

# Veteran Handbook | Veteran Directed Care

## *Becoming an Employer*

### BECOMING AN EMPLOYER

This handbook will help you as an enrollee in the Veteran Directed Care program. The program is available to you through a partnership between the [AGENCY] and [YOUR VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER PARTNER]. This handbook includes information about how the program operates that you can refer to throughout your time in the program. It also explains who is available to support you in this program. Veteran-directed does not mean doing things all by yourself – people are available to support you along the way. This document defines Veteran Directed Care, outlines your responsibilities, and provides information on what to expect from your Person-Centered Counselor and financial management service. Please think carefully about the information in this handbook. With Veteran Directed Care, choice and flexibility come with responsibilities.

[This is a template for your agency to modify as needed to fit your local situation. Please make sure that you complete all the sections that require you insert the specific names of your program, your agency, your FMS provider, and your VAMC. Also, in the body of this template are sections in red and in brackets – such as this one. These are notes that suggest specific areas where you will need to address predictable variations among Aging and Disability Agencies. These are not intended to be part of your final document.]

# Table of Contents

<b>Becoming an Employer .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Hiring Workers .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Finding Workers Other Than Friends and Family .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Job Advertisements .....	4
Interviewing.....	4
<i>The Telephone Screening.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>The Face-to-Face Interview .....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>How to Check References .....</i>	<i>5</i>
<b>Appendix A. Sample Job Advertisements.....</b>	<b>7</b>

## Becoming an Employer

Before you can hire staff, you will need to become a legal employer. [FMS NAME] will help you complete and file the necessary paperwork to become an employer. If you are using a representative to support you in Veteran Directed Care (VDC), the representative will become the legal employer.

## Hiring Workers

You may hire your own service workers, a family member, or a friend. Here are some things to think about when hiring:

- What do I need the service provider to do?
- How do I want it done?
- How often do I want help? Part-time or full-time?
- What time of day do I want help?
- Do I want help on the weekends and/or during the week?
- Does the person who helps me need to be strong?
- Does the person who helps me need to be able to drive?
- Does the person who helps me need to have their own car?
- Do I need more than one person to help me?
- Do I need different people to help me with different things?
- What do I want people who help me to know about me?
- Do I want the people who help me to be friends, neighbors, or family members? Or would I rather use someone I don't know outside of their caring for me?
- Would the person I want most to help me be the best person for the job?
- How much am I willing to pay for the help I need?

Once you know what type of service provider you want to help you, you will need to find someone to do the job. Your **Person-Centered Counselor** can help you if you need it.

**Person-Centered Counselor:** A trained individual who assists individual Veterans with understanding VDC requirements, developing a service and support plan and budget, and identifying where or how the developed service and support plan and budget can be implemented. The Person-Centered Counselor also serves as the liaison between the Veteran and other VDC staff.

## Finding Workers Other Than Friends and Family

You may have family and friends who you already know want to work for you. If you do not, you can put the word out through your family, friends, religious community, or other networks that you are looking for help. These informal channels are often the best way to locate workers who are right for you.

If you cannot find the help you need through these networks, you may want to place an advertisement in a newspaper or online, or on a bulletin board. Check ads in each of these places to

see what they are like and how much they cost. The cost of an ad may be included in your plan and budget if you so wish. Make sure you include important information in your ad, like:

- What hours you want someone to work
- A general description of what you want someone to do
- How to contact you or someone you've designated as your point of contact
- Any qualifications you may require the person to possess

You need to be careful about the type of information you put in the ad. Do not include your address or that you live alone; all you need is a way for people to contact you. This can be done with a phone number, email address, or regular mail. If you want people to contact you by mail, consider renting a post office box (PO box); note that although you will need to pay a PO box rental fee, it will prevent you from listing your home address in the ad. Whichever way you choose to be contacted, protect your privacy as much as possible. As with other parts of the VDC program, your Person-Centered Counselor can help you if you have questions about the interviewing and hiring process.

## Job Advertisements

The job description you develop becomes the foundation for your job. To begin, you need to decide whether you want many people to respond to your ad or only a few. In general, less information in ads triggers more responses, while more information in ads triggers fewer responses.

It might seem better to have many people respond to your ad. However, if you get a lot of responses to a particular ad, it means you must screen and interview more people, which could make your process longer and more involved. The goal is to get the right people responding to your ad. A well-written ad can help screen out people who are not interested in your job. However, those who do respond will likely be better candidates. Include enough information to get “quality” applicants. Make sure your ads do not illegally discriminate. Some examples of job advertisements are included in **Appendix A**.

## Interviewing

### The Telephone Screening

You need to be careful that anyone you hire will treat you the way you want to be treated. One way to do this is to talk with them over the phone before you meet them.

