

Hiring a Home Health Aide: A Guide for Family Caregivers



Watching a parent or spouse struggle with things they once did easily is painful. In most families, adult children or spouses are the first to step in – it’s natural to want to help.

But over time, your loved one’s needs may increase. And when you’re juggling work, children, and personal commitments, or even your own health concerns, [caregiving can become overwhelming](#).

You might feel guilty for not being able to do it all yourself, or nervous about trusting a stranger in your loved one’s home. These feelings are normal. To avoid burnout, family caregivers need support. One of the best ways to get that support is by hiring a home health aide, sometimes called a personal care assistant.

Finding the right person brings peace of mind, but it takes time and planning. This guide walks you through how to assess your needs, understanding the difference between using an agency or hiring an individual, and asking the right questions to keep the person in your care safe.

Contact Us to Start Care

Step 1: Understand Your Loved One's Care Needs

Before you begin looking for an aide, take time to understand what kind of help is needed. Looking closely at daily routines and challenges will make it easier to find the right support.

Assess Activities of Daily Living

Many families first notice that everyday tasks are becoming harder to manage. Activities of daily living, or ADLs, are the basic self-care tasks we all need to do to live safely at home:

- **Personal Hygiene:** Does your loved one need help bathing, grooming, or using the bathroom? You'll want to look for someone who knows how to handle intimate tasks with dignity.
- **Mobility:** Do they need help getting out of bed, walking, or transferring from a wheelchair to a chair?
- **Nutrition:** Do they need help preparing meals? Are there specific dietary requirements or cultural food preferences?
- **Medication:** Do they forget to take their pills? Home health aides can remind your loved one when it's time to take them.

Identify Safety Risks at Home

Safety concerns are one of the main reasons families hire help. Older adults are at [high risk for falls](#), especially in homes

with:

- Stairs
- Slippery bathrooms
- Poor lighting
- Cluttered walkways

A trained, certified aide can help prevent falls and provide supervision during daily activities.

Consider Culture, Routine, and Personality

Good caregiving goes beyond physical help. Think about what matters most to your loved one and the activities they enjoy. For example:

- Is there a language they prefer to speak?
- What is their daily routine?
- Do they observe religious or cultural traditions?
- Would they want a [companion](#) who is chatty?

Step 2: Choose Between an Agency or a Private Hire

Once you know what you need, you face a big decision: Should you

use a home care agency, or hire an aide on your own?

It can be tempting to hire a friend of a friend or someone you found through word-of-mouth. Often, families choose this route because it may feel more personal or seem cost-effective. At the same time, informal arrangements come with added responsibilities and potential challenges that many families may not expect.

Hiring an Independent Aide

When you hire independently, you become the employer. That means you may be responsible for:

- Conducting background checks
- Managing payroll and taxes
- Providing insurance coverage
- Handling scheduling and backup care

If the aide becomes sick or unavailable, you may need to find a replacement quickly.

Using a Licensed Home Care Agency

A licensed agency manages many of these responsibilities. Typical benefits include:

- **Screening and background checks:** Agencies typically verify:
 - Work references

- Legal authorization to work in the United States
- Home health aide certification

- **Nurse oversight:** At many agencies, a registered nurse assesses the person receiving care and creates a care plan.
- **Backup coverage:** If an aide is unavailable, the agency can send a replacement.
- **Insurance protection:** Agency staff are covered by worker's compensation and liability insurance.

How Home Care Agencies Match Aides

Agencies have a pool of aides and match them with families based on:

- Care needs
- Language and cultural preferences
- Personality fit

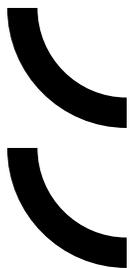
When you hire privately, you may need to interview several candidates to find the right match.

How VNS Health Supports Family Caregivers

Licensed home care agencies can help families find certified home health aides while managing screening, supervision, and scheduling.

