

# Home Care Aide Training Guide



## *Basic Safety Precautions*



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## *Pre-Service Training #2*

*Home Care Aide Orientation*



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## A. Introduction

### A.1 Overview

This safety manual for Home Care Aides is designed to help **you** stay safe and avoid injury and illness related to in-home services. It is designed to give you ownership in your own health and safety. Take some time to go through this manual and use it as a reference. By following these suggestions, you can greatly reduce your risk of accidents and illnesses.

### A.2 Safety Guidelines

In Home Care, we focus on our Clients health and safety, but remember, **your** safety is also very important. If you get hurt on the job, it might be difficult for you to fulfill your duties as a Home Care Aide.

Below is a list of general guidelines to help keep you safe. More information about each of these topics is found throughout this manual.

- Practice safety at all times.
- Think safety for both you and your client.
- Take the time to do it right.
- Keep quick access to a phone to call 911.
- Use gloves and personal protective equipment when handling chemical, blood or body fluids/substances.
- Follow the Task List and any other instructions carefully.
- Lift safely.
- Use gloves and good ventilation when working with household chemicals.
- Make sure smoke detectors are in place and are working.
- Ensure proper lighting.

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- Keep firearms and ammunition safe.
  - Don't use broken equipment.
  - Know your emergency evacuation escape routes and back-up plans.
  - Ask for help if you have a hazard you can't resolve with your client.
  - Maintain a drug-free, alcohol and tobacco free workplace.

### **A.3 Communicating With Your Client about Safety Concerns**

Your safety in the workplace is important, but when your workplace is someone's private home, it may be difficult to make changes. Open communication between you and your client is important. Reducing risks and hazards to your safety will likely make the home safer for the client, so both can benefit.

However, people often don't welcome changes in their habits, routines, or living space. Always remember, it is your client's home, and you do not have the right to move or change anything without permission. You do have a right to ask for reasonable accommodations to keep yourself safe.

Examples of safety concerns include tripping hazards, being asked to perform a task that could cause injury or is not on the Task List, exposure to disease, actual or potential abuse or assault of the worker, smoking while using oxygen, illegal activities, or weapons in the home.

Listed below are some tips for talking with your client about safety concerns.

1. If you are comfortable talking with your client, do so. Use "I" messages about how his/her behavior or the hazard that affects you. Such as, *"I am worried about tripping over your oxygen tubing when I work. Can we work to find a solution?"* Or, *"I am concerned about hurting myself if I do the task that way. Are you willing to try doing it a different way so both of us stay safe?"*
2. Offer support and encouragement if the client seems reluctant to make changes or doesn't know how to make the changes.
3. Follow up your initial discussion. For example, you might bring it up again in a day or two and ask if he/she has considered making the changes to your work activities or the work environment. Again offer support and share your concerns.
4. If you are afraid of being harmed, leave the home and call the Supervisor or designated client representative from a safe place nearby. If you are in immediate danger, call 911.
5. If the client cannot be left alone due to his/her need for assistance, call 911 and ask for a welfare check on the person. Stay nearby until someone comes or you are instructed as to what to do.

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6. If you are uncomfortable discussing this with your client, or if your client won't or can't change a dangerous situation, call your supervisor. Ask for advice on what to do and follow his/her instructions. Always keep notes of dates, summaries of discussions, who you spoke to, and outcomes.



## B. Hazards In and Outside the Home

### B.1 Hazard Assessment

#### What is a hazard assessment?

A visual inspection done for the purpose of identifying hazards and potential hazards in the client's home so that they can be removed or reduced.

This will prevent or decrease the risk of and injury to yourself or your client!

**Hazard assessments should be done every time you enter the client's home, especially if you haven't been there in a while.**

#### How do you control hazards?

- **Eliminate or remove the hazard;** for example, for example, you might pick up things from the floor to prevent tripping on them. Wiping water from the floor or repositioning an electrical cord also eliminates a hazard.
- **Reduce the hazard.** Maybe you cannot get rid of the hazard, but you could look for ways to make it less dangerous. For instance, if you cannot reposition a sharp-edged table in a home to prevent a bumping hazard, you could cover or pad the sharp edges if your client allows it. Manual lifting is a hazard. Using a mechanical aid such as a lift device can reduce the hazard.
- **Use "Personal Protective Equipment" (PPE)** which is equipment or clothing worn by a person that is designed to prevent injury or illness from a specific hazard. Examples of PPE include safety glasses, gloves, kneepads, waterproof aprons, and protective footwear. This equipment can sometimes be provided through the local office and/or your client's insurance. The agency supervisor has more information.
- When you start a new job, review the workplace for hazards and talk about a plan for controlling these hazards by eliminating, reducing, and using PPE. Seek additional help from your supervisor if needed.

