

IDENTIFYING WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IN A PERSONAL ASSISTANT



As part of the transition to adulthood, you may need personal assistance services. The next step is to figure out potential assistants' responsibilities and hours of work. The information below can help you get started in determining what you want and need from your assistants, as well as in communicating with your assistants once they start working. Since you are now the boss, it's important to establish and maintain good communication with your employees.

Here are a few other things to consider:

- **Which tasks will you need help with?** Which tasks can you do on your own?
- **Approximately how many hours of help will you need?** Per day? Per week? [If you don't know, begin to keep track of the general times during the day (and for how long) your friends/family assist you. Under different circumstances, you may require more or less assistance, but keeping track at least provides a starting point.]
- **How will you manage/schedule your assistants to ensure that you receive assistance as needed?** Will you have your personal assistants come at scheduled times throughout the day and the week? Will you have the personal assistants live with you or will they come in

on an as-needed basis? [Each option has advantages and drawbacks associated with it. To help determine the option that works best for you, talk to others who are currently employing personal assistants and consult the Additional Resources section of the *Making the Move to Managing Your Own Personal Assistance Services Toolkit* referenced below.]

- **How many assistants will you have?** Will you have one assistant or multiple assistants? Consider what happens when one person goes out of town or is sick. Make sure that you are honest with both yourself and with your personal assistant(s) about what's important to you. Because this can be a very personal relationship, it is critical to be upfront about your expectations. Don't consider anything too trivial or too embarrassing to mention.

Each of us has our own habits, likes, and dislikes. Sometimes we do things a certain way simply because we prefer to, and other times there may be a particular reason. For example, if you use a wheelchair you may prefer not to wear your seat belt. Or, when assisting you in dressing it may be easiest for the personal assistant to begin on one side versus another due to your limited range of motion. Many of us may not think too much about our daily routines, oftentimes because they are so familiar. But if you use PAS it's important to consider in detail both the type of help needed from others and the way you like things done. Making a potential personal assistant aware of these preferences and habits can make his/her job much easier and reduce your level of frustration.

For more information, download the *Making the Move to Managing Your Own Personal Assistance Services (PAS) Toolkit for Youth with Disabilities Transitioning to Adulthood* available at www.ncwd-youth.info.