

H.S. Personal Assistant Module



STATEMENT of PURPOSE:

To provide learning experiences that assist students in acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to effectively hire, instruct, supervise and evaluate personal assistants.



INTRODUCTION

- Well...if you are reading this, you must have done something right! You did it! You are successfully transitioning away from family and are going to experience independent living at college. YAY!!!!



INTRODUCTION.....

- You should be proud. Many students don't make it this far. It is not easy to live away from the people that have cared for your more intimate needs for so long.
- You are not alone. Leaving home is not easy for anyone. Family is no longer around to meet your every need! And there is no such thing as free housekeeping...



What is a Personal Assistant?

A Personal Assistant (PA) is an individual who is hired to assist persons with disabilities (also referred to as employers or consumers) to reach a level of independence based on **personal choices**.

- A Personal Assistant helps with routine activities of daily living
- There needs to be an efficient way to find good PAs.



THE STEPS...

- There are three main ingredients to start managing your own care:
 - Finding a PA
 - Interviews
 - Training a PA
- As well as explaining the above in depth, there will also be some miscellaneous tips about life and PAs...



ONE NOTE

- Please use this guide as information and a supplement in the search for PAs. Yes, these steps work, but nothing is foolproof.
- Keep in mind that the PA is just as nervous as you are.
- Remember, at the end of the day, you do what works best for you!
- ...and we begin.....



HOW TO FIND A PA

(it's easier than it sounds...no worries!)



GETTING STARTED

The *most effective* way for you to recruit the best PAs is for you to be honest and thoroughly identify what your personal and academic needs will be while as a University/College student.

- Before you start your search, assess exactly what your needs are... by the time you leave home, you should have a pretty good idea when it comes to your care, but in case, the following are some specific questions to ask yourself:



GETTING STARTED...

- Before hiring a PA you might ask yourself the following questions:
 - *What are my care needs? Compose a complete list, including laundry....*
 - *When do I need help? Night? Day? Morning? 24/7?*
 - *How many people will it take to fulfill my needs?*
 - *Is gender a consideration?*
 - *What are my expectations?*
 - *What personal qualities do I want my PA to have?*



GETTING STARTED cont...

- *What type of person am I?*
- *What minimum requirements am I willing to settle for?*
- *Will I hire a smoker?*
- *Is the applicant available in an emergency?*
- *How long will it take the person to reach me?*



ADVERTISE

- Ask the Disability Services Office if they assist with finding PAs, or how students have done it in the past.
- Once you have carefully constructed a flyer specific to what your needs are, you are only half done. **Advertising** is the next, most important step.
- 90% of the time, someone is short PAs because no one knew they were searching.



INTERNET ADVERTISING WORKS WONDERS:

- It is fast, independent, usually free, and effective.
- Often times, you can email a nursing school or other professional (disability instructor for example) with a job description and ask them to forward your info to a list-serve.
- Facebook and Craigslist are popular locales.
- If you will be living near a university, list on their job board.
- People get a lot of email, so it is crucial to be concise and only list pertinent info:
 - Dates/Hours
 - Pay
 - Job duties/responsibilities



REMEMBER:

- You must have a clear idea of the type of worker you are seeking and their required duties before you move on to the next step...
- Based on your completed self-assessment, develop a job description that you can use to help recruit PA staff.
- Write draft job description based on your self-assessment and fall class schedule.





THE PERFECT INTERVIEW

“What is your name again???”



INTERVIEW PROCESS

- There are two parts to this process:
 - Part I-Job application
 - *Ask for the application to be submitted ahead of the interview time.*
 - *If the application is a dud and not what you are looking for, you save time wasted in an interview!*
 - *If they look like a good candidate, then set up an interview.*
 - Part II-In-person interview



JOB APPLICATION

- Have your applicant complete an application including:
 - Full name
 - Permanent mailing address
 - *Not school address. You will need it during tax time*
 - Social security number, DOB, drivers license
 - *Imperative for verifying identity and criminal record*
 - Last three jobs (includes dates worked, company name, contact info, supervisor, reason for leaving)
 - Personal references (non-friend or relative)
 - Other jobs/commitments
 - Why do you want the job?
- A job application is a valuable tool, but it is useless if not scrutinized.



YAY!?!?!?

- So, you get a few responses...people are showing interest...you are so grateful and instantly hire anyone that responds hoping that everything will just work out, right???
- WRONG!
- It is very important to meet your potential PA and interview them before you put your life in their hands...
- 2 out of 3 interviewees will end up being duds...so initial interviews weed out the flops.