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**Examples of common household hazards you might encounter:**

- **Electrical** — missing outlet covers, extension cords that are worn, broke appliances.
- **Sharp objects** — syringes, knives, sharp edges on furniture.
- **Tripping** — oxygen hoses, telephone cords, wires, pets.
- **Slipping** — water inside or outside the home. (*bathroom & kitchen!*)
- **Lifting** — objects around the house and people.
- **Layout of home** — high traffic areas, stairs, location of furniture.
- **Chemicals** — cleaning products, medications.
- **Fire** — smoking, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, clutter.

## B.2 Housekeeping

Good housekeeping is one of the most important factors in maintaining a safe work area. Many Home Care Aides are injured each year because they trip, stumble, or step on objects that are in their way. These accidents are often blamed on the worker's carelessness when actually these accidents are the direct result of poor housekeeping. When you see something lying around that may be a potential risk for a slip, trip, fall, or injury, ask your client if you can put it away or move it to a safer location. Some ideas for reducing the risk include:

- Floors and stairs should be kept free of household clutter.
- Keep drawers of dressers, desks, and filing cabinets closed when not in use.
- Do not use boxes, chairs, etc., in place of step stools/utility ladders.
- Store material on shelves in a manner to prevent falling; heavy objects should be placed on lower shelves.

## B.3 Walking Surfaces

- **Be observant.** Look for sidewalk and entryway defects as you enter your client's residence. Cracks, holes, slippery, uneven surfaces, and other surprises such as toys in the walkway may cause you to trip.
- **Remove hazards, if appropriate.** If it's a hazard going in, it will be a hazard coming out. If you clear a path into the residence, you will be helping to prevent an injury to yourself and others.
- **Wear proper footwear.** Leather soled shoes on wet or slick surfaces are an accident waiting to happen. In snow, ice, and/or rain, wear rubber-soled or other traction shoes to keep yourself upright and improve your balance. Open-toed sandals are not appropriate footwear for Home Care Workers.

As you get familiar with your work area, be sure to look for slip, trip, and fall hazards as you did outside. Look for:

- Walkway obstructions.
- Torn and wrinkled carpets, door mats.
- Rugs with curled-up edges and those without non-skid backs.



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With your client's permission, remove or fix the hazard, recommend it for repair, or if you can't do anything right away, at least make a mental note to watch out for it until it can be removed.

## B.5 Proper Lighting

Sufficient lighting must be available in order to do your work safely. It is also important so you and your client can safely move about the home.

- Make sure flashlights are available in case of a power outage.
- Place night lights in hallways, bathrooms and the kitchen, especially if your client gets up at night.
- Please report any lighting concerns to your supervisor.

## B.6 Oxygen Safety

If your client uses oxygen, there are several things to be aware of for everyone's safety.

- Oxygen is not flammable, but it can cause other materials that burn to ignite more easily and to burn far more rapidly. The result is that a fire involving oxygen can appear explosive-like.
- Oxygen should always be handled with caution and HCA's should be aware of its potential hazards.
- There are three common ways of providing oxygen therapy. Oxygen can be delivered to the home in the form of a gas in various-sized cylinders or as a liquid in a vessel. The third way to provide oxygen is by using an oxygen concentrator.

### Oxygen Safety 101!

- **Never smoke while using oxygen.**
- Warn visitors not to smoke near anyone if using oxygen.
- Post at least one NO SMOKING sign in a prominent place at the entry to the home where the oxygen is being used.
- Keep oxygen at least five feet from gas stoves, candles, lighted fireplaces, and other heat sources.
- Oxygen cylinders and vessels must be kept in a well-ventilated area (not in closets, behind curtains, or other confined spaces). The small amount of oxygen gas that is continually vented from these units can accumulate in a confined space and become a fire hazard.
- Secure oxygen cylinders and vessels to a fixed object or place in a stand.
- Oxygen cylinders and vessels must remain upright at all times. Never tip an oxygen cylinder or vessel on its side or try to roll it to a new location.
- Always operate oxygen cylinder or container valves slowly. Abrupt starting and stopping of oxygen flow may ignite any contaminant that might be in the system.
- Turn the cylinder valve off when not using oxygen.
- Do not use extension cords for the oxygen concentrator.
- Do not place the electrical cord of oxygen tubing under rugs or furniture.

