**Home Care Aide**

**Annual Training**



***Understanding Client Rights***



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# Health Care Rights

Our country was founded on the belief that every individual is entitled to certain rights and we do not lose those right as we get older, get sick, move into a nursing home, or need home care assistance. When senior become “patients” or “clients” it is common for them to feel like they are not in control over what happens to them or they cannot make decisions for themselves. It is important for your client to know and understand their healthcare rights as this helps them to:

* Know they will be treated as individuals
* Understand they can make decisions for themselves
* Realize they do have control of the important role they play in their own health

*When working with seniors in their home we typically call them “clients” as opposed to “residents” or “patients” as we say in a long term care facility or hospital. When discussing health care rights, they’re usually referred to as “patient rights”. For the continuation of the in-service we will refer to all people who need health care as “patients”.*

## Patient Right #1: The Right to Information

All patients/clients have the **right** to:

* Receive current information about their diagnosis, treatment and prognosis. This includes learning about any risks involved in a particular treatment and what the alternatives might be. They must also be told how long a treatment might take and if that treatment is experimental. They also have the right to refuse treatment if they do not wish to have it.
* Know the identity of healthcare workers involved in their care.
* Know how much a particular treatment or service will cost.

### Ways to Meet this Patient Right…

As you go through your day, be sure to:

1. **Help your client understand any information you give them.** If your patient/client does not speak or understand English, let your supervisor know that an interpreter may be needed.
2. Wear your name tag everyday and remember to **identify** yourself when you meet your client or enter their home.
3. Let your supervisor know if your client has **questions** about their treatment or medications. A nurse or doctor can answer those important questions.

## Patient Right #2: The Right to Respect

All patients/clients have the **right** to:

* Expect their healthcare workers to be respectful and considerate.
* Receive care without discrimination because of their **race, culture, religion, age , gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities**.
* Expect their healthcare workers to be honest and ethical.
* Be free from any form of abuse or neglect.
* Be allowed to live a high quality of life, free from physical or chemical restraints.
* Be able to keep and use their personal belongings as well as have them handled respectfully.

*Along with this right, the clients have a responsibility to show respect for every member of their health care team, regardless of their race, age, sex, or religion of each health care worker.*

### Ways to Meet this Patient Right…

As you go through you day, be sure you:

1. **Show sensitivity** to the beliefs and needs of every client. For example, you are taking care of a client who is a vegetarian and does not eat meat. You can show your respect for the client by learning about vegetarian diets and fixing them nutritious vegetarian meals.
2. **Address your clients the way they prefer.** It is polite to call them Mr. or Ms. unless they ask you to call them by their first names or a nick name. Avoid using terms like “honey” or “sweetie”. It may offend some clients and seem child-like.
3. Don't touch your client’s personal belongings unless it is necessary. If you do handle their belongings, be careful and put them back where you found them.
4. Do your best to go along with your client’s personal preferences everyday; such as letting them decide what to wear and what to eat.



## Patient Right #3: The Right to Participate

All patients/clients have the **right** to:

* Make decisions about their own care.
* Change their minds about health care treatments and services.
* Refuse care.
* Have an advance directive/s including a living will, power of attorney and POLST (Physicians Order for Life Sustaining Treatment).

*Along with this right, patients/clients have the responsibility to ask for more information if they do not understand something, go to all scheduled doctors appointments, follow the plan of care, and inform every involved in their care of any advance directives.*

### Ways to meet this Patient Right…

As you go through your day, be sure to:

1. Honor any advance directive. If your client has a DNR (Do Not Resuscitate), make sure you know what to do if he or she stops breathing during your care.
2. **Encourage** your patients to take their medications as prescribed.
3. Help your client’s follow and meal or exercise plan that have been put in place by their physician.
4. Allow you clients to **refuse** care if they wish – be sure to **document** the situation and let your supervisor know.
5. **Encourage** you clients to participate in their personal care. Even if they are not strong enough to bathe by themselves, they can probably wash their faces and comb their hair. **The more they can do for themselves, the more independent they will remain!**



## Patient Right #4: The Right to Privacy

All patients/clients have the **right** to:

* Expect confidentiality from every health care worker who provides care for them.
* Review their own health care records if they want to. IF they do not understand what is being read, they have the right to have it explained to them in a way in which they do.
* Expect privacy during care, even in their home.
* Be allowed to visit privately with friends or family members.

*Along with this right, patients/clients have the responsibility to share any personal information that has an effect in their health, store their valuables in a safe place, and respect the privacy of their health care workers.*

### Ways to meet this Patient Right…

As you go through your day, be sure to:

1. Respect your clients’ privacy during personal care. For Example, keep a sheet over your client during a bed bath or close the bathroom door while your client uses the toilet.
2. Knock before entering their room or bathroom.
3. Keep all client information confidential, including information that you write or say. It should only be shared with participating family members and members of the health care team.
4. **Do not share** confidential information about your clients with people that are not involved directly in their care. For example, a neighbor walks over and wants to know how Mr. Johnson is doing and if he had recently undergone hip surgery. She says she has cared for Mr. Johnson in the past and is a very close friend. You can politely let the neighbor know **you are not in a position to give out any information but would be happy to express their concern with him and his family.** Mr. Johnson and his family can choose whether or not they wish to share any information with neighbors or friends.

**Do not give any information out over the phone to anyone**, even if it is someone claiming to be a close friend or family member. **Remember, you do not know who is on the other end of the telephone,** and in some cases, client will purposely exclude any information reaching a certain family member.

