

6 Steps to Getting Quality Home Care from an Agency

The best way to achieve quality care is for you and your home health or home care agency to work as a team. Below are some ways in which you can actively participate and monitor your care.

1. Be Informed

- 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 certification and licensing agency.
 - In some 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.
- Ask questions.

2. Create a Circle of Support

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

3. Participate in Your Care/Service Plan

- Ask that a care/service plan be created if development of such a plan is not required by regulation. It will help you know what services will be provided to meet your needs and goals.
- Ask your agency how frequently the plan will be reconsidered.
- Inform the agency that you want to be involved in reviewing or developing your plan.
- Consider asking someone from your circle of support and/or the staff person who is most familiar with you and whom you trust to attend meetings with you where the plan is discussed.
- Make a list of questions, comments or concerns you have. Bring this list to care/service plan meetings.
- Speak up at the meeting! Tell the staff what you want and need.
- Ask for a copy of the plan after it has been created or revised.
- Ask that the plan be changed if it is not working for you or if your condition changes.

4. Develop a Positive Relationship with Staff

- Talk to the agency about assigning the same staff to provide care and services to you. This will help ensure the best outcomes.
- Get to know staff.
- Treat all staff with respect and appreciation.

5. Communication Tips

- Ask a question if something is unclear. 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.
- Make sure to thank staff for their help. If the home health or home care staff tells you they cannot do something because the “state” or the “rules” do not allow it, ask them politely to show you the document where this information is written down or ask where to find the information for yourself.
- Keep notes. Write down any problems or incidents that occur. Be sure to include the date, time, person(s) involved, and what action(s) were taken. This information will help in communicating your concerns at a later date if problems continue.

6. Know Where to Turn with Questions and Concerns

- Find out which staff person to contact and how to reach them.
- If you would like free, unbiased advice, consider contacting:
 - **State/Local Long-Term Care Ombudsman.** Ombudsmen work to resolve complaints on behalf of consumers; they can answer questions, give suggestions, offer assistance and support, or address issues you may have.
 - Go to theconsumervoice.org/get_help to locate your State or local ombudsman.
 - **Citizen Advocacy Groups.** These local or state organizations can advocate for quality long-term care.



Additional Resources

For more in-depth information on these and other related topics, see the [Piecing Together Quality Long-Term Care](#) guide produced by Consumer Voice.

For more information and resources on getting quality care, go to
theconsumervoice.org.