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- Do not use any flammable products like cleaning fluids, paint thinner, or aerosol sprays while using oxygen equipment. Some organic materials can react violently with oxygen if ignited by a hot spark.
  - Use water-based lubricants on your client's lips and hands. Don't use oil-based products like petroleum jelly, petroleum based creams or lotions.
  - Do not use bedding or cloths made of wool, nylon, or synthetic fabrics as these materials have the tendency to produce static electricity.
  - An all-purpose fire extinguisher should be close by when using oxygen equipment.

## **B.7 Fire Safety**

Careless smoking is the most frequent cause of fire deaths. Some in-home smoking fires are caused by unattended burning cigarettes, smoking in bed, smoking around flammable materials (gas, paints, aerosol cans, newspapers, and other flammable items), and improper disposal of cigarettes and matches. Please be aware of these issues if your client smokes.

### **Smoke alarms/detectors**

Places of residency may or may not have smoke alarms/detectors depending upon building code requirements at the time of construction. If there are none in your place of employment, ask the client to check with the local building department and/or housing agency for compliance. In addition, some fire departments will give out free smoke alarms.

Smoke alarms/detectors should be tested a couple of times a year. A good time to check them is when daylight savings time begins and ends.

### **Emergency exit options**

Are there steps or stairs? Are there objects in the way? What is the fastest way to evacuate your client? Check on evacuation routes.

### **Fire extinguishers**

Read the instructions and get training on how to use it. Ask your client to have it serviced annually. The fire extinguisher should be easily located and identified in the Emergency Action Plan.

To use a fire extinguisher, follow the acronym **P.A.S.S.**

**P** – Pull the pin

**A** – Aim the nozzle

**S** – Squeeze the handle

**S** – Sweep left to right at the base of the fire

### **Kitchen stove**

Make sure the kitchen stove is off when not in use.

### **Fireplace or wood stove**

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Make sure the damper is open before fires are lit. Fireplace screens are essential and need to be kept in place.

## B.8 Poison Safety

A poison is anything someone eats, breaths, gets in their eyes or on their skin that can cause a rash, sickness, or potential death. Poisons can be solids, liquids, sprays, and gases.

### Common poisonings include:

- Cleaning products
- Medicines
- Cigarettes and cigarette butts
- Beauty products, perfumes, and nail polish removers
- Carbon monoxide gas (CO) (usually from cars and heating devices)
- Insect sprays, weed killers, and plant food
- Liquids used in cars (such as antifreeze, wiper fluid, and motor oil)
- Paint and paint-removal products
- Plants in the house and yard
- Animal bites and stings
- Spoiled food

**If you think that someone has been poisoned**, call the **Poison Center Help Line (1-800-222-1222)**. Medical experts are available at this center 24/7 to provide help with any possible poisoning. Don't wait for signs of poisoning.

If you call the poison center, calmly tell the specialist:

- Your name and phone number.
- The name, age, and weight of the poisoned victim.
- Any problems or symptoms the person is having.
- The name of the poison.
- The amount of the drug or poison missing.



## B.9 Electrical Safety

To reduce the possibility of electrocution:

- Allow only qualified individuals to repair, maintain or operate electrical equipment.
- Stay away from water when using electrical equipment.
- Do not touch electric appliances with wet hands or a metal object.

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- Keep electrical cords away from heat sources, pedestrian traffic, and do not place them under rugs or mats where damage can go unnoticed.
  - Unplug appliances before washing, making repairs, or when not in use.
  - If an appliance emits smoke or sparks, or if you feel a tingle or light shock when it's on, stop using it. Discuss repair or replacing the device with your client/supervisor.
  - Grasp the plug to disconnect an appliance from the socket. Do not pull the cord.
  - Do not overload outlets with too many appliances or lamps.
  - Keep electric heaters a safe distance from furniture, blankets, draperies and other objects that could catch fire. Never hang clothes to dry on or near your heater.
  - Stay away from overhead electricity lines.

## B.10 Firearms Safety

Your client may have firearms in the home. If you are working with someone who carries a gun or keeps one too close for your comfort, discuss this with your client. Voice your concerns and try to negotiate something that will make you feel safe. Ask them to put the gun away in a secure location while you are present. Refer to "*Communicating with your Client about Safety Concerns*" on page 5 of this manual.

