 8. **Go over the duties** on the job description and checklist with the applicant.
 9. **Ask the interview questions.**
 - Your interview questions will help you learn more about the applicant. A few specific questions should help you decide if the applicant has the skills you are looking for.
 - Try asking questions that applicants can answer with real examples of their experience in the areas that are important to you. This will help you get more information than you can get with simple questions that can be answered with just a couple of words or “yes” or “no.”
 - Useful questions begin with phrases like, “Tell me about...” “Explain to me how you...” “Tell me more about...”
 - Make sure the questions you ask are legal.
 10. **If your homecare worker will be a live-in provider** and you are considering hiring the applicant, you need to discuss:
 - **Food:** Will the employee bring their own food? Will meals be prepared together? Be sure to discuss meals with your case manager, the choices you make may impact food stamps.
 - **Sleeping:** You need to provide and agree on a place for the homecare worker to sleep.
 - **House Rules:** For example, will you allow the homecare worker to bring friends or a date into your home? What limits will apply?
 - **Employment Agreement:** If you hire this applicant, document your agreements in the Employment Agreement (see page 18).

INTERVIEW NOTES AND QUESTIONS WORKSHEET

Below is an example of a worksheet listing questions (and made-up answers) you might want to ask a job applicant. Using this kind of worksheet for each interview will help you compare answers to the same questions from different applicants.

SAMPLE

<u>INTERVIEW NOTES WORKSHEET</u>	
A friend can take notes if you decide that is what works best for you.	
Questions	Answers/Notes
What experience do you have working with people who use wheelchairs?	Many years - growing up, helped brother, who was a chair user.
Have you ever helped a person with bowel and bladder routines?	No, but willing to learn - did not seem to think that was a problem at all.
Part of this job is fixing my lunch each day. I like Chinese food. Can you cook Chinese dishes?	Knows how to boil noodles & do stir fry. Willing to try new recipes. Likes making Italian pasta dishes and baking cookies.
Have you ever been fired from a job? If so, why?	Never been fired.
What made you want to come to work for me?	Wanted to work for non-smoker -recently developed a cough because current employer smokes.
In this day and age there are lots of concerns with identity theft and drug problems. Tell me your thoughts on those concerns.	Family member used drugs, caused many problems. Aware of need to be cautious with personal information.
Etc.	

❖ **Handouts –**

- **Interview Notes Worksheet**
- **HCW Employment Application**

EXERCISE

PRACTICE INTERVIEWING ACTIVITY

Practicing interviewing will show you changes you might need to make to have a successful interview. For example, you may find that you are having problems with communicating, and find that it would be more helpful to write out questions and let the applicant read each one and answer. If part of the services you need involve writing, you may want to have the applicant write a couple of answers to check his or her writing ability.



Divide into groups of three (if you have an odd number, you can have four to a group - two Observers and one each of the Applicant and Interviewer).

- Each group of three will decide who will play the part of Interviewer, Applicant and Observer to begin with. You'll have a chance to switch so that everyone gets to play each part.
- The Interviewer asks questions for five minutes (use sample questions from our earlier worksheets).
- The Applicant makes up answers.
- The Observer takes notes on the Interviewer. The Observer should take notes on what two things went well and what two things might be improved?
 - ◆ Think about what we've discussed – welcome, introducing self, asking questions that will get complete answers
 - ◆ Be tactful when giving feedback – use words like, "It might have been less awkward to..." or "Maybe it would be helpful to...."
- When signaled to stop, the Observer will give feedback to the Interviewer.
- Switch roles and repeat until everyone has had a chance to play all parts.

When everyone is finished playing each part, have each group share two things that went well and two things that could have been done better.

- Interviewers, what was the hardest part?
- Applicants, what ideas did you get for asking questions when you actually do get to do a real inter view?
- What was most helpful about this exercise?

Interview Impressions Worksheet Example

In a real interview, you might want to use an Interview Impressions Worksheet like the following to help you remember whatever you feel is important. The first example is just that - an example. A blank form is included in the 'Handouts' to allow you to write in the things that are important to **you**.

❖ Handout – Interview Impressions Worksheet

SAMPLE

INTERVIEW IMPRESSIONS WORKSHEET

Applicant Name: John Doe

Date: 12-22-07

	Always 5	4	3	2	Never 1
1. a. Spoke directly to me instead of my helper.		X			
1. b. If not, corrected this when pointed out.					
2. Listened to me and tried to understand me.	X				
3. Seemed comfortable with me.		X			
4. Looked neat and clean.			X		

Circle your answer

Has Own Car?	Yes	No
Reliable Transportation?	Yes	No
Talks too much?	Yes	No
Smokes?	Yes	No
Would I hire this person?	Yes	No

Notes:

A little too chatty to start with, might have been nervous. Seemed very sweet. Asked respectful questions about my disability.

APPLICANT REFERENCES

Do not skip the reference checking step of the hiring process! It is very important to check the references the applicants give you.

- Some applicants do not interview well and do not make a good first impression, but they may have an excellent work history and references.
- Some applicants may interview well but have a very poor work history and references.
- Prepare questions for the references ahead of time or use worksheets.

Applicant Reference List

The Applicant Reference List is a permission slip for you to contact the references listed. The applicant lists the names and phone numbers of either personal or employment references, then signs and dates the form at the bottom.

Once the applicant signs this form, you will be able to tell the people listed when you call them that the applicant has given you written permission to contact them as a reference for your job as homecare worker.

