

# Consumer Directed Attendant Guide

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Information on understanding and utilizing consumer directed services to get the help you need in your home and community

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## The Nuts and Bolts of Consumer Directed Services

### 1. What are consumer directed services?

“Consumer directed” means that a person with a disability, often working with their family, decides exactly who will be hired to provide support services. The consumer is the person with a disability and they are “directing” or controlling exactly who will assist them. The individual with a disability can appoint a family member or friend to help in this role. You can choose to hire people with specific backgrounds, training, or interests since you’ll decide exactly who will work for you. The services that can be provided vary widely. The general idea is that the supports would be whatever you need- someone to help you with cooking, cleaning, completing homework, gaining life skills, or whatever else you may need to be an independent as possible. The person who provides the supports is often called an aide, attendant, or personal care attendant.

The alternative to consumer directed services is called “agency directed services” which means that the person with a disability hires an agency that sends support staff. In that situation, you choose the agency, but not the particular staff who will provide assistance.

### 2. What are advantages of consumer directed services?

The greatest benefit of consumer directed services, sometimes called CD services, is that you can choose exactly who will provide you with supports. If you have an unusual medical or behavioral need, you can look for someone with expertise in that field. If you love music, you can search for someone who would like to help you go to concerts, buy albums, and dance. You can hire as many people as you want and work out with them what their schedule may be. You could decide you want some people there on a routine schedule and some people “on call” for backup or as-needed respite.

### 3. What are the disadvantages of consumer directed services?

Anyone who utilizes CD services would tell you there is a lot of work involved. In this situation, you are the employer, or you can choose to have someone close to you (e.g. a parent) serve in that role. You will search for staff, conduct interviews, hire, train, and terminate staff as appropriate. If your staff call you to say they cannot make it in for their shift, you are responsible for finding backup support or providing the support yourself. In agency directed services, the agency is required to provide backup staff, though that does not work flawlessly either.

For Waiver CD services, after you complete the initial enrollment paperwork and weekly electronic timesheets (called EVV), a separate agency helps with taxes and human resource issues. See question nine for more details about those agencies.

Some families have ultimately decided the work associated with consumer directed services isn’t working for them, so they have gone to an agency for care and asked that agency to hire the existing staff. This isn’t guaranteed, but you can always ask.

The Community Living Waiver offers a service called Sponsored Residential where a person with a disability lives with a caregiver (typically non-family) and that caregiver is paid for providing supports. Agencies must oversee this model, even if the family privately located the staff they wanted.

#### **4. How do consumer directed services work with Waivers?**

A “Waiver” is a long-term care support provided by the state’s Medicaid office. Virginia currently has two different types of Waivers, each for a slightly different population and offering slightly different support options. To learn more about Waivers, visit The Arc of Northern Virginia’s website at <https://thearcofnova.org/resource-library/#waivers>, check out our recorded webinars at <https://www.youtube.com/user/VideosatTheArcofNoVA> , or attend an upcoming workshop or webinar at <https://thearcofnova.org/workshops/>.

Most Waivers offer attendant care and an option to use consumer directed attendants. As of 2024, Medicaid Waivers in Northern Virginia pay \$17.27 an hour for a consumer directed attendant. Waivers can provide up to 8 hours per week of overtime pay, and offer limited sick leave, but no other benefits (e.g., health insurance, vacation leave).

#### **5. Do I need a Waiver to use consumer directed services?**

Anyone can hire a care attendant at any time. However, without a Medicaid Waiver, you will need another way to pay for the attendant’s time, such as paying out of pocket or using Self-Directed Services (a County funded program in Fairfax and Arlington).

#### **6. How many hours of care am I able to receive?**

If you’re using a Waiver, you’ll work with your Support Coordinator and Service Facilitator to share information about the assistance you need and the frequency with which you need it. You will talk about two types of service if you are under 18 years old, attendant care and respite care. Attendant care hours are routine weekly hours and respite care can be used to supplement those hours when you need extra help. This may happen if a primary caregiver goes out of town. If you’re over 18, you may also be eligible for companion care hours. These hours are used for supervision, not active assistance. You can use the same attendant or attendants for all types of care. Once you determine the services you need, your Support Coordinator and Service Facilitator will submit a plan to the appropriate state office (either Medicaid/DMAS or the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services/DBHDS) depending upon your Waiver and ask that those services are authorized. Once they are, you’ll be able to start looking for attendants.

Note that as of July 2016, there are new rules in Virginia as a result of a Department of Labor ruling. The new rules prevent any single attendant from working more than 40 hours per week plus 8 hours of overtime, unless they are live-in staff. If you privately hire staff for more than 40 hours per week, you should look into the Fair Labor Standards Act to see if you are obligated to pay overtime for the hours in excess of 40 weekly hours.

