



BECOMING A PAID CAREGIVER

A Kapok Guide

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What to Expect from this Guide

Across the country, many people already actively care for older or disabled family members.

However, this role can often be challenging and stressful, especially for those caring for children and meeting work demands as well.

Because of this, many people are turning to outside caregivers for help in the home.



You may be wondering about the best way to break into this growing profession of direct caregivers.

In this guide, we attempt to broach and steer a clear path through the complex subject of becoming a paid caregiver. This includes the chance to do so while caring for your own family members or as a profession.

For some people, getting paid to work in this field can be a way to reduce the financial strain of caregiving. For others, it may be the entry point to a rewarding career or simply a way to earn some money.

There are many different options for becoming a paid caregiver, especially as funding sources, requirements, training, and certification all vary across the United States. Furthermore, there are many different formal roles within the direct care field.

These include the following:

- Home Health Aide
- Personal Care Attendant
- Certified Nursing Assistant
- Direct Care Worker

There are also many more roles beyond these and each formal role has its own set of responsibilities and required qualifications, not to mention differences in pay and opportunities. At the same time, there remain considerable differences from one location to another.

But, despite all this variation, there is an urgent need for direct care workers throughout the United States. That demand is only going to increase as the population of seniors grows.

Through this guide, we aim to provide insight and information about how to become a professional paid caregiver in these various areas. This includes reviewing the requirements and responsibilities for each type of position, while also discussing tips for finding work.

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Workforce Growth and Demand

The demand for caregivers has become critical in the U.S., primarily driven by the growth of the older adult population.

- The 2010 Census estimates that the group aged 65 and above is the largest portion of the population and is the fastest growing¹
- In 2010, the group represented 13% of the population, roughly **40 million individuals**
- Projections suggest this group will continue to grow, reaching **close to 84 million** by 2050²
- This level of growth will quickly outpace current support systems



Many families do care for their family members in unpaid and informal roles.

Yet, doing so can place great strain on the individuals

- Most seniors want to age in place but the burden of care is too great for many families, as they have children and work demands
- Instead, there is an increased demand for direct care workers to fill the gap and provide meaningful support

The Direct Care Workforce

To consider the idea of being a paid caregiver, it's important to take a look at the range of direct care worker categories.

The term *direct care worker* is a general one and is used as an umbrella phrase to refer to a number of different job categories, each of which has similar roles and functions.

These include the following.

- Home Health Aides
- Personal Care Aide
- Personal Care Attendant
- Nursing Aide/Certified Nursing Assistant
- Formal Caregiver
- Direct Caregiver

There are many individual direct care roles but they are all important in their own right

There is considerable overlap between these various categories and collectively, direct care workers are estimated to contribute between **70% and 80% of the long-term paid care** within the United States.³

In 2011, this workforce contained approximately **4 million individuals**, 80% of whom were either nursing assistants, personal care aides or home health aides.⁴

Direct care workers play key roles in helping to support day-to-day living. This includes providing support and assistance in the areas of dressing, meal preparation, transportation and other tasks of living. These roles are critical, as they allow millions of seniors to **age in place**, rather than being forced into facilities such as nursing homes.

Estimates suggest that around 39% of these direct care workers provide support in institutional environments, while the remainder work in home-based and community-based situations⁵.

Demand for direct care workers is rapidly growing – but supply isn't keeping up.

Overall, the direct care workforce is critical for supporting older Americans, especially as the population ages.

Yet, the healthcare industry is **already facing staff shortages** and these are likely to get worse in the future.

This is made worse by high considerable rates and the fact that healthcare positions are often high stress and come with considerable challenges. This is particularly true for low-skilled roles, which may often also have relatively low pay rates.

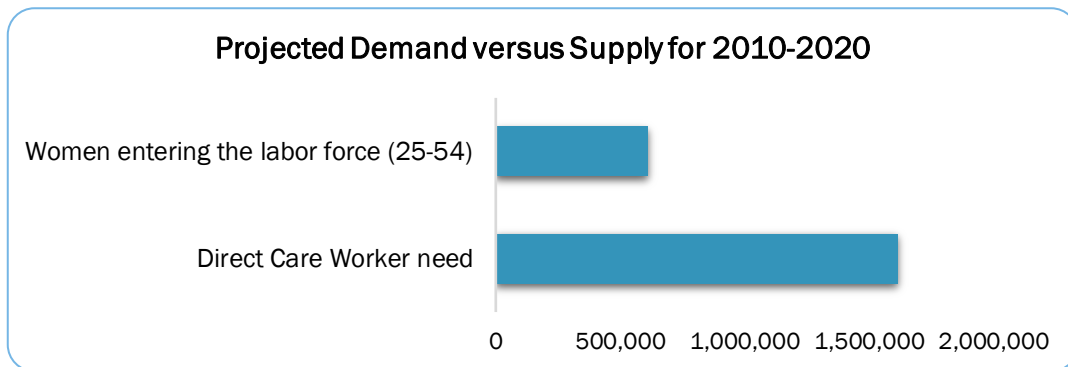
Projections indicate the following:

- Approximately 1.6 million additional direct care workers will be needed by 2020⁶
- Demand for Certified Nursing Assistants will increase by 19% by 2018⁷
- Demand for Home Health Aides will increase by 50% by 2018⁸
- Personal Care Aides and Home Health Aides will be the fastest-growing occupations from 2010 to 2020⁹
- Employment growth will be especially high for home- and community-based care¹⁰
- Likewise, home and community settings will become increasingly important and more direct care workers will be in these environments¹¹



Additionally, these projections may underestimate growth, as independent providers are also developing their own programs that provide similar services. Such programs are often not captured in statistics or projections of direct care workers.¹²

In fact, the demand for new direct care workers is particularly concerning as it vastly outpaces the number of women entering the workforce.¹³



Collectively, these patterns show that demand for paid caregivers is significant and is likely to continue to increase. Furthermore, the United States simply does not have the resources to meet this demand. As a result, this opens the door for anyone looking to enter the workforce of direct caregivers.

