

SERVICE **Excellence** GUIDE

## **Home Care Aide**

**Service Excellence** is essential to the success of our clients, our referral sources, and our organization. It develops client loyalty, enhances our reputation, and increases our referrals. But most importantly, **Service Excellence** puts clients and family members at ease, reduces anxieties, and invites questions--all which lead to better client outcomes.

Most clients want to stay in their homes for as long as possible. Home is a often a place of comfort, security, and familiarity. As a Home Health Aide, you play an important role in allowing the client to stay there. Always remember that you are a guest in the client's home and that you will be caring for them and their belongings in a very personal way. This calls for respect, integrity, and compassion.

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## Friendliness

Upon first visit, always introduce yourself. In addition, always introduce yourself to family members or others that may be present.

• My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

• I am a \_\_\_\_\_ (title or position) from \_\_\_\_\_ (company.)

Building positive, long-term relationships with clients and their families begins with friendliness. Treating people like people--not cases or conditions--affirms the client's basic dignity and self-respect.

Take five minutes prior to performing duties to connect with the client. Find out how they are feeling, what they have been doing, what they are worried about, etc. Ask questions that demonstrate your interest in the client as a person:

- *“How did the visit with your son go?”*
- *“Did your granddaughter win her soccer game?”*
- *“What TV show were you watching?”*

## Establishing Expectations

At the start of the visit, let the client know your plan, goals and time frame for the visit. Ask the client about any special requests. Occasionally ask the client what is most important to them in regards to your visit. Focus on these areas while interacting with them. This demonstrates to the client that what is important to him/her is also important to you.

- *“Here's what I plan to do today.”*
- *“What questions or concerns do you have?”*

For customer service and safety reasons, make sure you know the role of anyone else who is present (i.e. family member, neighbor, Meals on Wheels delivery person).

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## Communication

Good communication is essential to quality outcomes, continuity of care, and client satisfaction. There are 3 elements of communication:

### 1. Explanation

Always make sure the client knows what you are doing and where you are.

- *“I will be in the kitchen for a few minutes making lunch for you.”*

Communicate slowly, clearly, and positively. This gives the client time to process what is being asked or said. When you are changing the subject, tell the client. Give clues by pausing briefly, gesturing toward what will be discussed, gently touching the client, or asking a question.

Use ‘I’ statements when making requests or giving directions to the client. For instance, instead of saying, *“You need to tie your shoes,”* try, *“I would like you to try and tie your shoes.”*

### 2. Listening

When the client is talking, face him/her and maintain eye contact. Use frequent, brief responses (e.g. *“Okay,” “Uh-huh,” “I understand”*) to acknowledge that you are listening. Active listening keeps the discussion focused and lets clients know that you understand their concerns.

Ask open-ended questions (e.g., *“What concerns do you have?”*) rather than close-ended ones (e.g., *“Do you have any concerns?”*). Then listen in a focused way.

Restate what the client has said using his/her words and phrasing to demonstrate that you are listening. This helps all parties understand what is being expressed.

- *“So what you are saying is ....”*

Discussing concerns allows you time to gather important information and leads to improved cooperation.

Probe for more information:

- *“What makes you say that?”*
- *“Tell me more about that.”*

### “3. Empathy (showing compassion)

Listen to the client’s concerns with empathy as this often reveals underlying anxieties. Ask the client throughout the visit if he/she feels comfortable or if there is anything you can do to help him/her feel more at ease.

Watch for opportunities to respond to clients’ emotions and empathize with them:

- *“That sounds difficult.”*
- *“I’m sorry you’re facing this problem.”*

## Professionalism

The professionalism of the staff is a reflection on our organization as a whole. We want to reflect ourselves and our organization in a professional and positive manner.

Never speak negatively about other clients, staff, physicians, or the organization in front of clients or their family members.

Do not talk about negative aspects of your personal life. Clients are already burdened. You are there to ease their burdens, not to share yours. If they share negative information with you, listen, empathize but do not indulge them. Stay away from discussions about politics, religion and other controversial topics.

In addition, do not talk about how busy you are. This takes away from their importance as an individual and may indicate that you will be rushed while providing care. Some clients may even feel bad for you and look at themselves as a hardship for you. We want to convey that we are caring for them with delight.

## Privacy

Use key words and phrases during the course of the home visit to reassure the client that you are concerned with his/her privacy.

*“I want you to know that we are concerned about your privacy...”*

Always ask permission before touching the client. Ask others to leave the room when appropriate (i.e. toileting). Ask clients if they would like curtains drawn, blinds shut, or any other gesture that indicates to them that privacy is a concern. Handle your documentation with care. Be careful to insure that other client’s information is kept private.

## Continuity of Care

If you know that you will be out, reassure regular clients about your substitute:

- *“I will be on vacation next week, but we will be sure to send someone who will take great care of you.”*

## Scheduling

A client may want you to be their regular home health aide. While this is a great compliment, it is not always possible. You can respond with something like:

- *“Thank you very much. I am glad that you like the service I provide. However, we can’t always promise you will have the same home health aide. In order to best meet the needs of all our clients, scheduling is done through my supervisor.”*

Let your supervisor know if you will be late arriving to a visit. Give them time frames for your arrival so they can inform the client. When you arrive, give a brief, sincere apology then begin as you would a normal visit.

## Ending the Visit

Review the visit with the client. Explain what you did and why. Ask if there are any final questions, concerns, or worries before you leave.

Let the client know who to contact after hours/on weekends to answer questions and triage calls. If you are scheduled with the client for their next visit, let them know the date and time of your next visit.

Inform your supervisor of any significant client concern or anything unusual or noteworthy. Finally, wrap a nice bow around the visit by leaving with a fond farewell:

- *“It was so nice to see you again. I hope the visit with your daughter goes well. I look forward to seeing you next week.”*