## 7. What if I want consumer and agency directed care?

If you feel like consumer and agency directed services both have options you need, you can consider utilizing both by splitting your authorized care hours. For example, if you're authorized to use 20 hours a week, you could use 10 hours for consumer directed care and 10 for agency directed care. You would work with your Support Coordinator and Service Facilitator to make this happen.

## 8. Can I supplement the Medicaid Waiver rate of pay?

You may not supplement the hourly rate for Medicaid attendants. When they're hired, they agree to accept the Medicaid rate of pay for their work. *You may hire your Waiver attendant privately for additional hours beyond your Waiver hours. During those privately hired hours, you may pay the attendant a rate you feel is appropriate.*

You are able to reimburse attendants for out of pocket expenses like gas from driving around the individual with a Waiver, the cost of their meal or movie ticket while taking out an individual, etc. You can also offer to provide your attendant meals with your family during the time they are working. This can be a nice way to include them, show appreciation for their work, and to help eliminate some of their daily expenses.

If you're not using a Medicaid Waiver, you may pay your attendants an hourly rate of your choice. \$25-\$35/hour is a common rate in Northern Virginia.

## 9. This seems like a lot of work! Who will help me?

(See the next page for a chart on how responsibilities are shared under Waivers.)

This guide is meant to provide basic helpful information on CD services, but you may need additional help. If you're utilizing a Medicaid Waiver to fund services, your help will come through the Waiver. If you're using a CCC Plus Waiver, you will have a service facilitator who can help train you on how to be a successful employer, how to find and train attendants, and how to complete CD services paperwork. If you're using a Community Living, Family and Individual Supports, or Building Independence Waiver (collectively called DD Waivers), you will have a Support Coordinator (sometimes called a Case Manager) and a Service Facilitator. They will work together to help you be a successful CD employer. It is important to keep in mind that since you're the employer, the ultimate obligation for interviewing, hiring, and training attendants is yours.

Consumer directed services utilized through Waivers receive additional assistance from a fiscal agent. Depending upon your Medicaid Managed Care plan, you will have one of three fiscal agents. They are called Public Partnerships (PPL), Consumer Directed Care Network (CDCN), and Aces\$. The fiscal agent you get will depend upon your Medicaid Managed Care Plan. Their job is to receive and process the weekly timesheets in the EVV system, to process paperwork for new hires, to send paychecks to attendants, and to provide tax reporting documents. They work much like an HR department.

You can see them online at:

PPL- <https://www.publicpartnerships.com/>  
 Consumer Directed Care Network- <https://www.consumerdirectva.com/>  
 Aces\$- <https://www.mycil.org/>

If you're not using a Waiver, you may find it helpful to work with someone else who has used attendant care in the past, like a friend. You can also ask for help from your family or your circle of support. You can also use sites like care.com to manage payroll and tax deductions.

**Chart of Responsibilities for Consumer-Directed Services from Public Partnerships Employer Manual**

<b>Job</b>	<b>Waiver User &amp; EOR</b>	<b>Support Coordinator (DD Waiver only)</b>	<b>Service Facilitator</b>	<b>Fiscal Agent</b>	<b>Attendant</b>
Setting up service plan and hours	X	X	X		
Work getting services authorized		X	X		
Employer training	X		X		
Training, hiring, and firing attendant	X	Can provide support	Can provide support	X	
Submitting paperwork to be employer	X	Can provide support	Can provide support	X	
Submitting attendant paperwork and EVV	X		X		X
Paying attendant				X	X
Routine, quarterly, annual review visits	X		X		

## Getting Started

If you have a Waiver or another way to fund attendants, you've decided that CD services are right for you, and you need support now, then you are ready to get started! You can find the official Medicaid employer manual online at <https://www.dmas.virginia.gov/media/3868/employer-of-record-manual-august-2021.pdf>. The information below is designed to give you a quick understanding of the process in clear wording.

### Becoming an Employer of Record

If you're not using a Waiver, you can skip this step.

If you're using a Waiver, your first job is to be officially listed as an employer of record (EOR) with the fiscal agent. You must be listed as the employer in order for the fiscal agent to process any other paperwork related to your account. As part of this process, you will be given an Employer Identification Number, or EIN. If you already have an EIN, you will either need to find another employer of record or agree to use the EIN exclusively for waiver business in the future. Your Support Coordinator and Service Facilitator will help you with this process once you decide upon CD services.

The Service Facilitator will help you get the paperwork to do this. If the person with a Waiver needs someone else to be the EOR on their behalf, the EOR request form will identify that person and that person's essential information. Once the fiscal agent receives this form, they will send the individual or their EOR paperwork to complete and send to the fiscal agent for processing. Make copies of the forms you send in. Check with your fiscal agent or your service facilitator to ensure that your packet has been received, processed, and approved before you proceed.