Demographics of Direct Care Workers

Direct care workers come from all walks of life and from many different backgrounds. But, despite this, there are some clear patterns among direct care workers.

More often than not, direct care workers are women. Many of them are immigrants.

In particular, women are extremely overrepresented in this field - more than 90% of direct care workers are women.¹⁴

Additionally, immigrants play a key role in the direct care workforce, with most of these workers being immigrant women.

These women are estimated to make up around one-quarter of the current direct care workforce.¹⁵

Representation varies across direct care worker roles, but a little over 50% of Certified Nursing Assistants and Home Health Aides workers are white, 35% are African American, with the remainder identifying as Hispanic or with a different group¹⁶

Immigrant workers can help to fill the gap between supply and demand. In fact, the current level of demand is not being met by the native-born population, and this is likely to continue to be true as demand grows.¹⁷

Immigration and Direct Care Roles

Not only are immigrants critical in the current direct care workforce, they are also extremely relevant in meeting the growing level of demand. Indeed, current trends suggest that it would be almost impossible for native-born workers to meet the demand, particularly as many avoid the field of direct care entirely.

Yet, despite this, immigration in the United States makes it very difficult for people to become involved in direct care.

This is partly because most employment visas do not suit direct care work. As a result, most potential workers will not qualify for those visas.¹⁸

Despite the demand, immigrating to become a direct care worker is hard and there are few options available

At the same time, undocumented immigrants have few options for obtaining legal status.¹⁹ In particular, there are three key that immigrants follow to become involved in the direct care industry. These are as follows:

1. Permanent legal admission via a work visa
2. Temporary legal admission via a work visa
3. Unauthorized work, via authorized or unauthorized entry into the United States

The key work visas involved in this process are the EB-1, EB-2, and EB-3 workers.

In each case, the visas tend to have relatively strict requirements and many people interested in this field simply will not qualify.

Of the three, the most relevant option for most people is the EB-3 visa. This visa specifically focuses on:

- Skilled workers
- Professionals
- Other workers

Because this visa applies to many different types of work, it is often a much better option than the EB-1 and EB-2 visas.



However, the EB-3 visa still has a **large backlog**, and the number of people who can use it each year is limited. At the same time, individuals using the visa do still need a supporting employer.

Many people struggle to meet the requirements of the visa, especially as obtaining an employer before entering the United States is no easy task. Furthermore, the backlog means that even if individuals do meet the criteria, it could be some time before they are actually accepted for the visa.

Realistically, meeting the growing demand for direct care is likely to be unachievable under the current system. Instead, changes need to be made to increase the ease of getting into the direct care field, particularly for immigrants.²⁰

As we get a better understanding of how the Trump administration will handle these visas, we will update this Guide.

Projections and Implications

There are a few clear patterns to draw from the demographics of direct care workers and the current levels of demand.

The patterns of demand and supply show that we are facing a serious problem – one with no simple solution

First, we have an urgent demand for more direct care workers and that demand is going to increase as time goes on.

At present, the demand for direct care workers already exceeds supply and this issue is likely to be more significant as time goes on.

Second, the direct care workforce **heavily relies on immigrant workers**, especially female workers. Yet, there are many barriers that make it harder for immigrants to enter the United States if this is the field they want to work in.

Indeed, significant changes to policy may be needed to ensure that direct care supply can meet the demand. There are ample opportunities for men and women to enter the field of caregiving and launch a new rewarding career.



Payment Options when Working for Family

There are considerable differences in the way that direct care workers are hired and in how they are paid. For example, some people work for organizations, where they may care for clients in a facility or in the home environment.

In other cases, a direct care worker may be hired by the family and paid by them as well.

Now, if you're hired by an organization, then the pay and processes are going to be relatively conventional. Typically, you will also be protected by employment law, which means that you would be earning at least the minimum wage.

However, if you are hired by a family, the situation may be different.

Because of this, it's critical to learn how the family plans to pay you before you get involved. In particular, where they get the money from may influence how you keep track of your time and who specifically pays them.

Payment mechanisms and requirements will vary depending on who hires you and under what program

For example, if you are being paid from a county program, then your income comes directly from them, not from the family. Likewise, you may have to provide a timesheet signed by the person that you are caring for.

In contrast, if the payment comes from a client's insurance company, then your check comes from them. So, not only does the source of payment influence who specifically pays you but it also affects what you have to do.

In particular, there are a number of different ways that families pay for in-home care. These include:

- Medicare
- Medicaid/Medicaid waiver (via a County program)
- Long-term care insurance
- Programs from the County's Department of Health or Area Agency on Aging (e.g. Money Follows the Person or Cash and Counseling)
- Out-of-Pocket or private payment
- Companion Program (City of Alexandria)
- Veteran-Directed Home and Community-Based Services



Some specific examples of these and their implications are included in the following sections.

Cash & Counseling Programs

Many family members are already willing to provide support to seniors and may be doing so. However, the role can be highly stressful and often represents a major financial drain.

