

NC Family to Family Health Information Center

"A beacon for families of children with special health care needs."

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Fact Sheet

29

Personal Care Attendant (PCA)

What is a Personal Care Attendant? (PCA)

A Personal Care Attendant (PCA) is a person who assists an individual with a disability perform their daily living activities. These activities may include hand washing, teeth brushing, bathing, dressing, cooking, eating, personal hygiene activities, physical transferring of the individual, assistance with the use of mobility devices, as well as various individualized daily living activities to include monitoring of the health and physical status of the individual. Personal Care Attendants may also assist with various housekeeping chores such as making the individual's bed, dusting and vacuuming their environment or other activities which are essential to the health and the welfare of the individual.

As a Medicaid recipient, personal care services may be provided as a part of Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) as long as they are prescribed as medically necessary by a health care provider. Community Alternatives Program commonly known as CAP Services generally provide personal care goals and objectives as a integral part of their plan. An individual CAP care worker will often provide personal care, home and community supports, and respite services at various times through out their workday, or work week.

Q. How do I get a Personal Care Attendant?

A. *As a Medicaid or Community Alternatives Program recipient, contact your case manager and let them know your desires or needs for the individual in need of personal care support.*

Q. Who hires the Personal Care Attendant?

A. *Typically the case manager at your provider agency will provide qualified staff for you to interview, but you can also recommend family members (excluding parents) or individuals that you know. They will be required to meet the same standards as the staff that the provider agency would recommend. This may require training and employment, criminal background check and health care provider background check provided by your provider agency. In the case of adults with disabilities, legal guardians who are no longer financially responsible for the individual are permitted to be reimbursed for Personal Care duties that they provide the individual.*

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Q. Are there limitations to when I can use a Personal Care Attendant?

A. *Yes, Personal care services do not include transportation to medical appointments, or during a medical appointment. Individuals who live in residential facilities with more than one person are not entitled to this service.*

Possible questions to ask when interviewing a Personal Care Attendant:

- What personal qualities are important to you? For example, patience, honesty, reliability, flexibility etc.
- Ask them about previous people they have worked for. Why did they leave?
- If it is possible, have your child present during the interview, observe the interactions between your child and the person you are interviewing.
- If they are going to be transporting your child, do they have the right amount of insurance coverage on their vehicle? Ask them if you can see a copy of their insurance.
- Make a list of questions you want to ask.

Important things to remember:

- Always keep the communication open with the PCA.
- Keep your own timecard of the hours that the PCA has worked, just in case any questions arise.
- You, as the parent have the right to chose another Personal Care Attendant if you feel that things are not working out.
- **YOU, the parent/guardian are the decision makers.**

If you have additional questions, please contact your case manager, or the Family to Family Health Information Center at 1-800-962-6817.

Source: EPSDT: Supporting Children with Disabilities: www.hsri.org/docs/792FinalEPSDTbooklet.PDF
<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/mhddsas/cap-mrdd/capmanual1-18-06.pdf>