- Ask questions – name, address, phone number, and how they would get to work
- Talk about the job duties, and then ask about things that might be hard for them, like lifting or personal care
- Ask about their experience in working with people who are older or who have disabilities
- Make sure they provide references
- Thank them for calling, and tell them you will call them back if you want to interview them in person

## The Face-to-Face Interview

Think about where you want to do the interview – at home or some other place nearby. It is often a good idea to do the first interview in a public place rather than your home, like a neighborhood coffee shop. If that is not a good option for you, it is also a good idea to have someone else there during the first interview. If you interview someone, you might want to do some of the following:

- Take notes during the interview, or have someone there to help you remember what is said
- Introduce yourself
- Tell them about the job and what you want them to do
- Give them an application and ask them to fill it out
- Ask about how they will get to work
- Talk about when you need help
- Ask them about their work experience and how they feel about providing you the care you need
- Talk about VDC and how the [FMS AGENCY] will be writing their checks and ensuring that their payroll taxes and workers' compensation are handled
- Talk about what the job pays
- Ask them why they want to work with you
- Ask them why they think they would be good at working with you
- Tell them you are required to do a criminal background check and ask for proof of citizenship/legal resident status
- Ask them for references
- Thank them and tell them you will call when you make your decision
- Once the interview is over, you will need to check their references

The [FMS PROVIDER] will complete a basic background check for you; if you want a more complete background check, it can be built into your budget. [NOTE: This may differ by ADNA.]

## How to Check References

To check references, call the people listed as references and ask about your job applicant. Some good questions are:

- What are the applicant's strengths? What are their weaknesses?
- Would they recommend the applicant to work with you?
- Do they show up on time, and regularly?
- Do they do the job required?
- Do they call when they will be late, or may not be able to work?
- Do they bring personal problems to the job?
- Do they drink or do drugs on the job, or come to work impaired?
- If you had the opportunity, would you hire this individual again?
- Questions about the qualities you want in someone – for example, is the applicant honest? Do they respect other people?

Now that you have learned about the applicant, make the best decision you can about whether the applicant is right for you. Call and let the applicant know you want to hire them for the job and restate what the job pays.<sup>1</sup> You should also call any other applicants and tell them if you have chosen not to hire them. If the applicant accepts the job, meet with the new employee to provide them with an orientation, fill out necessary forms for the employee, and decide on a starting date. [NOTE: How much support your FMS will offer your Veterans in completing their employer and employee paperwork will be decided between your agency and your FMS.] Your Person-Centered Counselor will forward the required documents to [FMS AGENCY] to begin payroll and tax requirements.

Remember, recruiting is an ongoing activity. As long as you are directing your own supports, you will need to recruit workers, especially as back-ups. Workers will not be with you forever, so stay on top of your recruiting skills and activities. Be ready to recruit on very short notice. Do not forget about people you liked, but did not hire at first. They might make good back-up workers or might someday become your regular worker.

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<sup>1</sup> Please be aware that you cannot hire an individual until your spending plan and budget have been approved and background checks on the individual have been completed.

## Appendix A. Sample Job Advertisements

Below are some examples of what a job advertisement may look like. Notice the effects of the details in the advertisements. The first advertisement is the most general. In each subsequent advertisement, one word has been added to make the description more specific than the preceding advertisement. Read each advertisement carefully to see how adding one or more key words makes the advertisement more specific.

### Exhibit 1. Advertisement #1

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#### Personal Care Worker

Nonsmoker needed to work with adult who has disabilities, assist with personal care and housekeeping. Days negotiable. \$9 an hour. Call (619)-555-5555 or send an email to myemail@writeme.com.

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### Exhibit 2. Advertisement #2

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#### Personal Care Worker

Nonsmoker needed to work with adult **female** who has disabilities, assist with personal care and housekeeping. Days negotiable. \$9 an hour. Call (619)-555-5555 or send an email to myemail@writeme.com.

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### Exhibit 3. Advertisement #3

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#### Personal Care Worker

Nonsmoker needed to work with adult **female** who has disabilities, assist with personal care, **laundry**, and housekeeping. Days negotiable. \$9 an hour. Call (619)-555-5555 or send an email to myemail@writeme.com.

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### Exhibit 4. Advertisement #4

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#### Personal Care Worker

Nonsmoker needed to work with adult **female** who has **quadriplegia**, assist with personal care, **laundry**, and housekeeping. **Some lifting involved**. Days negotiable. \$9 an hour; **limited paid vacation included**. Call (619)-555-5555 or send an email to myemail@writeme.com.

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In the first advertisement, both men and women are likely to respond. However, men may choose not to respond to the second advertisement. Likewise, people who do not like doing laundry may not respond to the third advertisement. People who feel uncomfortable working with people with quadriplegia or who cannot lift are not likely to respond to the fourth advertisement. Regardless of your approach, it is ultimately your decision what to put into your advertisements. You may

want to try several different advertisements with different information in each to see what will work best for you.

You do not need to include your name or home address. All you need is a way for people to contact you. This can be done by phone, email, or regular mail. If you want people to contact you by mail, consider renting a post office box. Although you will have to pay a PO box rental fee, it will allow you to receive mail without including your home address in your advertisements. Whichever way you choose to be contacted, protect your privacy as much as possible.