Cash & Counseling programs aim to help in this area by providing some financial support to family caregivers.

Some programs provide seniors with money to pay for caregiving. This can include care from their own family members.

This includes people who are caring for elderly relatives or people with disabilities.

While this type of program won't typically remove the stress or challenges of caregiving, it can make the situation easier to manage and more bearable.

If nothing else, the program can reduce the financial strain involved in caregiving.

Specifically, the programs pay seniors directly and they then use this money to pay for care. Under this system, they have the ability to pay anybody they would like to, rather than having to rely on a formal caregiver.²¹ Some seniors choose to pay a family member or neighbor, while others opt to pay an outside person.

Additionally, some of the money may be used for other things that can improve safety or quality of life. Some examples of this include buying safety equipment, a new vacuum cleaner or kitchen tools. Likewise, the money may be partly used to pay for services, such as meal delivery or transportation.²²

The amount of money that seniors get is based on a Medicaid assessment of need, along with the current rate of pay for direct care workers in the state.

Currently, Cash & Counseling programs are available in the following 15 states:²³

- Alabama
- Arkansas
- Florida
- Illinois
- Iowa
- Kentucky
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- New Jersey
- New Mexico
- Pennsylvania
- Rhode Island
- Vermont
- Washington
- West Virginia

Additionally, some states offer similar programs that may have different criteria or work in slightly different ways. In particular, some of these programs may be suitable for seniors who have relatively little money but do not qualify for Medicaid in their state because of their income or their assets.

Getting Involved in Cash & Counseling Programs

Because this type of program is Medicaid-based, the specific eligibility requirements do vary from one state to another.

As a result, the first step to getting involved is to apply for Medicaid or a different cash assistance program.

To do so, seniors typically need to gather a range of records, including tax, bank and income information. More information about applying for Medicaid can be found [here](#).

Eligibility requirements for these programs can be strict and the first step is often for the senior to apply for Medicaid.

There are four key components to getting involved in this type of program.

- **Eligibility.** Typically, the senior needs to be eligible for Medicaid. Regardless, you have to be able to prove that the service is needed and this is primarily done through financial proof.
- **Assessment.** If the senior is eligible, then the next step is an assessment of current in-home needs. Doing so may involve speaking to caregivers and to doctors. The assessment process aims to determine what tasks a senior can do themselves and which ones they cannot.
- **Determination.** The program then uses the assessment information to decide whether the senior is able to be in the program. If they are, then the program determines how many hours of in-home assistance would be approved if the care were coming from an agency. Based on this information and the rate for care workers in the state, a total is determined, which will be how much the senior is paid each month.
- **Plan.** The senior is then responsible for planning who provides the care and how much they are paid to do so. The rate of pay needs to be at least the minimum wage. The senior can also decide how else the money should be spent, such as on household items and other services. Various aspects of the program help seniors to achieve this goal and fill out any required paperwork and tax forms.

To find out what options exist for your location, you can talk to your local social services, human services or Medicaid office. Each of these locations should be able to offer you important information and direction about your options and what directions you can take.

Your [local Area Agency on Aging](#) can also direct you to the relevant offices. For that matter, Area Agencies on Aging provide key information about the various programs and options that are available, along with other services and types of support.

Now, helping a senior apply for Medicaid would be most relevant for people looking to hire a caregiver. However, this may also be relevant if the person in question is a family member and you are aiming to become a paid caregiver for them.

Long-Term Insurance

Insurance acts as another key source of funding for caregiving.

There are many differences between insurance policies, which means that their requirements and expectations of caregivers may vary as well.

Some insurance policies do allow family caregivers to provide care.



However, in some cases, the policy may only provide payment to an in-home care aide who is state certified.

You may be able to obtain this qualification yourself, and the [National Family Caregiver Action Network](#) and [Family Caregiver Alliance](#) both provide valuable information about how to do so. Likewise, there are often low-cost certification courses offered at local community colleges or similar locations.

This type of qualification is not just relevant to long-term insurance. As a result, the qualification may be appealing if you hope to be a professional paid caregiver.

Veteran's Benefits Program

For veterans, the Veteran-Directed Home and Community Based Services (VD-HCBS) is another relevant program.

Insurance and the Veteran's Benefits Program can be other sources of funding for caregiving services

This program is specifically designed for veterans who are at risk of being placed in an institution.

As such, the options provided aim to keep veterans living in their own home and community.

To do this, the program offers a range of different services. Beneficiaries can choose a combination of goods and services, based on what best meets their own needs.

As with the Cash & Counseling program, the VD-HCBS includes the potential to hire workers for around the home, including friends and family members.

More information about this program and eligibility of requirements can be found at the [National Resource Center for Participant-Directed Services](#).

Other Options for Getting Paid to be Caregiver

The programs discussed above include key ways that seniors can receive paid caregiving from either people that they know or outside persons.

As a senior or professional caregiver, be sure to note which programs allow families to pay family members and which permit them to hire outside parties.



Some funding sources only allow funding to cover caregiving from accredited agencies.

These next options are relevant for anybody interested in becoming a paid caregiver. However, they don't typically pay family members to provide care.

While you may not be able to directly work for your family member, there are many agencies that need to hire caregivers to fill these roles and to support seniors. The key programs that operate in this way are as follows.

Medicaid In-Home Care Assistance

People who have low income and few assets (aside from their home) are often eligible for Medicaid coverage.

The type of care provided typically includes low-level healthcare services and monitoring.

Much of that involves personal care, including areas of cooking, cleaning, dressing, bathing, eating and moving, along with other elements of daily living.