SAMPLE

Applicant Reference List

Name of Reference: _____

Phone: _____

Personal Reference Employment Reference

Name of Reference: _____

Phone: _____

Personal Reference Employment Reference

I give permission for you to check the above references.

Applicant name: _____ Date: _____

References Worksheet

You may use the reference worksheet included in the handouts when you call each reference on your applicant's list. (You'll need a separate form for each reference.)

Using the form makes sure that you ask each reference for the same information so you can compare answers for different applicants.

Fill in the applicant's name and the name of the person you're contacting as a reference at the top.

If you want to, you may also mail, fax or deliver the form to the person. If you choose to mail the form rather than calling, you'll need to complete your information at the end of the form (employer name, address, phone and fax) so that the person can get the form back to you.

❖ Handout –

- **Applicant Reference List Worksheet**
- **Reference Worksheet (two options)**

MAKING THE HIRING DECISION

Before you offer anyone the job, you must be sure that the applicant has successfully completed the state's provider enrollment process and contact your case manager to arrange a start date.

A successful provider enrollment means:

- Completing a local office SPD or AAA homecare worker application packet
- Passing the required criminal history background check
- Obtaining a provider number

Once you have decided to hire a specific applicant and made sure they have completed the state enrollment process, notify your case manager and confirm the start date. Then you can offer the job to the applicant you choose and notify them of the agreed-upon date to start work.

THE EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT

Use an employment agreement to establish clear expectations and ground rules with your homecare worker.

- Develop employment agreements sooner rather than later, before hiring and immediately after this training if you already have a homecare worker.
- Base your employment agreement on the job description, your house rules, and the expectations list you have already developed.
- If you already have a homecare worker, you can tell them that you have just learned this procedure and that you want to use it to help you both track the agreed-to duties and expectations of the job.
- You can also use the employment agreement to measure each employee's job performance and to periodically review their work.
- You may want to document 'grounds for termination' in the employment agreement.
- All tasks in the Employment Agreements MUST match the tasks in your Service Plan and Task List.
- This is a good place to note your house rules and expectations

SAMPLE

EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT

(NOTE: Employment Agreements MUST match the tasks in the Service Plan and Task List.)



This agreement is between:

Employer: _____

Employee: _____

Date: _____

Duties:

1. Help with dressing, grooming, and personal hygiene.
2. Do laundry, including towels and sheets as needed.
3. Help with house cleaning and cooking from time to time.
4. Help with transportation from time to time.
5. Do other duties as needed (for example, take out trash).

Work Policies:

1. I understand that I will be paid only for hours worked at a rate of \$_____ per hour.
2. If I do not show up more than twice without letting my employer know ahead of time, I may lose my job.
3. I will give two weeks' notice when I must miss work or change any work schedule that was already arranged.
4. I will always clean up the area where I worked before I leave.
5. I will only use supplies that I am told to use and I will tell my employer when supplies are running low.
6. I understand this is a professional relationship and personal issues are not to be brought to work.
7. I understand I am not to talk on my cell phone when I am at work.

8. I understand that I will have a 30 day probation period beginning on the date below.
9. The employee can end this contract by giving two weeks' notice.

Privacy Rules:

1. I will always knock on the door (except early in the morning) and the bedroom door every time I need to enter before entering. I will not enter until told to do so.
2. I will always come to the house alone unless my employer tells me ahead of time that I may bring someone else.
3. I will only open drawers, cabinets, or doors in the house as instructed.
4. I will only answer the telephone when I am asked to do so.

Property Rules:

1. I will use my employer's property only when I am instructed to.
2. I will go into places in the house only when and if I am asked to or with permission.
3. I will come to the house only when my employer is home unless agreed to previously to do assigned tasks.
4. I will provide my own food and meals, I will not eat my employer's food unless my employer tells me differently.
5. I will pay for the fuel that I use in my vehicle.

Employee _____

Date _____

Employer _____

Date _____

❖ **Handout – Employment Agreement Worksheet**

HOMECARE WORKER BACK UP PLAN

What happens if your employee calls in sick or needs time off? Developing a homecare worker back up plan gives you someone to call when the scheduled employee is not available to work.



Make your back up plan fit your needs. For example, if you have a visual impairment, have your back up plan printed in letters that you can read without assistance. If you are not able to reach above or below a certain height, be sure your essential items are kept in a place you can reach.

- Sometimes there is a high level of turnover in homecare workers. A well thought out back up plan will help make sure that a homecare worker will be available to work, either at a planned time or at the last minute.
- The Registry and Referral System has contact information for other qualified homecare workers (see page 2).
- Update the back up plan as information about homecare workers changes.
- Include a list of friends or family members who are willing to help out in case of an emergency.
- Policies about how much notification is required of an employee will be late or miss work should be written into the employment agreement.
- Post your back up plan in a prominent place where your homecare worker can see it in case of an emergency.
- List backup workers in order of priority (list the first person you want called at the top, then next, etc.)

❖ **Handout – Back up plan Worksheet**

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 3 - Communication and Safety in Your Home**

- Ways to Train a Homecare Worker
- Communication, Conflict Resolution, Conversations that are Uncomfortable
- Keeping Professional Boundaries
- Employee Performance Reviews and Termination
- Safety in Your Home, Medical Emergencies
- Personal Safety and Equipment, Home Evacuation

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

Name

Telephone Number



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