## B.11 Earthquake Safety

### **Secure your space by identifying hazards and securing moveable items.**

Earthquake shaking can move almost anything, even large or heavy items. Imagine your home or workplace being picked up and shaken sideways – what would be thrown around? How can you prevent it?



### **Plan to be safe by having or knowing your disaster plan and deciding how you will communicate in an emergency.**

Planning for an earthquake, terrorist attack, or other emergency is not much different from planning for a party or vacation. Make sure that your emergency plan includes evacuation and reunion plans; your emergency contact person's name and number; the location of your emergency supplies and other pertinent information. By planning now, you will be ready for the next emergency.



### **Drop, Cover, and Hold On when the earth shakes.**

In MOST situations, you will reduce your chance of injury if you:

- **DROP down onto your hands and knees** (before the earthquake knocks you down). This position protects you from falling but allows you to still move if necessary.
- **COVER your head and neck** (and your entire body if possible) under a sturdy table or desk. If there is no shelter nearby, *only then* should you get down near an interior wall (or next to low-lying furniture that won't fall on you), and cover your head and neck with your arms and hands.
- **HOLD ON to your shelter** (or to your head and neck) until the shaking stops. Be prepared to move with your shelter if the shaking shifts it around.



**Improve safety after earthquakes by evacuating if necessary, helping the injured, and preventing further injuries or damage.**

The moment the ground stops shaking it is important take action quickly and safely. Evacuate to higher ground if a tsunami is possible. If not, check for injuries and damages that need immediate attention. Use your training in first aid to assist those in need. Look around your environment to identify any new hazards such as leaking gas lines, damage to the building, water or electric lines, or other things that may be dangerous, especially if there are aftershocks.



## B.12 Animal Safety

As part of your assessment for hazards inside and outside the home, consider household pets and other animals. Sources of injury from animals, especially pets, may include bites, tripping, and allergic reactions.

### Bites

Unless it is absolutely necessary or you know the animal well, avoid contact with pets. An animal bite is painful and can cause an infection.

Cats often let you know when they have had enough attention by biting or scratching. Dogs may appear friendly but can also be very protective of their territory and owners. If aggressive action occurs, request that the animal be secured in a safe place prior to your visits.

### How to avoid a dog bite:

- Never approach an unfamiliar dog.
- Never run from a dog and scream.
- Stay still when an unfamiliar dog comes up to you.

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- If knocked over by a dog, lie still.
  - Do not look a dog in the eye.
  - Do not disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies.
  - Do not pet a dog without letting it see and sniff you first.

### **Tripping hazard**

Pets can present a tripping hazard so be aware of the location of animals and their toys at all times. Placing a bell on an animal's collar can help alert you to their location.

### **Other animals**

You may encounter other animals outside of the client's home. Remember, any animal can become aggressive if it feels its territory is being infringed upon.

## **B.13 Driver Safety**

- **Wear your seat belt.** It's the law in California for a very good reason. Drivers thrown from vehicles are 25 times more likely to die in an accident.
- **Check your tires for wear and tear.** Faulty, under-inflated, or over-inflated tires cause many preventable accidents. Proper selection of tires is important. Be prepared for snow and ice with good traction tires or chains.
- **Check to make sure that your** engine, brakes, steering, shocks, lights, horn, and windshield wipers are working properly.
- **Slow down.** Thirty percent of all fatal accidents involve excessive speed.
- **Reduce distractions.** Pull over to text, make calls, or answer cell phones. Concentrate on driving. Phone conversations, radios, and snacking are distracting and can cause accidents.
- **Use extreme caution at intersections.** Other drivers may not stop at red lights or stop signs.
- **Don't drive while drowsy.** Get plenty of sleep. Pull over and take a short nap if necessary. Remember, caffeine is only a temporary solution, and eventually your body needs sleep.
- **Make sure your registration and insurance are current.** If you provide transportation as part of your assigned task, make sure that your insurance is adequate.
- **Don't drive while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.** Over half of all fatal car crashes are alcohol-related.
- **Take a refresher driver's education class.** Many insurance companies offer discounts to older (50+) adults who have completed a class.

## **B.14 Violence in the Workplace**

Be sensitive to the potential for violent behavior and how to handle such an event.

### **Examples of violent behavior:**

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- Verbal attacks
  - Threats of physical attack
  - Actual physical attacks
  - Sexual advances or comments

**Warning signs of impending violence could include:**

- Invading one's personal space
- Hands in pockets
- Clenching fists
- Pacing
- Yelling
- Profanity
- Confrontations

Be aware of other people in the home and those that come and go. Trust your intuition.