Some programs come with challenges, which can make situations more complicated for you and the person you are caring for.

When in-home care is provided via Medicaid, this is typically achieved through a licensed home health agency.

Through this approach, Medicaid directly pays the agency, which then sends aides to the senior's home on a regular basis.

For some situations, this arrangement can work well and means that family members don't have to stress about organizing the help provided. The agency may send you to one or multiple homes to care for a case load of seniors.

Sometimes, the arrangement isn't ideal.

In particular, many care agencies are overstretched and have a high worker turnover. As a result, the visits you are assigned may be irregular. Furthermore, the high turnover may result in changes to the workers over time, which makes it harder for staff members to get to know the senior and their needs.

There is also the potential for this arrangement to create communication challenges, especially if the agency does have staffing issues and you are stretched thin tracking a multitude of seniors.

This can create a frustrating work environment. It can also mean that families you interact with may already be sick of agency-based caregivers and may be adversarial from the beginning.

Medicare In-Home Care

Although the funding source is different, Medicare In-Home Care is relatively similar to the previous type of assistance.

Here, eligibility is mostly based on age and individuals who are 65 years or above may qualify for this type of insurance.

Medicare In-Home Care is also focused on people who are housebound or face major challenges in leaving the home.



If a senior does qualify, then the person may be qualified to receive a set number of hours of weekly care.

If the patient does qualify for care, then they need to hire a caregiver through Medicare-certified home health agency.²⁴

Location Specific Programs

There are also many examples of programs that are specific to one part of the United States, such as a given state or city.

These programs can vary dramatically, including differences in where their funding comes from and precisely what they provide.

One example of this is the Companion Program, from the City of Alexandria in Virginia.

This program offers in-home assistance for adults with severe disabilities or those above the age of 60, who are unable to perform some tasks independently.

The precise services provided differ depending on the needs of the individual. However, they can include:

- Light housekeeping
- Basic meal preparation
- Grocery shopping
- Laundry

To be eligible for this program, individuals have to meet income requirements.

Specifically, these are:

- For an individual: Income must be less than \$2,051/month
- For a family of two: Household income must be less than \$2,682/month

Programs are often location-specific, such as the Companion Program. As such, it's important to research what is available in your local area

To apply for the program, seniors or caregivers can call 703-746-5999, choose option 1 and then speak to a worker. If the senior qualifies for the program, then a home visit will be arranged where the applicant's capabilities can be assessed.

Now, this program is specific to the City of Alexandria in Virginia. However, similar programs do exist in other parts of the country.

Other examples include:

- The [Home Care for the Elderly Program](#) (Florida)
- [Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly](#) (New York)

As a result, getting in touch with your [local Area Agency on Aging](#) can be a key way of figuring out which options are available in your area and relevant to your specific situation.



Training and Certification Requirements

Requirements for training and certification vary significantly from one state to the next. At the same time, what you specifically need is going to differ depending on the role that you're looking at.

For example, no training is needed for most cases where you're acting as a family caregiver, even if you are getting paid for that role. In contrast, if you are being formally hired by an organization, then the requirements may be different.

However, there are some exceptions to these general rules and you need to work out the specific requirements for your state early on.

For example, like many states, Virginia does not have close regulation over direct care workers.

As a result, there are no significant standards or requirements for most roles (although, exceptions do exist).

In other cases, states are focusing on standard requirements for caregiving. Arkansas is one example of this, where paid home caregivers need to go through 40 hours of training.²⁵



Obtaining that training is not extremely expensive, as courses are offered for \$250 and lower-priced options may be available.²⁶

Additionally, training and certification may be needed for more complex roles. This is particularly true for any position that requires the provision of medical care, such as certified nursing assistants (CNAs) and home health aides (HHAs).

Training requirements vary by state and many roles come with no specific standards or requirements

As discussed previously, some types of funding for caregiving may also require you to have specific certifications.

Finally, if you are looking for a formal position as a caregiver, such as through an agency, having certifications may be a significant advantage.

Often the agency will ask for information about your licensing and training. In many cases, having specific certifications may be essential for you to get the job.

Talking to the specific organization is normally the best way to find out what training you are going to need. However, you can also look at the common types of requirements for your state and use these to determine the types of training most relevant to you.

We will explore later how best to identify the types of organizations/agencies that you want to be affiliated with.

Obtaining the Relevant Training

There are various options for training and certification. This includes going through community colleges and other educational institutions, along with training through national organizations, especially those that focus on caregiving.

Some training is even available online, such as through the [American Caregiver Association](#), which offers certification programs for nonmedical in-home care providers.

At the same time, there are a number of safety certifications available through various organizations, such as the [American Red Cross](#).

Training can help build skills and confidence and is accessible online or in person

Many of these certifications may be relevant to informal (and unpaid) caregivers, as well as paid ones.

For example, this training can include home safety, accident-proofing the home, bathing, healthy eating and more.

Even if you don't need training for the role that you are pursuing, it is an area that may be worth considering.

For one thing, training helps you to be more confident in your role and reduces the chance of any issues arising.

At the same time, having training can provide some peace of mind to the people who hired you.

Such training may be particularly relevant if the senior has a complex health condition, such as dementia.

Having some formal training may also increase your likelihood of obtaining a specific role, especially if the competition is fierce.



Getting Hired as a Caregiver

Finding a Position

As discussed [earlier](#), there are many different types of funding that families have access to for caregiving.

These funding sources are one reason why there are many different places that will hire caregivers and why your payment may be from the family, an agency, the government, an insurance company or somewhere else altogether.