## Patient Right #5: The Right to Quality Care

All patients/clients have the **right** to:

* Expect the same health care workers will care for them every day, as much as possible.
* Be treated as an individual.
* Expect their health care workers will keep them safe from injury or harm.
* Receive the same quality of care regardless of their ability to pay their health care bills.

*Along with this right, clients have the responsibility to recognize the impact of their own lifestyle choices. For example, Ms. Johnson needs to realize that all the medication in the world may not help her diabetes if she continues a diet high in sugar and carbohydrates while skipping her insulin shots.*

### Ways to meet this Patient Right…

As you go through your day, be sure to:

1. **Provide a safe environment for you clients** by keeping them safe from falls and common household injuries.
2. **Stick to a routine** with your clients as much as possible. This helps them to know what to expect and when to expect it.
3. **Report to work on time**! If you are scheduled to be at a client’s home at 10 am, be there at 9:50! Being late or not showing up on time shows unreliability and a delay in care for that client.
4. Keep learning new skills and continue to do yearly training. This will be very helpful for you on the job as well as continuing to provide your clients with the highest quality of care.



## Patient Right #6: The Right to Make a Complaint

All patients/clients have the **right** to:

* Make suggestions or complaints about their care without being afraid of consequences. For example, a client can make a complaint about the type of care they are receiving from a caregiver without the fear of retaliation.
* Switch to a different healthcare facility or agency if they want to.
* Know the health care plan organization policies for handling a complaint.
* Have a prompt and fair response to any complaint.
* Take their complaint to the state if they are not satisfied with how an organization handles it.

*Along with this right, clients have the responsibility to cooperate with workplace rules and consider the rights of other client’s or healthcare workers.*

### Ways to meet this Patient Right…

As you go through your day, be sure to:

1. Ensure your client know how to make a complaint. Remember: you can learn from client suggestions and complaints. They may help you develop customer service skills.
2. Encourage your clients to tell you when they are unhappy or worried about their care. The more your client grows to trust you, the less likely they are to take legal action when problems arise.
3. Stay calm if your supervisor tells you that a client has made a complaint. Let your supervisor hear all of the facts about the situation.
4. To avoid complaints, help every client/resident in need- not just who is assigned to you. Review your client’s plan of care frequently to ensure you are providing the proper care.



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# Additional Rights for Home Care Clients

* Home care clients have the right to receive care in their own homes *if it is safe* *to do so*. For Example, Mr. Johnson’s medications need to be refrigerated but he has no refrigerator or electricity. Home care would not be the best choice for him. Be sure to report any unsafe conditions you notice with your home care clients.
* All adults have the right to choose where and how they want to live, even if that environment is unpleasant for the home care aide. If Mr. Johnson’s daughter, who has a refrigerator and electricity, invites him to live with her while he receives care, he can either except or decline. He cannot be forced to move out of his home. You might also have a client whose home is infested with bugs. If it were your home you would want to get rid of them immediately, but it may not bother your client in her home. You can encourage, but you cannot force them to change their living habits.
* Home care clients have the right to be instructed on what to do in event of an emergency, whether they should call the agency, their doctor or 911. Be sure your client knows how to handle problems during the hours a home care aide is not present.
* Home care clients have the right to ask for certain caregivers. For example, one female client may like to have a male caregiver because she feels safe in that he is able to transfer her to her chair with ease, where as another female client may ask the agency for a female caregiver because she feels comfortable with her doing personal care.

*Home care clients have responsibilities for providing each home care aide with a safe working environment. If you feel unsafe in a client’s home, for any reason, discuss the issue with your supervisor immediately.*

# Tips for Supporting Client Rights

1. **Listen to your clients when they tell you they need something**. Remember each client is different - even if they have the same health problems. Make an effort to treat each client as an individual.
2. Remember **the client’s family may want to be involved in making health care decisions** and it is ok if the client wants them to participate – just keep in mind they still need privacy too.
3. **Make it a habit to explain everything you are going to do with your client *before you do it.***
4. If you travel from client to client make sure you keep all of your documentation private.
5. Do not gossip about your clients to anyone, even other members of the healthcare team. It is not necessary to share personal information about the client unless it pertains to their care.
6. Be honest with your clients and their family members. If they ask you something you do not know the answer to, respond with something like, “I don’t know but I will check with my supervisor.” Be sure to follow through by discussing the issue or finding out the appropriate information.
7. Encourage your clients to discuss any issues they have about their care or delivery of service.
8. Avoid using slang words that your client may not understand. This includes medical terms and abbreviations.
9. For clients that do not speak English try to communicate to them using pictures or gestures.
10. Help your clients have the best quality of life by

* not smoking
* staying physically healthy
* exercising regularly
* not abusing drugs or alcohol
* getting enough rest
* and getting a yearly physical

1. Encourage independence in your clients by letting them make decisions about their care everyday.
2. Never threaten your client’s to cooperate. It is wrong to say something like, *“If you don’t take a bath now you cannot watch TV later.”*
3. Do not force care on a client. Even if you know the client would benefit from the task, like taking a shower or eating a meal. You can encourage and offer a reason for the activity but if they still refuse, document it and inform tour supervisor.

***Make sure you have read through the Patient/Client Bill of Rights before entering a home as a Home Care Aide. To protect your client’s rights always treat them the way you would want to be treated if you were in their place.***