

Personal Care and Service

Personal and Home Care Aides

Personal and Home Care Aides assist people who have a disability, a chronic illness, a cognitive impairment, or are elderly adults who live in their own homes but need more assistance than their friends and families can provide. Personal and Home Care Aides help people go to work and remain engaged in the community.

Their duties include helping individuals with moving in and out of beds, wheelchairs or automobiles, dressing and grooming. They also provide emotional support and advice to individuals and their families on preparing healthy meals, living independently, or adapting to disability or illness. Some may take charge of changing bed linens and doing laundry, entertaining and conversing with the patient, and planning, purchasing, and making meals according to the individual's diet. Personal and home care aides direct patients in exercise and the use of braces or artificial limbs, changing dressings, monitoring heart rate, temperature, and respiration rate. Other household duties, such as running errands are often part of the job.

Aides may work with one individual or several individuals depending on the severity of the client's condition. Personal and home care aides work for certified home health or hospice agencies that receive funding from the government and comply with government regulations. They usually work under the supervision of nurses, keep client records, and report their client's condition to their supervisor.

Work as a personal and home care aide is physically demanding because it is often necessary to help individuals get in and out of bed and assisting individuals with limited mobility may necessitate heavy lifting. In addition personal and home care aides can be exposed to infectious agents and communicable diseases. Some duties performed can be unpleasant, like emptying bed pans and changing soiled linens. Aides may spend a significant amount of time traveling between homes if they have several clients; Conditions of the homes may vary from neat and tidy to those that are untidy and have a depressing atmosphere. Client temperament can vary as well and some can be angry, abusive, and uncooperative.

Education/Training

How to Obtain:

Personal and home care aides who work for agencies that receive reimbursement from Medicare or Medicaid must:

- receive a minimum of 75 hours of training
- complete a competency evaluation or certification program and

- a minimum of 16 hours of supervised practical training before having direct, unsupervised contact with a client.

The National Association for Home Care and Hospice (NAHC) offers national certification for aides. The requirements for certification through the NAHC are:

- 75 hours of training
- Observation and documentation of 17 skills for competency, assessed by a registered nurse
- Passing a written examination developed by NAHC

Each state has different licensing and certification guidelines for personal and home care aides. In New York, a home health aide must comply with state rules and regulations, and individual healthcare agencies provide training and examinations for certification. Workers who apply for employment with a home care services agency must undergo a background investigation that determines an individual's eligibility for employment.

Advancement for home health aides is limited. In some agencies, workers start out performing homecare duties, such as cleaning. With experience and training, they may take on more personal care duties.

More Information on Certification:

- HomeCare University, Home Care Aide National Certification Program:
<http://www.nahc.org/education/PDFs/HCAcert.pdf>
- New York State Department of Health, Personal Care Aide Training Programs:
http://www.health.state.ny.us/professionals/home_care/personal_care_aide_training_programs.htm

Average Costs:

In New York State, personal and home care aide training classes are free, but individuals are responsible for their own physical exam, which costs around \$100.