This pattern also means that there are multiple places that you can apply for caregiving roles.

For example, you may be able to find [job announcements from families](#), where they are looking to hire caregivers directly, without the middleman. Likewise, there are announcements from agencies that provide caregivers to families and specific programs may also recruit new caregivers.

Websites like [Care.com](#) also help to facilitate the process of matching caregivers to clients and can be a good place to look for work. [CareLinx.com](#) is another example.

Both of these sites are places where you can list yourself as a caregiver and highlight your specific skills and your experience.

At the same time, they allow families to search for suitable caregivers and contact you directly, make payment to you, or review the quality of the services you provide. For example, CareLinx promotes itself like this:

1. Compared to traditional agencies, CareLinx empowers you to:

- Earn higher wages
- Get the benefits you deserve
- Find work that fits your schedule

The design can make it easier to find work, especially once you have developed a positive reputation on the site.

In particular, for CareLinx:

2. You show up more prominently in family searches and get more job opportunities when you:

- Check job availabilities and apply to relevant jobs regularly
- Respond within 24 hours to messages from families
- Complete your profile and update availability
- Have a professional profile photo

The process that potential employers can use to search for caregivers on Care.com is shown below.

The screenshot displays the Care.com search interface. On the left is a sidebar with search filters. The main area shows a category carousel for 'Everyday Helpers' with icons for Date Night, Transportation, Light Cleaning, Groceries / Errands, and Help with Pets. Below this is a search results summary bar showing '1 to 15 of 187' results, sorted by 'Relevance', with '15' results per page. A section titled 'Find connections on Care.com' features a network of profile pictures and a 'Facebook connect' button. The main content area displays two caregiver profiles: Deborah L. and Terria M. Each profile includes a photo, name, premium status, location, experience, age, pay rate, and average response time. Deborah L. is from Springfield, VA, with 10+ years experience, age 62, and a pay rate of \$20-25/hr. Terria M. is from Fort Washington, MD, with 10+ years experience, age 46, and a pay rate of \$15-20/hr. Both profiles include a 'Send message' button and a 'Pay now' link.

In particular, people can search using a range of parameters, including physical location, age, gender, payment options and experience. Caregiver profiles are provided in an easy-to-read manner, where all information is readily accessible.

This design significantly facilitates the process of matching caregivers to employers and makes it easier on both parties. Additionally, the caregivers themselves come from a range of different backgrounds and experience levels.

As a further example, the two images below highlight the profile of one Care.com member. Her profile makes it easy to see the exact experience that the caregiver has, along with her background.

Setting up a profile like this can take time initially but it isn't as bad as you might imagine. Additionally, once the profile is set up, you simply need to keep it updated and doing so is easy.

Deborah L. PREMIUM
 Female | Full-Time senior caregiver | Springfield, VA

10+ 62 \$20-25
 YRS EXP. YRS OLD HOURLY RATE

★★★★★ (1)

- Has Transportation
- Willing to travel 15 mi
- Licensed Practicing Nurse
- Registered Nurse
- Comfortable with pets
- Non-smoker

Activity
 Add note Send Message

Meet Deborah
 I have been caring for people for over 20 years. I love to help them feel good about their life. I enjoy helping them get through their days and sharing life with them. I am experienced in managing all facets of their care including medication management, light housekeeping, meal prep, transportation to and from appointments, shopping, bathing and dressing. I understand how to follow instructions from physicians, therapists, family members, and the person being cared for, I have the experience to offer suggestions on how to make elderly care easier for the family and... more

Deborah's Services: Senior Care

Schedule Deborah
 Contact Deborah
 Pay Deborah

Mark as hired
 Add to favorites
 Print for interview
 Request background check
 Report
 Add to maybes
 Hide profile

Share profile

Deborah L. PREMIUM
 Full-Time senior caregiver | Springfield, VA | \$20-25/hr

10+ 62
 YRS EXP. YRS OLD

★★★★★ (1)

Services: Message Senior Care

Pay now

Bio Work History Safety & Verifications Payment Skills & Experience Education Reviews Availability

Deborah can also help with

- Date Night
- Transportation
- Light Cleaning
- Groceries / Errands
- Help with Pets
- Companion Care
- Organizing / Laundry
- Packing / Moving
- Meal Prep

Share profile
<http://www.care.com/pi/deborah1012/sk>

Caregivers like Deborah

- Yamdjeu T. 26 year old, Full-Time Senior Caregiver Lanham, MD
- Ruby A. 35 year old, Full-Time Senior Caregiver Woodbridge, VA
- Esther K. 37 year old, Full-Time Senior Caregiver Lorton, VA
- Tineka P. 30 year old, Part-Time Senior Caregiver Indian Head, MD
- Krista R. 35 year old, Part-Time Senior Caregiver Falls Church, VA

Work History

- Senior Caregiver - Ed M. family Oct. 2016 - present
- Senior Caregiver - Rose Marie M. family Jun. 2014 - present

Safety & Verifications
 Safety Center Compare Options

Deborah L.'s Other Services

With all of this in mind, it's easy to see how such sites could significantly increase your odds of getting a job.

Through these sites, you also have the ability to provide a significant amount of information all in one place. For example, you can indicate whether you have transportation, describe your experience, provide references, and even indicate whether you're comfortable with pets, able to assist with light housekeeping, and more.

This can make some aspects of paperwork easier. Plus, it means your potential clients know what to expect from the very beginning.

Regardless of whether you go through a site like this or whether you find employment listings in other ways, the process of finding a position can often be time-consuming and frustrating.



