

# Veteran Handbook | Veteran Directed Care

## *Being an Employer*

SUPPORTED BY [YOUR LOCAL VA MEDICAL CENTER] AND [ADNA NAME]

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.]

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# Training and Supervising Workers

Training your workers is very important. You must make sure your employees have the proper training to meet your needs and give you quality support.

All workers will need some training – even if your new employee is a Certified or Licensed Nurse Aide and/or has performed this kind of work before, they do not know how you like things to be done. You should always train your worker to do tasks the way that you want them to be done. There are many ways to train your workers; the following are only a few suggestions.

## Prepare for Training

Before you start training, have all the equipment and supplies you will need for the training. If possible, schedule training when you will not be disturbed. You and your worker need time to focus on the training.

## Explain Your Disability or Your Medical Condition

Tell your worker everything about your disability or medical condition and how it affects your daily life. Do not leave anything out. Does your disability or condition have symptoms that could be alarming to a new employee? If so, talk about it. If your disability or condition has symptoms that could be alarming to the uninformed public, prepare your worker to deal with this also. Use many examples. The more your worker knows of your disability, the better support they can give you.

## Review Your Expectations

You talked about your expectations in the interview. Make sure your worker hears they are important. Explain anything that is unclear and let them ask questions. If your expectations cause problems, it is best to address the issue right away. If you cannot resolve the problem, you may not want them to continue working for you. If this is the case, do not do any further training.

## Have a Training Plan

Begin each training lesson with an overview of what you will cover. At the end of the lesson, sum up what you have taught. If you need more than one lesson to cover a topic, review what you have taught in earlier lessons first. Answer any questions, and then move on to new material.

## Explain and Demonstrate Tasks

When explaining a task that must be done in a certain way, tell the worker they must do it in a certain way and explain why. If the task must be done at a certain time, explain why. Describe each step carefully. The worker must understand all parts of a task and how they fit together.

A good way for your worker to learn a new task is to have them watch someone else do it first. Have a friend, family member, or another skilled worker show them how to do the new task. Make

sure they see several times how the task is to be done. Then, let the worker practice it and tell them how they are doing.

You may want to make use of a task checklist or schedule for your worker. If you are using a checklist/schedule, have your worker review the checklist/schedule on the task as you work through each step of the task. Or, you could have your worker write down each of the steps as you explain them. Review what your worker writes to be sure that they understood all steps correctly. A sample a worker checklist/schedule is available in **Appendix A**.

## Stress Safety

Stressing safety is critical both for you and your worker. If you have life support or medical equipment, make sure the worker knows how and when to use it. Train the worker to understand and use **standard** and **universal precautions** whenever needed. Make sure the worker knows what to do in case of an emergency.

**Standard and Universal Precautions:** A standard set of guidelines created by the Centers for Disease Control to prevent the spread of disease by limiting exposure to bodily fluids and other potentially infectious materials or situations. Precautions taken include, but are not limited to, hand hygiene (e.g., regular hand washing) and personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves, masks, face shields, goggles).

## Be Sensitive to and Respect Your Worker

Your worker may not get all your directions right the first or even the second time. Making mistakes is part of learning. Ask for feedback and give the worker plenty of chances to ask questions. *Be patient!*

Some people may be able to learn a whole task at once. Others may need a slower pace. Pay attention to your worker's feelings and reactions as you train. Give thought to how much new knowledge your worker is able to learn at one time, and respect your worker's ability to learn and how much they already know.

## Provide Feedback and Correct Mistakes

Giving your worker feedback during training as well as on the job is very important. Talk about what is working and, more importantly, what is not working. Like most people, your worker needs both positive and corrective feedback.

When your worker performs a task differently than the way you wanted it done, point it out. Patiently remind your worker how you want it done. Remember, you are trying to fix the mistake, not the person.

## Praise Good Work

When your worker performs tasks the way you want them done, point this out. Praise your worker for good work, and do not forget to say, "Thank you." This is a powerful motivator for workers.

## Evaluate Your Worker's Performance and Behavior

Let your worker know you will be evaluating work and behavior regularly. Share copies of your evaluations. You can find a sample evaluation form in **Appendix B**.

## Dismissing Workers

Most people do not like having to dismiss, or fire, someone. However, sometimes that “perfect” person you hired does not work out. People and situations change. If you find at some point that your worker is not meeting your needs, you may have to dismiss that person. Communicating your expectations regularly and keeping a regular schedule for reviewing your employee's job performance can help you decide if you have grounds for dismissal.