**If violent behavior occurs or you see indicators, do the following:**

- Remain calm.
- Talk calmly, listen to the person, and keep a safe distance.
- Remind the person you are there to help.
- Know your escape route.
- If you feel afraid of being harmed, leave the home and call the Supervisor or designated family member from a safe place nearby. If you are in immediate danger, call 911. If the client cannot be left alone due to his/her need for assistance, call 911 and ask for a welfare check on the person. Stay nearby until someone comes or you are instructed as to what to do.

**Personal safety outside the client's home:**

- Plan ahead — if your client's home is in a location not familiar to you, ask for precise driving directions or look it up on a map.
- Carry a noise-making device such as a whistle.
- Carry a cell phone.
- Keep your car in good repair; know whom to call if your car breaks down.
- Always lock your car.
- Don't leave personal items visible in the car.
- Always carry your keys in your hand when you are leaving your client's home to go to your car.
- Carry an extra set of keys.
- Choose a parking spot that is in the open and near a light if you are there when it is dark.

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- Check the outside, the front, and back seat of your car before getting in.



## C. Protecting Your Body at Work

### C.1 Preventing Strains and Sprains

Identify job tasks that could cause an injury that affects muscles, tendons, ligaments — strains and sprains. Work-related strains and sprains occur in all kinds of work-related activities, such as:

- Client transfers
- Housekeeping
- Personal care tasks that involve:
  - Pushing, reaching, pulling
  - Lifting
  - Bending

These activities may not present problems in all circumstances, but consider the **duration** (how long) and **frequency** (how often) of your tasks. The more you are exposed to the risk factors (repetitiveness, awkward postures, force, and heavy lifting), the more likely you are to be injured.

**Remember:** Report the first signs of pain and symptoms of a work-related injury. If ignored and left untreated, mild symptoms can turn into more serious, disabling injuries.



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## C.2 Body Mechanics for Home Care Workers

Using the proper body mechanics can help protect your body in every household task from cooking to cleaning to laundry.

### Tips for good body mechanics

**Wide base of support.** Stand with your feet shoulder width apart with one foot a half step ahead of the other. You will then be able to move your client or object by using a weight shift rather than a dead lift.

**Bend knees.** Bending your knees rather than your back makes your legs do the work instead of your back. Bend at the hips, not at the waist.

**Keep your back straight.** Keeping your back straight while maintaining its natural curve minimizes the risk of injury. Muscles that support your back work optimally in this position. Tighten your stomach muscles before lifting an item or moving a person.

**Bring weight close to your body.** A heavy object that is held close to your body is easier to carry. There is less load on your back and less stress on your back muscles.

**Lift with your legs.** The muscles of your legs are stronger than your back and should be used for lifting.

**Adjust the height of the bed when possible.** If your client is in a hospital bed, raise the bed to the best height so that stress on your back is minimized when assisting with transfers, dressing, toileting, positioning, or range of motion exercises.

**To turn, move your feet.** If you turn without moving your feet, you are twisting your back. This causes wear and tear on your discs, which can raise the risk of injury. Face your work; don't twist, move your feet instead.

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# SAMPLE SAFETY CHECKLIST

*(Conduct this safety assessment with your client.)*

- Emergency Action Plan in place.
- Adequate disposal gloves, first aid kit, masks, and bleach.
- Outside walkways are well lit, cleared of debris/material.
- Inside floors are cleared of furniture, clutter, cords, hoses, etc.
- Stairs have handrails and are well lit.
- Rug edges are not frayed and tacked down.
- Throw rugs are removed or non-skid mat in place.
- No exposed or frayed electrical wires or extension cords.
- Used needles are placed in sharps container.
- Sharp objects are padded (bed frames, etc.).
- Bathrooms have non-slip surfaces and sturdy grab bars.
- Medical equipment properly stored.
- No smoking or open flames near oxygen bottles, especially when in use.
- Liquids such as water, ice, snow, and grease are cleaned up immediately.
- Materials are stored at proper height and safely.
- Proper lighting.
- Home is free of bugs, mice, etc., and animal waste.
- Animals are controlled.
- Medications and chemicals are labeled and stored correctly.
- Fire extinguishers are readily available and serviced.
- Smoke alarms are in working condition.
- Lifting and moving objects are kept to a minimum.
- Well-fitting shoes with good tread are worn at all times.
- Flammable materials are stored properly or thrown out.