This is particularly true for anybody who is relatively new to the field. Nevertheless, there remains a high demand for caregivers, including ones that don't have many specific qualifications.

As a result, it should be possible to find work if you are patient and dedicated.

Getting Hired

Regardless of who you are applying with, there are some key techniques that can help you to get a job as a caregiver.

1. Read the Requirements Closely

There are many different types of caregiving, along with varying expectations of what the caregiver is supposed to do. As a result, it's critical that you understand what is expected of you before you apply for a position.

In some cases, there may be specific expectations that you simply do not meet. It's better to figure these out early, rather than wasting your time and the time of the people involved in hiring.

2. Apply Carefully

When applying for a position, you need to be sure that you can be effective at it in the long-term.

This is particularly true for any position that involves more intense work, such as caring for a patient with Alzheimer's disease.

If you have serious back problems, steer clear from positions that require lifting the client on a regular basis.



Some caregivers try to get any work, even if they have never done so before.

However, this **can be risky** and you could easily end up in a role that you don't have the skills or knowledge to cope with effectively.

As such, researching the role and learning as much as you can about the client is critical before you even apply.

3. Choose Good References

Always apply with careful consideration. Caregiving comes with challenges and getting the right fit between caregiver, family and senior is critical

When applying for a job, make sure that you pick references that paint you in a good light and can emphasize your **trustworthiness and ability to connect well** with clients.

Additionally, make sure your references are as relevant as possible for the position you're applying for.

As an example, the best references when applying for a job with a family may be very different than for a job with an agency.

4. Prepare for the Interview

Preparation is critical for getting a job and also for making sure you understand what is involved.

Focus on developing **good positive rapport** between the people you interact with, particularly with those that you will be seeing the most if you get the position.

For a caregiving role, preparing a list of questions that you want to ask is a good approach.

This can help you be more prepared and anticipate the unique challenges of a given situation.

Possible questions that you may want to ask include:

- What specific responsibilities would be required of me?
- How would I get in contact in the case of emergencies?
- What am I expected to do around the house?
- What are the expectations in regards to overtime?

Highlight your related strengths and ask lots of questions

Likewise, you want to have a list of references and focus on highlighting your strengths and experience within the caregiving field.

Additionally, you can expect questions from the person that is interviewing you. These may cover a range of topics, depending on the situation and specifically what people are looking for. Some of these may include the following:

- Do you have any first-aid training or CPR?
- What hours are you able to work?
- What are your vacation/holiday/time-off needs?
- Are there any tasks that you are uncomfortable doing?
- Do you have a driver's license and reliable transportation?
- Would you be willing to adjust your schedule in the case of emergencies and other unforeseen circumstances?
- What types of diagnoses have you cared for in the past?
- If you were needed to prepare meals, could you do so? What type of meals would you provide?



You may also be asked **how you would respond to specific situations**, such as challenges that may arise with a given health condition.

In some cases, questions may seem challenging or overly intrusive. However, it's important to remember that this type of care can be critical to a senior's health and overall wellbeing.

As a result, it is important for the caregiver to be a **good fit** to the situation and the specific needs of the senior.

Families are often emotional when hiring caregivers. Try not to take this personally.

Additionally, if you are being hired by a family, it's also important to remember that the decision is an emotional one for them.

As such, they may be trying to get someone who fits in well with the family and the client, while also having the right qualifications and experience.

Because of this, families don't always hire the best qualified candidate. Instead, there is often a strong focus on getting one that is the right fit.

In some cases, this may mean that you don't get the job, even if you are the most qualified person for it.

Try not to take this personally, as it is hard to trust the health and safety of a family member to a stranger.

Taking the time to prepare for the interview is also critical because this can help ensure that you and your employer are on the same page. Direct care is a complex field, with responsibilities and requirements tending to vary from one senior to the next.

As a result, it's important that you know precisely what you're agreeing to before you accept any position. Likewise, there needs to be a clear understanding about what your responsibilities are and are not. Otherwise, there is a significant risk of issues further down the road.

5. Be Ready for a Background Check

In many cases, a potential caregiver will also have to be subject to a background check. For example, if you are being paid by state funds, a background check is essential.

Likewise, many home health agencies (but not all) will run a background check. In some states, the law even requires a background check to be run, although those rules aren't always obeyed.



Individual clients also have the option of doing a background check through various sites. Overall, it's best to **assume that you will have to go through a background check.**

After all, caregivers are responsible for vulnerable clients and there is a strong focus on protecting these clients whenever possible.

With a background check, potential employers often focus on convictions for disqualifying crimes and also any convictions that suggest you may pose a risk to a client. As a result, any conviction is likely to decrease your chance of getting a position, even if the conviction seems unrelated.

Caregivers can also have background checks performed themselves, through sites like CareLinx.com and Care.com.

Clients then have the ability to request access to your background check.

The services at CareLinx.com and Care.com can make the background check process faster and easier.

If you keep it updated, that information can be a great way to promote yourself as being a reliable caregiver.

Likewise, this makes it easy for potential clients to access the information that they need.

6. Be Prepared to Have Multiple Clients

If you are a professional caregiver, you probably won't have just one client. As a result, you have to be prepared to manage them at the same time, without putting any at risk.

In particular, clients will sometimes have last-minute changes to what they want or emergency needs. As a caregiver, you need to be able to respond to these changes without putting other clients at risk and while maintaining your own work-life balance.



Being an Effective Caregiver

The specific duties of a caregiver vary widely.

