



HAND IN HAND
The Domestic Employers Network



Tips for Managing Attendants/Caregivers During the Coronavirus Crisis

The coronavirus crisis has changed what it means to hire and manage attendants or caregivers. The new guidelines for social distancing and sheltering in place challenge us to think about how to get the care and support we need, and keep ourselves and workers we employ in our homes safe and healthy, while also recognizing everyone's needs. This guide, created by Hand in Hand and Senior and Disability Action, offers ideas, recommendations and thoughts for getting through this crisis safely.

Our Workers Depend On Us

We encourage you, to the degree possible, to continue to pay your attendants -- whether or not they are working, since their livelihoods depend on it. (And then tell others to do the same by signing [Hand in Hand's Coronavirus Fair Care Pledge](#) of consistent pay throughout this crisis.) If you cannot afford it, think about saving for a small paid sick leave fund and asking friends and family to help. This fund can be used if a worker is sick with coronavirus symptoms, if you are sick and the worker does not come, or if you and the worker decide it is best to not be in direct contact. Also, they may be eligible for other income supports; see list of worker resources on page four.

Key recommendation: Communication!

There is no easy or standard way to manage attendants during a pandemic. We urge you to have honest and difficult conversations with the people who work for you, listening to their concerns and needs, sharing your own, and coming up with creative solutions to make sure everyone gets what they need. Discuss whether people prefer to self-isolate and not work for you. Talk about financial and community resources available for people who cannot work or who lose work because of the coronavirus.

Basic precautions to keep from transmitting the coronavirus:¹

For attendant employers:

- Wash your hands regularly, with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds
- Try not to put your hands or face on your attendant's body, clothes, face, or belongings.
- Do not be in contact with other people besides housemates and attendants. Stay home if at all possible. If you go outside or go buy food, stay at least 6 feet away from others and wash your hands as soon as you return home. Postpone non-essential appointments. Get groceries/supplies delivered.
- Do not touch your face! Keep a tissue with you if needed.
- Think about *critical* services you need, to limit the time a worker spends in your home. Skip other things that can wait. If there are other people in your household, talk to them about helping with some basic tasks.

For attendants/caregivers:

- Wash your hands as soon as you come in and before you leave. Use soap and water, for at least 20 seconds.
- At the beginning and end of a shift, wipe down door handles, countertops, other surfaces that get touched, with cleaner.
- Minimize the number of people you're around.
- Do not touch your face.
- When doing laundry: don't shake clothes, which can send droplets into the air. Put dirty laundry in a garbage bag and straight from the bag into the washing machine. Wear gloves. Wash your hands after putting in the washing machine.
- After providing care or support, go home and wash your clothes.

How you can protect your workers' health and your household's health if you need an attendant/caregiver to come to work²:

- Provide gloves, soap and hand sanitizer and offer to provide a mask if your employee would like one. Sanitize your home, or ask your family to do it, or ask the worker to do it upon entering. (See basic precautions above.)
- If possible, pay for a taxi or rideshare to transport the workers home who may normally rely on public transit.

¹ Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, March 2019:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>

² Note that most shelter-in-place requirements allow attendants and family members to travel to provide personal assistance.

How to self-isolate if you have attendants coming in and out of your house:

- Ask a family member or housemate to fill in as much as possible. Plan to pay your attendants who do not come, so they do not lose needed wages. If you are hiring them through an agency or they are an IHSS worker, support them to apply for unemployment insurance.
- Think about how to minimize contact for everyone. If an attendant lives with or works for other people over 70 or with compromised immune systems, try to arrange for them to stay home or not work for you. If another attendant lives alone and agrees to not see anyone besides you, ask them to fill more shifts.
- Consider whether someone, who can provide you with attendant support, can stay at your home and self-isolate with you.
- If an attendant is not working for you currently, to minimize the number of people you're around, check with people you know about whether that person could work for someone else in need, and refer them to financial resources we list on the top of page four.

What if either you or an attendant feels sick?

- If this happens in the middle of a shift, both of you should wear masks if possible and be extra careful to wash hands and limit contact.
- Call your doctor or a local hospital about what you should do. Do not go to the hospital until you get phone instructions.
- If you or a member of your household is sick, get tested for COVID-19 if possible. Tell your worker and protect their health by not asking them to work (if possible), or honor their request not to work. If they do come to work, practice social distancing in the home (details [here](#)), minimizing contact between the person who is sick and your employee.
- If you are found to have coronavirus, you may need to go to the hospital. If you have a ventilator, take it with you. If the hospital cannot take you, try to find a family member or worker who is young and does not have any health problems. Ask them to stay with you for a couple weeks to avoid exposing other people.
- If you go to the hospital, you may not be allowed to have anyone visit you, including family and attendants. Think in advance about what you may need to communicate with hospital staff. Get it in writing if possible.
- If your attendant is found to have coronavirus, you may have been exposed. Do whatever you can to self-isolate and limit the number of people you come into contact with and the number of people they come in contact with.
- If your employee or someone from their household is sick, give them paid time off and assist in covering health care costs if you can.

Income support for domestic workers who don't work during this crisis:

If your employee is...

- laid off, they may be eligible for unemployment insurance.
- is sick, they may be eligible for paid sick time.
- is undocumented, they may be eligible for an emergency fund (see a [CA list](#)).
- is privately hired, they may be eligible for domestic worker funds such as the [NDWA Coronavirus Care Fund](#).

For more information on these resources, contact these worker organizations:

Private-pay workers: National Domestic Workers Alliance www.domesticworkers.org

State-funded home care workers: United Domestic Workers <http://www.udwa.org>

SEIU 2015 / other locals <https://www.seiu2015.org> / www.seiu.org

Actions To Take:

Included above are individual actions you can take. But we can't do this alone. We need to reach out to each other to offer support. Talk to people in your community to see if a mutual aid network exists, or consider starting one. Take a look at the Disability Justice Culture Club's network as a model. And please contact Hand in Hand and Senior & Disability Action to join local, state, and national policy efforts, such as:

- Establishing back-up registries -- can be developed by relaxing requirements, doing online background checks, allowing family members to serve as paid caregivers, reaching out to therapist/nursing/medical schools, etc.
- Providing extended paid sick leave for home care providers.
- Providing Protective equipment for workers.

Other actions to take:

- Donate to the [national Coronavirus Care Fund](#) for domestic workers set up by the National Domestic Workers Alliance.
- Fight back against policies that ration care and deprioritize seniors and people with disabilities.
- Join efforts to win universal Long-term Services and Supports (LTSS).

This guide is intended as a start to helping each other navigate the crisis we are in. If you have other ideas to add, please contact us.

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