IN - PERSON INTERVIEW

- So you read the application and have gotten your first impression of the potential PA, now you need to set up an in-person interview.
- To get beyond the surface to learn more about this prospective worker, consider the following:
 - Ease the tension
 - Ask the applicant to tell you about themselves
 - Restate your needs
 - It's imperative your job description be well-defined
 - These are just a few ideas. Change it around as it pertains to you and don't assume anything!
 - Finally, remember that not all interviews go the distance. If the person is unacceptable, abbreviate the interview, and view it as interview training!



FINAL STEP

- The final phase of a good interview is assessing that they meet your needs and schedule.

What are my expectations?

- If they meet your requirements and are available to fill hours set up a training session.
- Make it very clear that they are hired pending the background check.



HINT!

- Because people with disabilities are vulnerable, you should never schedule the initial interview in your home. Try reserving a room in the library or a community center.
- Remember, you are the boss. It is a good idea to set that line from the beginning.
- When you offer a PA the job, tell them it is pending the clearance of their criminal background check.
 - ◎ Get the check done for FREE by calling your local police!
- This is also a good way to determine how committed they are...





HOW TO TRAIN A PA

“You have to actually *touch* me to dress me...”



SHOW TIME!

- Most of the PAs hired are NOT experienced in this field of work. Each PA should be given a general training to familiarize them with the care needs of people with disabilities. You are responsible for assuring that they receive the information that they need to provide **your** specific needs.
- It is important to keep in mind teaching proper lifting and transfer technique when training your new staff. **Their safety is as important as yours.**



TRAINING TIPS:

- Remember that what is routine for you is for him or her a new experience.
 - This means learning to have patience and accepting that things will probably not go smoothly at first.
 - Through step by step instruction and repetition the PA will gain experience. Over time the PA's efficiency will improve.



TRAINING TIPS cont.:

- Training is, without a doubt, the hardest part of the PA process. It can be intimidating having a stranger and/or peer give personal care.
 - Regardless, it has to be done.
 - Keep in mind, your favorite and most reliable PA was once inexperienced...
 - So, when your doorbell rings announcing the arrival of a new PA, take a deep breath, put on a happy face, and say “It’s show time!”



WHO SHOULD TRAIN?

- If you are able, and it's not too difficult, you could probably just walk them through the steps verbally.
- If it is more complicated to describe, or if your speech is unclear, direct the training while having an experienced worker show the trainee what is needed to be done.
- Video taping/photos are also great tools for training.
 - The value of your instruction helps the trainee focus on you as the one giving the directions, and not a PA.
 - *This is especially beneficial when training a nurse assistant or someone who has worked in a medical institution, as these workers learn to only take direction from staff, not patients.*



TRAINING

- In the end, you must decide what method of training will be most effective for both parties:
 - Ask the trainee how they best learn.
 - Make sure you discuss how you want the current PA to train the new PA?
 - Follow-up if something was missed or confusing, don't let it go.
 - If old and new workers are friends, you may want to let them work together at training, unless the current PA has bad habits that they won't break.



TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL TRAINING

1. You should have your PA routine written out for the PA to read over and ask questions.
2. Before beginning, give a general overview of the procedure so the trainee knows what to expect, ask them if they understand.
3. Whenever possible, let the trainee observe the entire shift one time with general explanations. They are probably intimidated, scared, and overwhelmed, so going into specifics the first time around may waste time.
4. **Don't rush training!** People learn at different rates. It's critical to ensure you have a good find! Give them time to learn, but if they aren't getting it, then you may need to let them go.





MISCELLANEOUS TIPS & RESOURCES

...just in case you get
stuck!



MISCELLANEOUS TIPS

- Disciplining a PA is never fun, but sometimes necessary. Sit them down, tell them what they did wrong, ask them what you may have done wrong, and move on. Communicate!
- Make sure that you completed this contract with all staff, signed and give them a copy also. It can help to decrease miscommunication. http://www.pascenter.org/pas_users/work_agree.php
- When you fire a PA, make sure you find someone to fill the shift before you tell them and offer 2 weeks notice. Require them to provide the same.
- Keep documentation of all communications/incidents/encounters



RESOURCES

- <http://www.mainstream-mag.com/health.html>
- <http://www.independentliving.org/>
- <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm>
- http://www.demosmedpub.com/prod.aspx?prod_id=9781932603286 (helpful book!)
- <http://www.incil.org/>
- <http://www.drcinc.org/>
- <http://www.aapd-dc.org/index.php>



SOURCES

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