

# Care Provider Code

By following these suggested guidelines while providing care for a consumer, you have a better chance of creating a successful, trusting, and comfortable relationship, whether your consumer is a family member or not.

Keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive list of what a caregiver may want to remember; only experience can teach those things, and every interaction is different; but these tips *are* a very good place to start.

## 1. A care provider should treat their consumers with dignity, respect and sensitivity

Respect your consumer's right to make decisions about their life, and help them maintain a sense of control and privacy whenever possible.

- Listen to what your consumer has to say and pay attention to their worries and concerns.
- Offer to provide help on your consumer's terms, not yours.
- Encourage your consumer to retain as much independence and control over their life as possible.
- Keep the Independent Living Philosophy\* in mind during your interactions.

## 2. A care provider should respect the rights and decisions of their consumers

The ability to make decisions is a basic freedom, so provide choices whenever possible—from which cereals to eat at breakfast, what to wear or which blankets to put on the bed. Choices enable us to express ourselves and feel ownership of our lives. As your consumer's age or disability progresses options can become more limited and you may have to work harder to find choices to provide.

## 3. A care provider should treat adult consumers as adults

It can be very easy to slip into the role of parent/child with a consumer; you may be caring for them in a similar manner, after all. It is important to not forget that adult consumers have a wealth of life experience and should be spoken to and treated as you would any other adult in your life.

## 4. A care provider should practice and encourage open communication

Asking open ended questions that start with "how" or "what" encourages your consumers to engage in a discussion, rather than giving a "yes" or "no" response. These kinds of questions demonstrate that you care about what your consumer wants and how they want it done. It is also important to address issues that you and your consumer are having, which may be harder for some cultures to do, but it is nonetheless a very important aspect of creating an open and trusting relationship. The key is to remain respectful.

## 5. A care provider should be patient and understanding

It can be really easy for caregivers to feel frustrated when their consumer is making a decision that you don't agree with or isn't beneficial to the health of the consumer. You must be patient and remind yourself that you are not in charge of their life; you are just here to help with some of their needs. You don't have the authority to decide whether or not what they are doing is right.

\*A philosophy that people with disabilities are the best experts on their needs and are completely capable of self-determination.

## **6. A care provider should promote independence in their consumer**

As stated in point #1, if your consumer is still capable of performing certain activities, such as collecting the mail, cooking meals or washing their own face during bed baths, then encourage them to do so. Helping your consumer to maintain a feeling of independence and control will make them feel better about their situation.

- Encourage any effort at independence, no matter how small.
- Even if you can do something more quickly and easily than your consumer, unless they need your help, let them complete the task. If you think they may need your assistance, ask them if they want your help, don't just take over. Doing everything for your consumer may increase feelings of depression and frustration.
- Avoid treating your consumer like a child, unless they are one. In which case, don't forget to let them grow.

## **7. A care provider should perform all tasks with a high level of importance**

The tasks that you perform for your consumer are important, because they are tasks that the consumer cannot perform for themselves. Don't take for granted your ability to do these tasks and don't underestimate how your attitude while working can have a profound effect on your consumer's mental well-being. Think about how you would feel if your roles were reversed.

## **8. A care provider should act in a professional manner**

Caregiving is a job and your consumer is your employer, whether they are a family member or not. Just as with any other job, you need to dress, act and present yourself appropriately. It is never ok to bring people to a consumer's home without their express permission.

## **9. A care provider should remember to take care of themselves as well as their consumer**

It is very difficult to provide a high level of care for someone else for an extended amount of time, if you are not also making sure that your own health and mental state are in good condition. There are many community resources, support groups and respite options, use them and allow yourself a break from time to time.