

## Getting Started towards Independent Living

- **S**ome disabled individuals believe a Personal Care Assistant (PCA) will come to them like Mary Poppins did – floating down from the sky with a big smile and good heart just when they need her the most. Unfortunately, that ain't gonna happen. Instead, finding a PCA requires a lot of time, skill and hard work.

**Begin by calling your local Center for Independent Living (CIL)** for assistance, information and support. Keep in mind you are not their only consumer. You may get faster results if you assist with the phone calling and other work.

**Examine your needs by asking yourself some specific questions before proceeding:**

- What are my care needs? Make a complete list.
- When do I need help? Morning and night but not days? Days but not nights? Just overnight? 24-hours a day?
- How many people will it take to fulfill my care needs per day/week?
- What kind of help am I looking for? Strictly personal care? Companionship? Housekeeping? A combination?
- How much funding is available to pay for help, or how much can I personally afford to pay?
- Can I offer additional benefits? Free room, shared rent, board?
- Will I hire only a man or only a woman, or is either gender acceptable?
- Is race or ethnicity a consideration?
- Are there any personal qualities I need or prefer in a PCA? Strength, gentleness, ambitiousness, patience, an independent thinker, easily directed?
- Can my PCA have a disability? Hearing loss, under/overweight, gait impairment, cognitive disability, artificial limb?
- Can I hire a foreign-speaking individual?
- Will I hire a minor? Some funding sources prohibit this.
- Will I hire a smoker?
- Must the PCA have her own car? Drive my vehicle? Drive me in theirs?

Once your PCA profile is developed, you will be able to seek out the best resources for finding help. For example, it may be a waste of time to advertise at a college if you need 24-hour care. However, this may be the ideal place to find occasional or part-time help.

**Develop a flyer specifying job requirements.** [See Appendix A] Also, **place want ads** [See Appendix B]. Consider these sources for posting flyers or ads:

- city and community newspapers
- college newspapers and bulletin boards
- churches (bulletins and verbal announcements)
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- community/recreation centers
- youth centers
- senior centers (seniors are age 55 and up!)
- fitness centers
- grocery store bulletin boards

**Word of mouth is often your best advertising tool.** People who know you can sell the job to people they know. Send flyers to anyone who can spread the word to others, especially friends or acquaintances in the health field (nurses, therapists, etc.). I even send flyers to my veterinarian and to the health store I frequent! People who have contact with a lot of people are our best resource.

**Tell your disabled friends you are seeking a PCA.** They may know of a qualified worker looking for employment.

**Ask to make a short announcement to a particular group** (i.e. church, school, recreation center). People are more apt to show interest once they meet you.

You must have a clear idea of the type of worker you are seeking and the duties you need them to perform before you can move on to the next step.



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