The employer of record must be able to help attendants complete paperwork, hire, fire, and train attendants. The person with a disability can be the employer of record if they're able to perform these duties. If they are not able to perform these duties, a family member or someone else involved in their care can serve in this role. Case managers, service facilitators, and attendants cannot be the employer of record.

### Who Can Be an Attendant?

Keep in mind that Waiver attendants must be 18 years or older, have a Virginia license if you want them to drive the person receiving supports, and be able to pass a background check. This background check only covers Virginia, but it will be paid for by the fiscal agent. If you would like a more comprehensive background check, you can pay for a federal search. You can learn more about this option at the FBI's website (<https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/more-fbi-services-and-information/identity-history-summary-checks>). Attendants must have a Social Security number and be eligible to work in the United States.

Parents often ask if they can be attendants. Parents are allowed to be a paid attendant under the CCC Plus and DD Waivers, assuming you can demonstrate the need for that flexibility. This may happen if



you have repeatedly tried to find attendants through CD options and agency directed care, but have not been able to find someone to meet the needs of your adult child. Parents may also be considered as optional attendants if the child has unique needs that are difficult to meet with another attendant. For example, if the child only speaks or understands a foreign language that is uncommon in your area, or has care needs that are highly complex, a parent may be the best paid caregiver. You may also want to consider adult siblings before parents.

In order for the parent to become the attendant, you will need to have this plan approved by DBHDS or your Medicaid Managed Care Organization, depending upon with Waiver you are using. Your Support Coordinator or Service Facilitator can help with this process. You would also need to name another emergency backup caregiver. Parents of children under 18 cannot work more than 40 hours/week per child with a Waiver and they do not get respite if they are paid caregivers.

## Finding Attendants

Once you're officially an employer, you're ready to find an attendant. There are a lot of ways to find attendants. You should choose the method that works best for you. Some people try multiple avenues at one time or change their methods over time. Start with who you know! Do you have neighbors, family friends, siblings over 18 who live outside the home, grandparents, aunt and uncles, former teachers or tutors or anyone else who has helped you in the past? Ask them if they may be willing to work as an attendant. Remember that you can hire as many people as you'd like, so no single attendant has to be available all the time you will need support.

1. Post an ad or peruse resumes at care.com or sittercity.com. These websites are focused on connecting supportive staff and families. Care.com has a Special Needs section and conducts a background check. See the personal story of one mom's care.com experience on pages 14-17 of this guide to get more details on this option. Note that there is a fee to post jobs on care.com
2. Post an ad on a general jobs website, like craigslist.org or the jobs section of facebook.com. You can customize this ad as much as you'd like. Ask for resumes in your ad. The cost for such an ad in Northern Virginia is about \$25.
3. Post an ad in the bulletin at your place of worship, neighborhood newsletter or listserv, or community Facebook page. People who see that ad will live near you and may be interested in finding a job with no commute.
4. A local non-profit, SPARC, has a service called Personal Support Attendant (PSA) Match. For a flat fee, they'll write ads, interview and screen candidates, and help with the process. <https://sparcsolutions.org/>
5. If you live near a community college, nursing school, or university, get in touch with them. Students learning about social work, psychology, special education, nursing, and other similar fields are often very interested in attendant care jobs. Often these students are comfortable with the rate of pay offered by the Waiver and are available on nights and weekends.
6. Talk to friends who use Waivers. They may have an attendant who works for them who needs more hours or is looking for a new client.

7. Tell people in your life you're looking for someone and ask them to recommend anyone they know who may be a good fit.
8. Ask staff who work with your loved one at school, work, day programs or other settings if they'd like to work with them in their home, too.
9. Consider asking grandparents, peers at school who are 18+ years old, neighbors, and other people who may not be the best for ongoing care if they'd be willing to be backup options.

## Ad Content

The best ads are clear, personal, and concise. Aim to include all the relevant information in about a paragraph or so. People who are interested can then contact you for more information and further details. There are a number of things you definitely want to include in any advertisement:

