

Personnel Management Manual: Achieving Independence through Personal Assistance

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The goals of this manual are to help people with disabilities learn to live independently and teach Personal Attendants (PA) how to best help their clients achieve their goals. The information in this manual comes from my over 25 years of experience of managing personnel. I bring to the forefront knowledge gained from my trials and errors, struggles and accomplishments, and I include the perspective of other consumers, PAs and nationally prominent independent living advocates.

In this manual, people with disabilities will learn how to assess their own needs and recruit, hire, train, supervise, and even live with a PA. This manual goes beyond basic instruction and teaches communication skills, personal interaction, and tools that will empower people with disabilities. People with disabilities will become able to self-direct their own care, and PAs will understand their clients needs. The manual is designed to be helpful to individuals with disabilities, family members, caregivers, hospitals, Independent Living Centers, teaching institutions, nursing agencies, and community centers.

Independent living does not mean you have to do everything by yourself. Whereas you may choose to think that having to use a PA robs you of your independence, in reality having a PA may be your means of living your life the way you want. Through the assistance of a PA you can gain your independence. This manual is based upon an independent living philosophy – the idea that people with disabilities should be in control of support services that assist them.

Although effective attendant care is the most important factor to achieving independent living, it is also often a problem and a struggle. All too often, individuals who want to assist people with disabilities do not receive the type of training that enables them to help their clients achieve true independence. PAs are usually prepared to handle seating transfers, bathing and other medical needs; however, they are not taught the psychology of care, nor the related interpersonal skills. They often lack insight into how people with disabilities perceive independence. Without this knowledge, PAs can feel overwhelmed by their job. This contributes to the frequent turnover of personnel and can easily cause an individual with disabilities to lose self esteem and lower their expectations of independence.

The proceeds from the sales of this manual go to Help-Your-Self, inc.® to provide services for people with disabilities.

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