VNS Health matches families with aides based on care needs, preferences, and personality compatibility.

Care is coordinated by a team that may include nurses and care coordinators who monitor changing needs and adjust care plans over time.



Step 3: What to Look for in a Home Health Aide

A [home health aide](#) does more than assist with daily tasks. The right aide can help someone stay safe, comfortable, and independent at home. When choosing an aide, look for a combination of training, reliability, and compassion.

Training and Certification

In New York State, home health aides must complete a Department of Health–approved training program.

Look for certified aides educated in:

- Safe transfers and mobility assistance
- Meal preparation and [special diets](#)
- Infection control and hygiene
- Recognizing warning signs that health may be changing

Some agencies also provide additional training beyond state requirements.

Health and Safety Standards

Professional agencies often require:

- Health screenings
- Immunizations
- Drug testing

These safeguards help protect older adults who may have weaker immune systems.

Compassion and Communication

Technical skills matter, but personality matters too. A good aide treats your loved one with:

- Dignity
- Patience
- Respect

Strong communication skills also help families stay informed about changes in health or behavior.

Step 4: How to Find the Right Aide

Once you know what kind of help you need, the next step is finding the right aide. If you work with an agency, a care coordinator can help match you with someone who fits your needs.

These guidelines will help you whether you go with an agency or independent hire.

Prepare a Job Description

This doesn't need to be complicated – just create a clear list of tasks. You might include:

- Shower assistance in the morning
- Medication reminders at specific times
- Meal preparation
- Help transferring to and from a wheelchair

Clear expectations help agencies match you with an aide who can properly care for your loved one.

Plan How You Will Communicate

This is important whether you go with an agency or an individual. Decide:

- Who will be the main contact in your family

- How the agency or aide should reach you
- What to do in an emergency

Questions to Ask a Home Care Agency

Before signing a contract or starting services, it helps to ask a few key questions:

- Is the agency licensed in New York State?
- Does a registered nurse supervise care?
- How do you screen and train aides?
- Are aides insured and bonded?
- How do you handle absences?
- How do you match aides with clients?
- What if the aide isn't a good fit?

Step 5: Help with Adjusting

Even when families feel confident about their choice, bringing a new aide into the home can be a big adjustment. It is normal for older adults to worry about losing independence or privacy. Here are ways to ease the process.

Start Slowly

If your situation isn't urgent, starting with a few hours helps your loved one adjust. You might start with companionship or help with household tasks like cooking before moving to personal care. Over time, care can expand to personal assistance if needed.

Involve the Person Needing Care

When possible, include your loved one in the process. Find out what qualities they think are important. Let them:

- Share preferences
- Meet the aide
- Help make decisions

Feeling involved can make the transition easier.

Monitor the First Few Weeks

During the early weeks, pay attention to how things are going. Check to see:

- Is the aide arriving on time?
- Does your loved one feel comfortable?
- Is the care meeting your expectations?

If something does not feel right, speak with the agency. Many agencies can adjust care plans or assign a different aide.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does a home health aide do?



A home health aide helps people with daily activities such as bathing, dressing, meal preparation, mobility, and medication reminders. Aides can provide companionship, and they also monitor safety and report health concerns to care supervisors.

What is the difference between a home health aide and a personal care aide?



Both roles provide assistance with daily activities. Training requirements and job responsibilities may vary depending on state regulations and the employer.

How much does a home health aide cost?



Costs vary based on location, hours of care, and whether you hire through an agency or independently. Some services may be covered by insurance or Medicaid programs.

Do home health aides provide medical care?



Home health aides do not perform medical procedures. They assist with personal care and daily tasks, while nurses or other clinicians provide medical care when needed.

How many hours of home care do people usually need?



Care plans vary widely. Some families need just a few hours of help each week, while others require daily or full-time support.

Jump Nav

Array

Related Content

Array

Call To Action

Array

Utility Tile

Array