- A brief title that describes the job. Examples include "Attendant needed for 12-year-old boy," "Caregiver wanted full-time in the Fairfax area," "Care attendant wanted to work with young girl who loves Star Wars." It is up to you to decide what the most important details are and what may catch the eye of possible employees.
- A general description of the hours. Is it full-time, part-time, evenings, weekends, 9-5, or flexible? Shifts of four hours or more tend to attract much more interest.
- A rough outline of the duties. Will the attendant be doing a lot of lifting, behavioral management, or community outings?
- A salary range. Some websites, like care.com, allow you to post within a dollar by hour range. You may also choose to list the exact salary. Medicaid Waiver pays \$17.27/hour in Northern Virginia.
- A start date. Is someone needed immediately or in the coming weeks? Is the start date negotiable?
- A job location. You can give the name of your city or neighborhood. You want attendants to know if the commute would work for them, but don't disclose your whole address to protect your privacy.
- Transportation options. If you live near a Metro station or bus stop, note that option for possible attendants. If you are not located near public transportation, clarify that they will need a private vehicle to get to and from work.
- A focus on desired qualities. Some people find that it is most helpful to focus on skills (e.g., experienced managing behaviors), while others have more success focusing on interests (e.g., seeking someone with an interest in art). Keep in mind that you'll be providing specific training on how to provide care once someone is hired, so you may want to avoid being too specific on someone's backgrounds. Old habits and skills can be helpful. . . and hard to change! If the attendant shares interests with the Waiver recipient, the odds that they will enjoy each other and work well together increase.
- Age range of individual being served. The skills needed to support a young child and an aging adult are different. Give an age range to help attendants know if this person's needs fall within their skill set.

- Contact information. Leave a way to get in touch with you. If you use a site like care.com or craigslist.org, people can reply to you through the ad directly. Otherwise, leave a phone number (with best times to call) or email address. Be quick to reply to their contacts.

## Follow Up Contacts and Interviews

Set aside time to reply to attendants each day. The quicker you respond, the better. There are lots of people looking for good attendants and you don't want to miss any opportunities. When you follow up, you should ask for more information if anything in the potential employee's reply is unclear or does not seem to reflect the needs you listed in your ad.

Suggest a few possible interview options in the coming week. If you can provide a range of days of the week and times of day, this increases the odds they may be available. Clarify that the interview will be in your home and take about 30 minutes (or longer if you feel that more time may be needed). If you want them to bring anything to the interview (e.g. copies of certifications, resume, references), let them know now so they have time to prepare. If you haven't already done so, provide contact information for yourself so they can reach you if they need to change the interview day or time.

Once an interview time is agreed upon, remind the attendant of your contact information, address, and any information you'd like them to have for the interview.

On the day of the interview, be prepared with a list of interview questions and a way to take notes. Customize the interview questions based upon your needs. Examples are below.

- Thank the person for coming. You may want to start with a courtesy question about the weather or the drive so they can settle in.
- Make note of the time of their arrival (early, late), their appearance (neat and clean or rumpled), and body language (eye contact, fidgeting, appearing comfortable).
- Briefly overview the job responsibilities, hours, and requirements. Then, begin with questions.
- Can you tell me what interested you in this job?
- Could you briefly describe your experience with work like this?
- Can you provide references?
- If the attendant will be cooking on the job, ask about what they like to eat and like to cook.
- If the attendant will be cleaning, ask if they are comfortable performing that work.
- Be clear on any possible work hazards (e.g., lifting, working around medical supplies) and ask to ensure they understand and are comfortable with those risks.
- Ask about transportation. Are they able to get to the job reliably and on time?
- If the attendant will be going on outings, ask about their interests in activities like eating out, movies, concerts, sports events, etc.
- Ask them about any concerns they have related to coming to work on time, consistently, and performing all the duties you outlined.

- Clarify the exact salary and that a fiscal agent will handle timesheets and paperwork. Ask if the attendant is already enrolled with a fiscal agent.
- Add any questions related to your specific needs. For example, is the person comfortable managing behaviors or helping someone bathe and dress?

If you are an EOR who is not the person with a disability, make sure you allot time for the individual receiving services to be a part of the interview. If your loved one is able, they can be in charge of showing their room or the supply closet. If they are older they could ask some of the interview questions. If they don't use verbal communication, perhaps they could show their favorite stuffed animal, iPad or communication device, as a way to include them in the interview process.

If at all possible, it is really helpful to have the other people who live in the house (e.g. spouse, siblings, etc.) at least be in earshot of the interview and be introduced at some point during the time together with the potential care attendant. Often the insight from these observers who also have to "live" with an attendant in their home is invaluable.

At the end of the interview, thank the person for coming and let them know what day you will let them know about the job. Keep that promise and follow up with them to let them know that they got the job, they were not selected, or that you would like to contact them in the future but that you have enough support for now.

## Reality Check

While you should stick to the list of qualifications necessary for the health, safety, and independence of your loved one, you should also be realistic about who you can hire, especially if you're using a Waiver. \$17.27 an hour with no option for benefits is not a salary that attracts endless numbers of career disability experts, or college graduates who want to work part-time. There is always a chance you can find that one in a million attendant, but don't expect that to be the only type of people you find.