### Some Grounds for Dismissal

The reasons to dismiss someone will vary. Here are some of the most common reasons:

- The employee's work does not meet agreed-upon expectations
- The employee does not learn fast enough to meet your changing needs
- The employee is late or fails to show up too many times
- The employee's personal habits bother you
- The employee does not pay attention to your instructions
- You find you are having too many arguments
- You do not feel safe and comfortable with the employee
- The employee has a schedule that is not flexible enough for you
- The employee violates your employment conditions, seriously or often

Some actions by a worker may be grounds for dismissing them right away. You should have put these in your hiring agreement, as mentioned earlier. It is important that you cover these with your worker when they start working for you.

### Grounds for Immediate Dismissal

Reasons for immediate dismissal include actions such as:

- Drinking on the job
- Using illegal drugs on the job
- Coming to work impaired by alcohol or drugs
- Being caught stealing from you
- Abusing you in any way
- Violating your confidentiality

## How to Dismiss a Worker

Weigh all your options before you dismiss a worker. Trying to work things out with the employee might be better. Trying to hire a new one will take time and effort and there is no guarantee that your new employee will be a better worker.

How you decide to handle dismissing a worker will depend on your personality, your employee's personality, and the situation. You might want to get advice from your **Person-Centered Counselor**, and make sure your back-up plan is available before you dismiss your worker. However, if dismissal is your decision, consider the following questions.

**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.*

- **How should you tell the employee you are dismissing them?** Doing it by phone or letter may feel safer and/or easier, but doing it in person is more respectful. Having a third person, such as your designated representatives, tell the employee on your behalf is also an option.
- **What reasons should you give the employee for dismissing them?** If you have been giving plenty of feedback and doing regular evaluations, the worker should not be surprised. They should also know what you have said are grounds for dismissal. In some cases, something may happen or a very serious problem may arise that you have not addressed in your guidelines or evaluations. You should give the employee some idea of why are you dismissing them, but you do not have to go into great detail.
- **How will the worker react?** Have a neighbor, friend, relative, or Person-Centered Counselor in the room with you and your worker if you feel there may be a problem when you bring up the subject of dismissal.
- **How much notice should you give your employee?** Be fair but remember that if you give your employee advance notice, you may risk even more problems with their work and behavior.
- **Who will provide your support once you dismiss the employee?** Before you dismiss your present employee, have at least one back-up worker ready to step in right away.
- **Are you safe and secure?** If the employee you dismissed had access to the keys to your residence or car, get them back on the same day that you dismiss the individual.
- **Learn from the experience.** After you have had some time to consider the situation, think about what you have learned from it. Would you deal with the situation in a different way? Was there a question you would have asked in the interview process that would have helped you realize that this was not the person for you?

## Appendix A. Sample Worker Task Checklist/Schedule

The below sample checklist/schedule can be used to ensure that your worker completes their tasks, knows the frequency of each task, and can record the instructions required to complete each task.

**Exhibit 1. Sample Worker Task Checklist/Schedule**

Task	Check	Frequency and Instructions
<i>Shopping/Errands/Miscellaneous</i>		
Prepare shopping list		
Shop		
Unpack, put items away		
Other		
<i>Periodic Cleaning</i>		
Windows		
Oven, Stove, Microwave		
Refrigerator		
Seasonal Maintenance		
Yard		
Other		
<i>Personal Care</i>		
Bathing		
Grooming/Shaving		
Oral Hygiene		
Dressing/Undressing		
Eating		
Ambulation		
Transfers		

Task	Check	Frequency and Instructions
Toileting		
Skin Care		
Repositioning		
Prosthesis/Brace/Splint: Put on or off		
Other		
<b><i>Meal Preparation</i></b>		
Breakfast		
Lunch		
Dinner		
<b><i>Laundry</i></b>		
Do Laundry at Home		
Bring to Laundromat		
Prepare for Laundry Service		
Fold Clothes		
Put Clothes Away		
Change Bed Linens		
<b><i>Cleaning</i></b>		
Kitchen		
Bathroom		
Bedroom		
Living Room		
Dusting		
Mopping		



Task	Check	Frequency and Instructions
Vacuuming/Sweeping		
Take out Trash		