



# How to Get Good Home Care in Virginia

The best way to achieve quality care and services is for you and your home care provider to come together as a team. Below are some ways in which you can actively participate and monitor your care.

## **Select the Best Provider**

- Research the track record of the provider at **Home Health Compare**:  
<http://www.medicare.gov/homehealthcompare/search.html>  
Home Health Compare has information about the quality of care provided by “Medicare-certified” home health agencies throughout the nation. “Medicare-certified” means the home health agency is approved by Medicare and meets certain Federal health and safety requirements.

## **Be Informed About Your Care**

If you are getting services through an agency:

- Learn what your rights and the agency’s responsibilities are.
  - If the agency is licensed or certified, read the home health care or home care agency regulations posted by the state and certification licensing agency. Go to <http://www.theconsumervoice.org/ombudsman>, choose Virginia and look for “Licensure and Certifications,” or call the Consumer Voice at (202) 332-2275 or toll-free at (866) 992-3668 to find the contact information for this agency.
  - In cases where the agency is not licensed or certified, the contract/agreement is the only place in which the agency’s responsibilities will be stated. If you do not have a copy of the contract, request it from the agency.
- Know what care and services you are supposed to receive. This information is in your care/service plan, so make sure to always have a copy of the most recent plan.

If you have hired your own worker:

- Explain what you expect from your worker. Expectations might include:
  - Being on time.
  - Calling you as soon as possible when unable to show up for a shift.
  - Giving as much notice as possible when time off is requested.
- Create a written work agreement that states expectations/responsibilities for both you and your worker. Give a copy to your worker.

## **Create a Circle of Support**

- Develop a group of family members, friends and other people you can trust who can assist in advocating for the care you want.

## **Participate in the Care/Service Planning Process**

If you are receiving services through an agency:

- Ask that a care/service plan be created if development of such a plan is not required by regulation. Tell the agency you want to be involved in reviewing/developing your plan.
- Ask your agency how frequently the plan will be reconsidered.
- Ask for a copy of the plan after it has been created or revised, and ask that the plan be changed if it is not working for you or if your condition changes.

If you have hired your own worker:

- Create a process for sitting down with your worker and reviewing the written work agreement.
- Revise the written work agreement to indicate any changes that you and your worker agree to make. Give a copy to your worker.

### **Develop a Positive Relationship with Your Worker**

- Get to know agency staff and/or your worker. Treat them with respect and appreciation.
- If you are receiving services through an agency, talk to the agency about assigning the same staff to provide care and services to you.

### **Communication Tips**

- Express your needs and preferences. Ask a question if something is unclear.
- Explain to your worker and/or the agency staff how you like tasks to be done.
- State what you mean directly, respectfully and in language that is free of blame or judgment. Try to ask a question, not make an accusation.
- Tell your worker and/or agency staff to let you know right away if there is something that makes them uncomfortable or that they do not understand.
- Keep notes. Write down any concerns that arise, especially the details about any incidents or issues.

### **Know Where to Turn with Questions and Concerns**

- If you are receiving services from an agency, find out which staff person to contact and how to reach them.
- If you would like free, unbiased advice, the following agencies/individuals may be able to help:
  - **Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs)** can help you learn about local programs and services. To get a list of ADRCs in your area, go to <http://www.adrc-tae.acl.gov/tiki-index.php?page=HomePage>.
  - **Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)** coordinate and often provide a range of services to assist older adults and frequently younger persons with disabilities maintain their independence and dignity. To find your local AAA, call (804) 644-2804 or visit <http://www.vaaaa.org/agencies/>.
  - **Care Managers or Service Coordinators** assist consumers in getting the care and services they need and can help resolve a problem. To get a list of private geriatric care managers, go to [www.caremanager.org](http://www.caremanager.org) or call (520) 881-8008. If Medicaid or a state-funded program pays for your services, you will most likely have an assigned case manager.
  - **Centers for Independent Living (CILs)** are organizations that provide services to maximize the independence of individuals with disabilities. To find the CIL closest to you, call 1-800-552-5019 or visit <http://www.vadrs.org/cbs/cilslisting.htm>.
  - **Disability Rights Virginia** works to address concerns about care/services, rights, access to services and more for people with disabilities both in residential or community settings. To contact Disability Rights Virginia, go to <http://disabilitylawva.org/> or call (804) 225-2042.
  - **State/Local Long-Term Care Ombudsmen** advocate for older persons receiving long-term care through community-based services to assist persons still living at home. They provide older Virginians, their families and the public with information, advocacy, and assistance to help resolve care problems. To talk to an ombudsman if you have questions or concerns about your care or services, call 1-800-552-3402 or (804) 726-6624 or visit <http://www.ElderRightsVA.org>.