Focus on finding someone who meets your requirements, is punctual, kind, and wants to do the job. Finding someone who shares interests with the individual they will support is a good way to ensure a nice partnership. Look for siblings of people with disabilities, teachers looking to make extra money, and other people who have a personal connection to the field as good bets on people who may do the job well.

Never underestimate the potential of meeting people who might be different from your original expectation, but can bring a richness and multitude of interests into your lives. Many attendants become lifelong friends of individuals and their families. In the same breath, be cautious and smart about who you invite into your home to share your living time.

## Hiring and Training

Once you've selected the new attendant, let your Support Coordinator and/or Service Facilitator know. The Service Facilitator can help you and the new attendant submit the required new hire paperwork to your fiscal agent.

Note that some paperwork, like background checks requiring a notarized signature, has to be mailed in. To save time, ensure that both background check forms are notarized, all signature boxes are signed, and all blanks are completed on the forms.

Make a copy of the paperwork and send it with tracking information, like a receipt with tracking number from the post office. Have your service facilitator follow up with the fiscal agent to ensure the paperwork was received and processed and the attendant has an ID number so they are able to begin work. This process may take several weeks. If you choose to have the attendant start working before they're approved with the fiscal agent, you are responsible for paying them for their services if the fiscal agent does not enroll them because they do not pass the background check or are otherwise ineligible to work. The attendant may experience a significant delay between start date and their first pay date if the fiscal agent is slow to process their paperwork.

Notify the attendant that they are eligible to begin work once the fiscal agent processes their information. Remind them of the start date and time. On the first day, be prepared to begin training. Work side by side with the attendant to help them learn the job first hand. Show them how you want things done and tell them how and when to ask for help. Plan to do this for the first several shifts until you are all comfortable that the attendant can perform the job. You may find it helpful to write up a daily checklist or schedule to ensure everything is completed. Make sure the attendant always has a way to contact you or another person in the event of an emergency or if they have a question or concern.

Note that agencies (e.g. group homes and home care agencies) that employ similar staff must have those staff members undergo separate trainings on behavior supports, human rights, I/DD basics, and other topics. You can find a list of those requirements here (<http://dbhds.virginia.gov/library/developmental%20services/ods-trn-dsp-trainrequirement-id-ds-waivers.pdf>) and a sample manual and quiz for attendants here (<http://dbhds.virginia.gov/library/developmental%20services/ods-trn-dsp-orientationmanual.pdf>).

You may find it helpful to make a list of likely emergencies (e.g. if you know your basement floods in big rains, if your child gets sick quickly, etc.) and have tips and quick responses written out. Leave it out somewhere, like the kitchen, so the attendant can always find it if needed.

All Waiver attendants will follow a specific pay schedule determined by the fiscal agent that spans two weeks. Make sure you keep track of that schedule and verify electronic timesheets (EVV) in a timely manner to avoid delays in payment.

## **TB Testing**

Medicaid regulations and manuals across Waivers are not always clear. For example, some clearly require a tuberculous test before work and annually thereafter and some do not. To err on the side of caution, it is a good idea to have anyone paid using the Waiver tested. This must be paid for by the family initially, but it can be reimbursed. The family must keep a copy on file. A TB test is done and the

results must be read approximately 48-72 hours later. X-rays are used to confirm possible positive test results. Local hospitals and medical facilities can usually perform this test if you call in advance.

## Working with Attendants

### Electronic Visit Verification

The 21<sup>st</sup> Center CARES Act is a federal law that mandated an Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) system for Waiver users. The electronic system records when attendants begin and end providing Waiver services and will require a smart phone, landline, tablet, or other cell device to track times. The EVV will keep track of the service attendant performs (e.g., attendant care or respite), the Waiver user who was helped, time and date of service, location of service (e.g., home or community setting), and the care attendant providing the service.

If you do not have a cell phone, the Medicaid user may be eligible for a free cell phone that will be compatible with the EVV system. To find out more about these programs, talk to your Service Facilitator or MCO Care Coordinator.

Your Service Facilitator will help you download the app that will work for you and your attendant, or teach you how to log in using a landline to use the service. All care attendants must use the EVV system unless they are live-in care attendants, who are exempt.

If the app is not working or there is another error with the EVV app, you can manually update an attendant's time worked, but this should be done rarely. The state system expects users to use the EVV program to the greatest possible degree.

### EVV Apps and Contacts

The various fiscal agents use different EVV apps. Aces\$ and Consumer Directed Care Network both use CellTrak. You can see user friendly videos on working with the app at <https://www.mycil.org/resources/evv/> for Ace\$ and <https://www.consumerdirectva.com/training-materials/> for Consumer Directed Care Network. Public Partnerships uses an app called Time4Care and you can see information on that app at <https://www.publicpartnerships.com/tools/time4care-evv/>.