In particular, the tasks that you do will depend on what the individual needs and also on your role. For example, many caregivers are involved in only non-medical tasks, while some specific roles also involve medical components.

However, typical duties of a caregiver include helping with some (or all) of the following:

- Grocery shopping
- Meal preparation
- Laundry and housework
- Activities of Daily Living (including dressing, bathing, and medication assistance)
- Transferring recipient into and out of bed
- Transportation
- Arrange medical appointments
- Order and pick up medications
- Interact with doctors and care manager regarding care needs and plan
- Respond effectively to any crisis or medical emergencies that arise
- Providing companionship
- Assist with medical processes, including physical therapy, feeding tubes or injections



There are other duties and needs that may arise in specific situations. Likewise, you'll probably find that you don't need to do all of these tasks for any specific patient.

Caregiving roles and responsibilities can vary dramatically. It's important to be clear about all of these from the beginning.

Instead, your specific role will be defined by a range of factors, including what the family wants and what the client is capable of doing on their own.

To be effective as a caregiver, you need to understand what is expected of you and be able to perform each of the tasks well.

As discussed [previously](#), it's also important to make sure the position you apply for suits your experience and skills. Otherwise, you may end up doing tasks that you are not able to do effectively, which isn't fair on the people that you are working for.

Working with the Family

If you are hired by a client or a family directly, then you also need to be able to work effectively with them. This includes understanding what you are expected to do and the precise nature of the job role.

Doing so is critical because of the dramatic differences in what families need.

For example, some situations may mean that you need to assist with medication or physical therapy. In other cases, the assistance needed may be non-medical and could include bathing, toileting, and dressing.

There are also many cases where the person being cared for is relatively competent. As such, they may be able to dress, clean and toilet themselves without any issues.

Ask questions and seek clarification early on to prevent any issues down the road.

In that type of situation, your main roles could focus on meal preparation, cleaning, groceries or simply being there to be their companion and offer support.

This means that you should read the **job description carefully** and **ask as many questions as you can**.

The process may seem tedious but ensuring that everybody is on the same page from the beginning reduces the chance of any issues later on.

Additionally, there may be some topics that the family simply hasn't thought of when developing the job announcement initially.

Some important pieces of information will include the following:

- **Level of Training Needed:** This can include the specific types of training and also what level. In some cases, a particular certification may be needed as well.
- **Driving:** For example, does the caregiver need a valid driver's license and do they also need a vehicle that they can drive the care recipient in? Often, just the driver's license will be needed and the caregiver will be able to use a vehicle belonging to the family. In other cases, driving may not even be needed.
- **Lifting and/or Operating Special Equipment:** Both of these areas can be important and can mean that the caregiver needs a specific amount of physical strength and skill. This may refer to scooters, motorized equipment, or other gadgets.
- **Schedule:** This includes how often the caregiver will be working. Is it a part-time, full-time or occasional role? Likewise, is there an expectation to stay overnight occasionally?
- **Specialized Assistance:** Is there specific assistance that is needed, such as Alzheimer's/dementia care or support with physical therapy?

Once everyone understands and agrees about what is involved in the role and what is expected of the caregiver, it is possible to move forward.

One key aspect of doing so is the **job contract**.

This will be provided by the client, although you may also play a role in developing or refining it. The contract will outline a number of things, including the following:

- Payment rate and frequency of payment
- Hours of work
- Social security number of the caregiver
- Job description
- Unacceptable behavior
- The process of termination (such as the amount of notice needed and the specific criteria for termination without notice)
- Dated signatures from the employer and employee
- Any other pertinent information

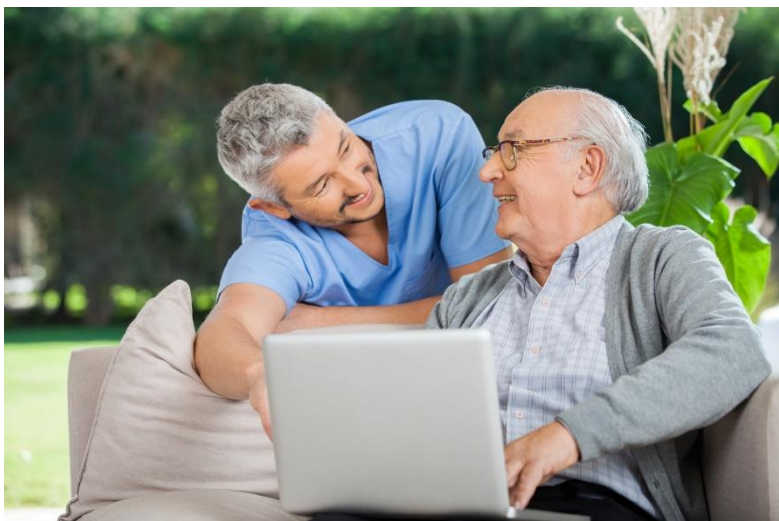
As a caregiver, it's also important to remember that the situation is emotional for the family involved.

This may mean that they don't want you simply because you're not a 'good fit' with the client or for an emotional reason, rather than a practical one.

Caregiving is an emotional situation and clients are not always entirely rational.

Additionally, some families may have never hired a caregiver directly before, so may be unclear about what they can expect and what expectations are reasonable or unreasonable.

Making sure that the job contract is fair can help to reduce these issues. Being open and upfront during the employment process is also a critical way to avoid any problems in the future.



Other Considerations

Even though caregiving is often informal and many caregivers may have little to no training, the field itself is still complicated.

