

Parents tell us that finding and hiring a child's Personal Care Attendant is one of their biggest challenges. Here are some helpful suggestions.

Finding and Hiring a Child's Personal Care Attendant

Sometimes children need extra help to perform daily self-care skills. Children's Personal Care Services may be able to help. Children's Personal Care Services is part of Children with Special Health Needs at the Vermont Department of Health. This program helps pay for one-on-one help with the extra needs a child might have with dressing, bathing, grooming, toileting, eating, and mobility. Visit the Vermont Department of Health's website for more information on eligibility and how to apply.

Family-Directed Program

Children's Personal Care Services is mostly a family-directed support program. This means that families have control over whom, how, and when someone provides care to their child, within Medicaid guidelines.



Many people can become your Children's Personal Care Services employee, or personal care attendant (PCA), and families can hire the best person to meet the needs of *their*

child. There are, however, a few rules about who can and cannot be hired—including policies relating to family members, wage restrictions, age of paid caregivers, and background checks.

Anyone in the primary caregiver role, cannot be paid as a PCA in the Children's Personal Care Services program, this includes stepparents, domestic partner of the child's parent or other relative/individual acting in that role. However, other family members can be including siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc. PCAs must be 18 years or older, however a waiver can be obtained for someone aged 16 and older by contacting:

Children's Personal Care Services
Children with Special Health Needs
Vermont Department of Health
802-865-1395 or 802-951-5169

Families use a payroll agent to help them pay personal care attendants, currently [ARIS Solutions](#). The payroll agent does more than just write checks. The payroll agent also makes sure that background checks are run, state and federal taxes are paid, and employees are covered by Unemployment and Workers' Compensation Insurance.



Getting Started

If your child has been approved for the Personal Care Services program, you may be feeling a bit overwhelmed with the process of finding and hiring a PCA who is a good match for your family. Knowing what your child and family needs is an important first step and deserves a lot of thought. Here are some questions to consider:

- How will the PCA fit into the overall plan and schedule for your child?
- Considering your child's personality, interests, likes, dislikes, temperament, behaviors, etc., what qualities must the PCA have at the outset? What skills could the PCA learn on the job or through additional training once hired?
- What is your vision of how your child and the PCA will spend their time together? If they will work on certain skills, which ones? How will those goals be accomplished?
- If you have safety, behavioral, medical, or other concerns about caring for your child, what do you expect from the PCA?

Creating an Advertisement

PCA advertisements that are clear and upbeat work best to spark multiple inquiries. Use a short version of your ad for certain publications such as Craig's List and a longer version for other purposes such as Front Porch Forum.

When creating your PCA advertisement, include your "must haves" and your child's interests. Each parent decides how much information they want to include in their ad. Some things to consider including are:

- Your child's age and gender
- A brief description of your child
- Your location
- Transportation needs
- Schedule (days, times, hours per week; set schedule or flexible?)
- Qualities or qualifications of the person you are seeking to hire
- Main responsibilities
- Hourly rate
- Your contact information



Sample PCA Advertisement

Parents of an outdoorsy, energetic, bright, and kind 10-year old boy with Autism seeks Personal Care Attendant for 20-hours per week from June 1 through September 1. Schedule is somewhat flexible; 4-5 hours per day, 4 or 5 weekdays. Weekends off! Ideal candidate is cheerful, dependable, loves kids, is easy-going, and able to follow daily schedule and routines. Ideal candidate will need a car to provide transportation to nearby activities. No experience needed. \$13-\$15/hour (plus occasional home-made cookies.) Contact Jane at JDoe@gmail.com or call/text me at 802-123-1234.

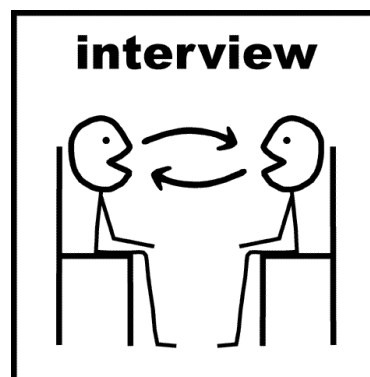
I am looking forward to talking with you!

Where to Advertise for a PCA

Many jobs are filled through word-of-mouth so share your PCA job opportunity widely with your friends, family, and members of your community. Some families use social media such as Facebook to get the word out. PCAs employed by other families you may know are also a good source of leads. Some families reach out to their child's support worker at school to check on their interest and availability or to ask for ideas or recommendations.

Consider advertising at the following places:

- Word of mouth - Talk with your contacts at your child's school, church, healthcare settings, neighborhood friends, and local Facebook friends to see if they have any recommendations.
- Craig's List, Front Porch Forum, local newspapers in your community, etc.
- Care care.com
- Indeed indeed.com
- UVM College of Nursing and Health Sciences sends a weekly newsletter to students. Families are welcome to email their PCA ad to Sara White-sara.m.white@med.uvm.edu to include in their newsletter.
- By joining the VFN listserv and/or closed Facebook page you may learn of PCA opportunities in Chittenden County and the surrounding area. Our closed Facebook page is only for parents. When in Facebook, search on "Vermont Families of Children with Special Needs." For step-by-step instructions to join the VFN listserv: vermontfamilynetwork.org/resources/vfn-listserv/
- Bulletin boards in relevant departments at local colleges. For liability reasons, the career offices at both UVM and St. Michael's College will not post openings for families looking for a PCA because they are only allowed to post names from approved agencies, which presumably do some screening. Vermont Family Network cannot screen either families or student PCA applicants.



Interviewing Potential PCA Candidates

When you find someone that may be a good fit, you will be responsible for interviewing, checking references, and hiring that person.

Consider the following:

- Have the initial meeting in a neutral public place such as a coffee shop or have someone you trust come with you to the interview.
- Have a list of questions prepared ahead of time to ask the potential PCA.
- Share your expectations, needs, communication style, and management style.
- Ask the candidate what questions they have for you. Address any questions or concerns.
- Set-up a time for a second interview, in person or a follow-up telephone call.
- Have the candidate meet your child/family and visit your home before extending a job offer.





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1 800-800-4005

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How can Vermont Family Network help?

VFN alerts students to the PCA job opportunity at Family Faculty events in Chittenden County. Parent panelists speak to students in healthcare and education classes at UVM. Interested students email us a brief paragraph about themselves with contact information. We post these on the VFN listserv and share on VFN's closed Facebook page for parents (name of group is "Vermont Families of Children with Special Needs").

Call VFN Family Support to join the listserv.
800-800-4005

For step-by step instructions to join the online VFN listserv:
vermontfamilynetwork.org/resources/vfn-listserv/

Resources
ARIS Solutions
arissolutions.org/
800-798-1658

Children's Personal Care Services-
Children with Special Health Needs

Vermont Department of Health (CSHN DOH)
healthvermont.gov/children-youth-families/children-special-health-needs/personal-care-services
108 Cherry Street
Burlington, VT 05401
802-865-1395 or 802-951-5169

The following resources include sample ads, interview guides and Dos and Don'ts for managing PCAs.

The Quickstart Guide to Hiring and Supervising Personal Assistants
vcil.org/resources/pas-quickstart

The MDA's Independent Living and PCA Support Resources
mda.org/young-adults/independent-living