If you have questions about EVV, see the state webpage at <https://www.dmas.virginia.gov/providers/long-term-care/programs-and-initiatives/electronic-visit-verification/>

## Having Someone in Your Home

When you hire anyone to work in your home, it may feel odd at first. Attendants are often working during evening and weekend hours when many members of the family may be home. It can be a big adjustment to get used to having someone there during dinner hours and other personal family time. Before you hire an attendant, the whole family should talk about what that may be like. The impact can be especially hard on siblings. It may help if you start with just having someone a few days a week.

When you hire an attendant, make sure you talk to them about how their job will play into your entire family dynamic. When you need family time, let them know they can take a break. Keep the lines of communication open.

## Good Days, Bad Days, and What to Do About Both

Sometimes you will find attendants who catch on to the job right away and do great work. Make sure you take the time to share your thanks for their hard work. Everyone needs to know when they're doing well and to feel appreciated.

If you find an attendant is not performing up to your standards, work alongside them to remind them of the proper way to perform the job. Ask to be sure they understand and follow up often to make sure things are on track again.

If an attendant repeatedly makes the same errors or does something dangerous, it is time to fire them. Sit them down and let them know that you no longer feel they are the best person for the job. Help them complete their final EVV log in and let them know that they should not return for further shifts. Begin to advertise for the job again and think about calling any other attendants you've hired to ask if they can work more in the interim.

For all attendants, an annual performance review is something you should consider offering. These annual reviews provide a set timeline for reviewing what someone is doing well and where improvement is needed. This helps keep the lines of communication open and ensures all parties are clear on expectations. You may want to have 90-day reviews for newly hired attendants.

## Expect the Unexpected

As obvious as it sounds, attendants are people, too! Everyone has bad days, gets a short temper sometimes, is occasionally late, or makes a mistake. Be understanding and reasonable to a point, but be clear and firm about any actions that are dangerous or repetitive.

Sometimes even good attendants just don't show up for work or do something that should get them fired. Be ready to have that tough conversation and be thinking about backup plans and options before you hire anyone or make permanent changes to your work schedule.



## Plan to Keep Working

Being a CD employer is not a short-term job. Many families say they constantly run ads for timeslots that are hard to fill. Sometimes families cycle through multiple attendants in a six-month timeframe before finding someone who sticks around for some time.

## Abuse and Neglect

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and neglect. The best way to prevent the problem is to thoroughly screen all employees, ask for references, and conduct background checks. Offer good, clear training and resources for when the attendant feels overwhelmed. For example, if a behavior is escalating quickly, teach them who to call you or a crisis response line while protecting themselves and the person with a disability.

If you do not see it first hand, it can be difficult to know whether or not someone has been abused or neglected. Know your loved one and be suspicious of any change in mood or behavior, and of course any signs of physical harm like bruising, swelling, redness, or scratches. Signs of abuse or neglect include sudden withdrawal or change in mood and attitude, new fears or behaviors, seeming dazed or listless, not enjoying old favorite activities, trouble sleeping, and suddenly asking about new sexual or violent topics or exhibiting new sexual or violent actions.

For any concerns about abuse, neglect, or exploitation, you should contact Child Protective Services for people under 18 years old or Adult Protective Services for individuals 18 and over. Some tips on that process are below, followed by contact numbers.

- *You do not need to be certain of abuse nor of who may have been the perpetrator. CPS and APS's job is to investigate any and all concerns.*
- If you suspect someone in particular, have them stop working with your loved one immediately. You can call at any time and can call back if you continue to feel concerned or have new information.
- You can ask that they keep your name or identifying information out of the investigation if you would like.
- If you suspect an immediate danger or want to involve the police at any time, call 911.

<b>Adult Protective Services (APS)</b>	<u>Alexandria</u> - (703) 746-5778 <u>Arlington</u> - (703) 228-1700 <u>Fairfax</u> - (703) 324-7450 <u>State Hotline for after business hours</u> (888) 832-3858	<b>Child Protective Services (CPS)</b>	<u>Alexandria</u> - (703) 746-8500 <u>Arlington</u> - (703) 228-1500 <u>Fairfax</u> - (703) 324-7400 <u>State Hotline</u> - (800) 552-7096
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## A Real Life Example

The tips below were developed by a mom who has used a CCC Plus (formerly EDCD) Waiver for years. Her son uses both attendant care and nursing care with his Waiver.

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Here is my step by step guide to hire a care attendant. I am the EOR and my son is a minor who is very medically fragile, is developmentally delayed and is verbal and mobile.

### 1. Advertise on [www.care.com](http://www.care.com)

There are several other sites that people use but I am familiar with this site and it has a great special needs category that I like to search in.