As mentioned previously, [training and certification](#) can be extremely relevant to making sure that you can provide the best care.

Additionally, this type of training may be necessary for obtaining some positions or for basic caregiving in some states.



There are also other critical areas to consider for anyone interested in being a paid caregiver, regardless of the specific role that they're interested in.

Being a Bonded Caregiver

The term bonding is sometimes used in caregiving, although it doesn't refer to the relationship between caregiver and client.

Instead, bonding is a legal term and it refers to a specific type of insurance. This insurance covers any theft from an employee. As a result, a bonded caregiver may provide more peace of mind to clients, especially when that caregiver is not from the family.

In most cases, a caregiver hired from an agency will be bonded. This means that if the caregiver does steal from or victimize the client, the client will be compensated.

Typically, bonds for clients go up to \$5,000. Many companies also contain information about the bonding within their advertising.

Being a bonded caregiver does involve extra effort – but may be worth it.

Bonding isn't limited to caregivers who work for an agency. Instead, individual caregivers can also be bonded, although many do not choose to. To do so, you need to contact an insurance carrier and purchase a surety bond.²⁷

In some locations, having this bond is necessary if you want to be a certified caregiver. Likewise, being bonded could potentially increase your chance of getting a caregiving position.

As a result, it's worth talking to local insurance agencies and seeing whether being a bonded caregiver is a viable option for you and whether it would be worth the time.

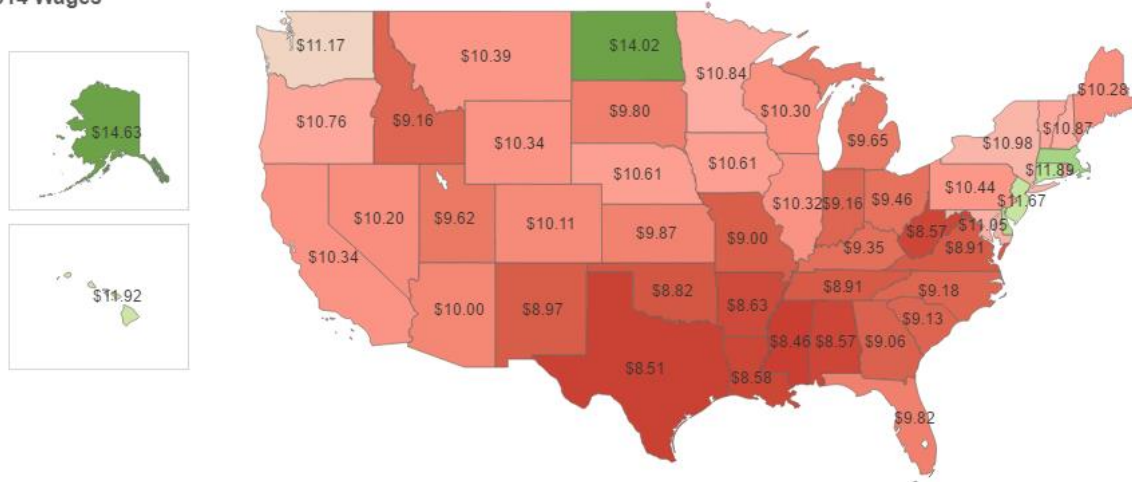
What Can You Expect to be Paid?

It should be no surprise that pay rates for caregiving vary dramatically. This variation depends on a range of factors, including who is employing you and the physical location that you are in. Likewise, **your qualifications and your role could influence your pay.**

For example, caregivers who also offer medical caregiving will typically be paid higher than those who are not.

As an illustration, the average wages for Personal Care Aides can be seen in the image below, which comes from [PHI National](#). In the image, a green state is where the wage has increased from 2004 to 2014, while red states indicate a decrease. In both cases, a stronger color indicates a more significant increase or decrease.

2014 Wages



These patterns suggest that, in most cases, being a paid caregiver is not a well-paid position. This is particularly concerning given the stress that comes with this job.

Nevertheless, these are the wages for just one type of direct care role and wages for others may well be higher. Likewise, these are averages, which means that some positions will pay more and others less. So, these averages may be a good starting point but you may well be able to find a position that pays better.

Is This the Right Field for You?

Caregiving is difficult – and the challenges are often underestimated. In many ways, paid caregivers have an advantage, as they often have more training than informal caregivers.

Additionally, they typically have the ability to go home at the end of the day, which gives them the chance to maintain a work-home balance. Nevertheless, it's important to consider the challenges of caregiving carefully. After all, the role does typically involve a significant amount of emotional and physical challenges.

Likewise, you may often need to manage a crisis and treat clients with dignity, respect, and autonomy, regardless of the situations that are occurring. To do this effectively, you need to be **compassionate and patient.**

Conclusion

With the ever-increasing demand for direct care workers, paid caregiving can be a good option for many people.

In some cases, this may simply involve earning some money for [supporting your own relative](#), which can help to reduce the stress and financial strain of doing so.

In other cases, you may be interested in being a professional caregiver and may choose to care for multiple clients.

Caregiving can be a rewarding chance to support others, whether they are your own family members or strangers

Whatever the case, caregiving may be a challenging role but it is also a satisfying one. After all, you are helping to support seniors and provide them with the ability to remain within their homes as they age.

The role can also lead to many rewarding relationships over time.

At Kapok, our focus is on providing information and resources for caregivers, regardless of whether they are in paid or unpaid, formal or informal roles.

Indeed, many of the challenges and rewards of caregiving remain the same regardless of the specific role that you are in.



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