

Section 3

Communication and Recognition

Types of Communication

Communication has been under development for millions of years. We currently use many ways to get our point across and to understand what others are trying to tell us. Types of communication can include:

- Listening;
- Speaking—through words or sounds;
- Observing;
- Body Language;
- Action or inaction;
- Writing; and
- Sign Language.

Communication doesn't always occur face-to-face. Other methods of communication using technology, such as phone, fax, e-mail, video and teleconferencing are examples of how our communication methods have developed in the past few decades.

Communicating with Your Worker

Knowing how to communicate with simple, clear statements will lead to more positive interactions with your employees. Developing good listening skills to better understand what your employees are telling you will increase your effectiveness as an employer.

Being assertive involves speaking up for your personal rights and expressing thoughts, feelings and beliefs in direct, honest and appropriate ways. It is also important to communicate in a manner that does not violate another person's rights.

Respect also includes respect for yourself (expressing your needs and defending your rights), as well as respect for another person's needs and rights.

Giving Verbal Directions

- Make sure you have the person's attention before you give the direction.
- Begin by making a statement about what the directions are supposed to accomplish.
- Minimize the number of directions given.
- Individualize the way directions are given. Some people may respond well to verbal direction, while others may need a demonstration or prompts.
- Give clear directions and avoid directions that are vague, such as "be careful" or "get me a jacket." These directions could be substituted with "hold on to the railing" or "please get me my yellow rain jacket."
- Maintain a positive rather than negative tone when you give directions.
- Give the person the opportunity to respond to a direction. Avoid giving multiple directions at one time without giving the person a chance to respond.
- Present steps in the order to be followed.
- When appropriate, give choices and options for following directions. For example, say "while waiting for the dryer to finish, would you prefer to vacuum the living room or start preparing lunch?"
- Follow through with positive acknowledgment when needed to convey that the person is following the directions.



Giving Feedback

Feedback is also an important communication tool. Feedback is the process of giving information, instruction, support and guidance to another person based on their actions. Feedback therefore requires good communication skills.

Here are some guidelines about giving feedback:

- Feedback should describe behavior, not pass judgment on it.
- Feedback should be specific rather than vague.
- Feedback should describe what you observed, rather than what you assume to be the reason it happened.
- Feedback should focus on behavior rather than the person.



Creating a Positive Work Environment

Engaging good communication skills is a definite step toward creating a positive working environment. A working environment that is positive and open is one of the most important factors in keeping a great worker. Below are some suggestions and examples for creating a positive environment.

- Express appreciation to your employees for the work they are doing. Most everyone wants to feel needed, appreciated and important.
- When you must correct something your home care worker has or has not done, it is important to be open and honest and to criticize the action, not the person.
- Don't let small irritations build up. If you feel irritated about something that is happening, talk about it as soon as possible.
- Respect your worker. They are human beings and should be treated accordingly. Use the Golden Rule, and treat your employee as you would like to be treated. Be honest, fair, kind, respectful and patient.
- Home care workers have their own lives, too. Flexibility and compromise are important qualities for both of you.
- Ask your home care worker how he/she feels about their work and about you as a consumer. Set a regular time to share feelings about your relationship. Be open to making changes in the routine if necessary, or in attitude, or anything else that can help you to correct a problem. Negotiate a plan that will work for both of you.

Recognizing a Job Well Done:

There are times you may want to recognize your worker(s) performance. How you do that is up to you, but make it meaningful to people who work for you.



The following are suggestions for no-cost and low-cost ways to recognize home care workers:

- Give routine verbal thanks and encouragement.
- Mention their good work to others in their presence.
- Nominate someone for a special award.
- Say positive things about workers in front of their peers.
- Give recognition for birthdays and important life events.
- Send a note of thanks to the worker's home.
- Post recognition cards on a bulletin board, refrigerator, or other work space.
- Submit articles or letters to the editor to the local newspaper about the value of care giving and recognizing worker(s).

Problem Solving and Stress



Being an employer can be stressful. Managing multiple employees, juggling their time and needs with yours, and managing their behavior can be emotionally stressful. Having to find replacements at the last minute and worrying about being stranded can be a regular stressor.

How do you deal with stress? Finding ways to rest and rejuvenate is essential, doing something you enjoy doing can be relaxing.

One way many people deal with stress is by putting off a necessary confrontation. Putting it off will add to your stress by imagining what will

happen when you do confront your employee. Many times what you imagine is worse than the reality. The sooner you confront your home care worker about an issue the less stressful it will be.

Find a support system made up of people with whom you trust. These are people who will listen to you and give you suggestions on how to deal with your issues.

About Good Communication

You have the opportunity to create a positive work environment for your home care worker, but this is a team effort. Good communication between the two of you is the key to this interdependent relationship.