This is my ad:

The title says: Afternoon Caregiver for 10 year old boy

Ad content: Our son has Down Syndrome as well as other conditions that make him medically fragile. Otherwise he is funny, clever, and busy and needs help to focus on homework and evening routines. He loves music and dancing and we are looking for a creative caregiver to help us in the late afternoon and evening from 4-10 p.m. Monday - Friday and/or Sunday mornings for up to 35 hours per week. Job available immediately and continues through the summer into next year.

- Please note that I don't include Down syndrome in the title. This makes more people look at the actual ad to learn about the job.
- I give specific time schedule if I have it and total hours available.
- I also state when the job will start.
- Also note that all of this can/does change in the interview for the right person.
- I say up to 35 hrs/week so those who only want a few days will also apply.
- Our 4-10 PM slot is in-between two 9 hour nursing slots (7am-4pm and 10pm-7am ). I do have a tough time finding folks that can come at 4. Most can't come until 5 or 5:30pm because of other jobs. I tried making do with that schedule but it doesn't work for me because I have to pick my daughter up at school at 3:30, so can't always get back in time for the nurse to clock out.

### 2. I screen replies to the ad.

- When they reply through [care.com](http://care.com), I see the title of my ad as the subject to their email.
- I always respond within 12 hours, but I generally respond within 1-3 hours.
- I also immediately review their profile paying *special attention to range of price and schedule of availability*. I like those that have pictures. If they have reviews, I read all of them. The reviews are a new, nice feature on care.com.
- If I am interested in their profile, I respond through care.com which protects my email address. My response is:
  - Hello,  
I would like to meet you and have you meet my son and our family. Are you available for an interview Monday or Tuesday between 4-6PM? Thanks, (Name)
- I always give a range of time for interviews because that allows me to stack the interviews 2-3 a day and doesn't overload my son as he is part of the interview.
- I also interview as soon as possible.

- I try to give them two or three days to choose from but I keep them close together so I can make a good decision and not forget.
- At this time I would call/text or email, depending on what info I have. I find people respond to texts the best.
- I give people my address and cell phone when we are confirming when and where we will meet. I set up the interviews every half hour in the day. If I really like the person, I will leave an empty 30min time slot after their interview so I don't worry about going over.
- I have had individuals show up while I'm still in an interview with another and I just welcome them on in and watch how they each handle it.
- Some will not be able to interview in person, like my current hire who still lives in Michigan. I offer a phone interview first, and then skype or facetime.

3. While I am waiting for people to reply to my ad, I also send invites to people through care.com.

- I do a search in Special Needs category within 20 miles of English speaking people who will work within the Medicaid pay rate of \$17.27/hour.
- I look for people who have their own transportation, don't smoke, and are willing to care for sick children.
- I have recently started to add the criteria that they must have been online within 1 month to my search and it has helped tremendously.
- You can save this search once it gives you the list and you can come back to it every other day or so and rerun if you need to.
- I then spend several hours trolling through the searched data, looking at Picture, profile, availability and the little blurb they write. If I am interested I click on the heart to make them a favorite. If I am somewhat interested I click on the half heart to make them a maybe. Then I send all the favorites the following ad:
  - Title: Interested in Caring for our 10 yr old son?
  - Ad content: Our son has Down syndrome as well as other conditions that make him medically fragile. Otherwise he is funny, clever, and busy and needs help to focus on homework and evening routines. He loves music and dancing and we are looking for a creative caregiver to help us in the late afternoon and evening from 4-10 p.m. for 35 hours per week, particularly Monday through Friday and some weekends. Hope to hear from you , (Name)
- This is tedious but worth the effort. Usually half of my interviews come from this and half from my ad.
- Once people respond to this, REPEAT #2 above.
- I never call to ask about interviews, I always send an email through [care.com](http://care.com) as a reply.

When I log in at care.com, this is how I do a search for the people I would like to find.

The screenshot shows the Care.com website interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for Children, Seniors, Pets, Home, and Military Families. Below these are links for Articles, Payments, Safety, Messages, and My Care.com. A search bar is prominently displayed with the text "Find a Special Needs Provider in ZIP 22041 within 20 miles". Below the search bar, there is a banner for "Special Needs Providers in Falls Church, VA (22041)" with statistics: "Discover trusted connections 10" and "Share experiences friends know 23". A sidebar on the left allows users to "Refine your search" with filters for General Information, Location (Within 20 miles of ZIP Code 22041), Provider Age, Gender, Language, Hourly Rate, Last Login, and Provider Type. The main content area displays three provider profiles, each with a photo, name, location, experience level, hourly rate, and a brief bio. The providers listed are Jennifer B. (Silver Spring, MD, Under 18, \$5-20/hr), Kaylynn C. (Alexandria, VA, Under 18, \$10-15/hr), and Jamila M. (Silver Spring, MD, Under 18, \$5-50/hr).

#### 4. The interview process

- I always make note of whether the candidate is early, on time or late. If there is an excuse for late, like traffic, I take it into account.
- Expect all kinds and don't be surprised at who shows up.
- I shake their hands when they enter. I note their handshake and whether it is firm, limp, etc.
- I often have my son answer the door and I observe how they talk to him and whether they get down on his level or shake his hand. I am a big believer in first impressions and note them accordingly.
- I ask them a little about themselves, the weather, if they had trouble finding the home, etc. These easy questions help me get a feel for them and make them comfortable.
- I let them interact with my son and try to draw him into the conversation if he is willing. If he is not, I don't fret because he now knows that taking them up to his room and showing them all his things is part of the deal and sometimes he likes to watch me talk with them first.
- After a few minutes, once they are starting to fall in love with my son, I talk about my son's Waiver.
  - Here is my speech: "My son is a Medicaid case. This means that his attendant and nursing care is paid by Medicaid. For attendants, Medicaid only pays \$17.27/hr which we think is terrible, so we continually advocate for higher provider rates. Because we

can't risk my son's future Medicaid eligibility, we never supplement this hourly wage. That is considered Medicaid fraud. We do, however, include you in dinners and if you are driving my son around to stores or library or camps then we sometimes offer you the gas card to have you fill up the tank every now and then. But please understand we cannot give you extra money or gift cards or anything like that because my son is going to need Medicaid for the rest of his life here in Virginia. Is this something you can work with?"

- All through my speech I am watching them very carefully for body language clues and for how they respond. Some glaze over and nod, others ask about Medicaid and still others will ask for a higher wage when I am finished. If they do that, I just repeat verbatim and without judgment, what I just said. Their response to this exchange will depend on whether they get the long interview and my son's tour of his room or they get a cursory overview and "see you soon!" Often this leads to an explanation of Medicaid waivers and Virginia's system of minimal care for individuals with a disability and our active role in advocating for better services for all. Half the time they are already on PPL and understand this and we move on.
  - If they pass this first test, I then launch into a discussion about my son, his medical needs, the timing of the shift, my needs, what exactly I am looking for.
    - Example: "I need someone to follow-up on the day's school lesson for repetition, take my son outside every day that it is above 32 degrees, take him to the store, library, museum, etc. I need someone who can do nighttime routines and read until he is ready for bed." I usually include that they will be expected to help my son do his laundry, which is mostly folding and putting it away."
    - I review his feedings with the tube, medications and my expectations, the ileostomy bag and pull-ups.
  - I ask if they have any questions and then my son does his room tour. This entails him taking them upstairs and reviewing his things in the room. It is something he developed on his own after watching me and the nurses do it so many times. It is a wonderful opportunity for me to sit downstairs and listen in on the conversation and let the individual have a break, away from my presence, to interact with my son freely.
  - When they come back down I ask things like "Did you understand him, what do you think of my boy, do you have any questions, etc.?"
  - I also confirm at this time what their availability is and they understand about PPL, etc.
  - At this time I tell them that I have several different interviews over X number of days, but I will know more by X day. I promise to get back to them by that date and keep that promise.
  - We all say goodbye and off they go.
5. If none of the interviews pan out...
- I go back and send invites to my "maybe list" on care.com and run more searches.
  - I have never had to do this.
  - I have gone back to the maybe list a couple of months after I unexpectedly lose an aide.
  - Most of my aides stay for a long time until they move, get pregnant or get a job with more hours. Many of my aides use my job as a second job because of the hours.

## Your Contact Sheet

Use this sheet to keep track of important contacts related to consumer directed care.

1. What type of Waiver do you use? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who is your Support Coordinator? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Where do they work? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is their number and email address? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Who is their supervisor? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Who is your Service Facilitator? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Where do they work? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What is their number and email address? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Who is their supervisor? \_\_\_\_\_
10. My Medicaid ID is: \_\_\_\_\_
11. My fiscal agent ID is: \_\_\_\_\_
12. My EIN is: \_\_\_\_\_
13. Fiscal Agent Contact information:

<p><b>PPL</b>  <a href="https://pplfirst.com/">https://pplfirst.com/</a>                      Phone number: 1-833-549-5672                      Email: pplVA@pcgus.com</p>	<p><b>Aces\$</b>  <a href="http://www.mycil.org/aces-virginia.html">www.mycil.org/aces-virginia.html</a>                      Phone number: 1-833-955-4545                      Email: SupportVA@mycil.org:</p>	<p><b>Consumer Directed Care Network</b>  <a href="https://www.consumerdirectva.com">https://www.consumerdirectva.com</a>                      Phone number: 1-888-444-8182                      Email:                      infocdva@consumerdirectcare.com</p>
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