



PCA Recruiting and Interviewing

Helpful Tips in Preparation for Hiring a PCA

You have applied for the PCA Program and may need to begin preparing to hire a PCA. Remember the date of hire must be no earlier than the start date of your Prior Authorization, which is provided in your MassHealth decision letter.

1. Establish your care needs as approved by MassHealth
2. Establish when you wish to receive your care
3. Establish a schedule that fits your personal care and household needs
4. Document a job description and some qualifications that are important to you
5. Advertise and be clear about your expectations:
 - Local Career Center
 - Rewarding Works Website
 - Word of mouth/ network with family and friends
6. Interview: Establish some important qualities that you are looking for and ask that person to explain their qualities. Remember it is your PCA Program and you deserve to hire the exact person you are looking for.
7. Background and Reference Checks:
 - Run a free Criminal Offender Record Inquiry (CORI)
 - Check Sex Offender Registry (SORI list on the www.mass.gov website)
 - Check the Office of Inspector General List of Excluded Individuals and Entities at www.oig/leie to be sure the potential employee is not restricted from working in a MassHealth funded program such as the PCA Program



- Personal Reference Checks or Professional Reference Checks:
Ask potential PCA to provide a phone number or written letters of reference (sometimes a reference from a PCA's primary doctor could be helpful)

Note: PCAs WILL ONLY BE PAID WHEN THERE IS A DECISION LETTER FROM MASSHEALTH AUTHORIZING THE PCA PROGRAM.

PCA CAN BEGIN WORK ON THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE DECISION LETTER.



Recruiting Methods

Word of Mouth

This method is preferable because the potential PCA is known by you/family or has a connection to someone you know. It involves contacting people you know and asking them to tell anyone they know that may be interested in your job. It is most effective when you work hard to get the word out. Good, potential PCAs may be former teachers, former home health aides, respite workers, neighbors, church members, or someone you have met through a community activity function.

Make a list of all possible "word of mouth" connections. Note on the list the date you spoke to each person. Approximately 1-2 weeks later, make a follow up call to remind each person that you are still looking for a PCA. If your contact is not interested, ask them to talk with people they know and trust about your job. ***Remember to check references for all PCA, even if it is a friend of a friend.***

There are many different ways to recruit potential PCAs.

Here are some ideas:

- Some teachers and professors will give credit to students in special education, psychology, rehabilitation or mental health counseling and interpreters who live in and work as PCAs. Contact such departments at universities or community colleges directly.
- Contact employment offices at local colleges
- Contact housing divisions of the Armed Forces near you. Sometimes a spouse may like to live off base where the husband and wife could visit, but couldn't afford it without help.
- Call groups representing employment of people with disabilities. Many people with disabilities can be competent PCAs

- Make 10 contacts per day to any or all of the above and others. Each one must be different.
- For high school aged PCAs, guidance officers may be able to put you in touch with students looking for work. High school coaches may know of off-season athletes who may be available to provide PCA services
- Contact the Division of Career Services. They keep lists of jobs available for job seekers, as well as maintaining an on-line list of jobs.

Bulletin Boards and Posters

Posting ads on bulletin boards allows you to write an eye-catching description of your job. Your ad should include the town you live in (not the address), a brief description of the job, hours, and who to contact for more information. You may want to include the pay or a brief description of yourself. At first you will need to experiment in your local area to see which places should produce the most applicants. Many people have had success when they place an ad at local colleges (or high schools), churches (if you ask, they may publish the ad in their bulletin), libraries, hospitals, nursing homes and cultural clubs.

Make sure to take along tape or tacks to secure your ad when posting. Colleges typically require postings to be approved through the student employment office. Inquire first to save time.

Personal contact often helps in recruiting good workers. It may be beneficial to make a follow up call two weeks after you've posted an ad to inquire if there has been any response and to remind your contact that you're still looking for a Personal Care Assistant (PCA).

It may help to keep track of where you've posted ads, follow up calls you've made and the outcome. Over time, this information could help you decide which postings produced the most applicants. Remember to ask an applicant where they saw the ad so that you will know which postings have been most effective.

Newspapers

If your recruiting efforts haven't been successful through word of mouth and posting notices, consider placing an ad in the newspaper. Although some people hesitate to place ads in the paper, this method does help you reach the most people. To find out the cost for a brief ad, you will need to contact the ad department of the newspaper company. Some papers have a special section for personal assistants, which are less expensive and allow you to give more detail. Newspaper ads must be concise, but you can get a lot of information into a short ad.

The beginning of the week is the best time for advertising.

The Internet

There is a website for PCAs and Home Health Aides seeking work and for consumers seeking PCAs. As more people use it, it may become a useful recruitment tool. The address is www.rewardingwork.org or www.mass.gov/how-to/hire-a-pca. Please remember that no matter how you locate potential PCAs, you're still responsible for screening and obtaining references.

Telephone Screening

When people call your home in response to your ad, you can save time by asking a few questions before you spend time talking about yourself or the details of the job.

Here are some examples of screening questions:

- Where do they live? (Is distance reasonable?)
- Are you available during the hours needed?
- Is the pay rate acceptable? (Pay rate is in accordance with the Massachusetts PCA Union, 1199SEIU)
- If lifting and/or transferring are required, can you perform this task and all essential tasks?

If the applicant does not meet these non-negotiable requirements, thank them for responding to the ad and cut the conversation short. If they do answer favorably to these screening questions, briefly describe the job. If, after speaking briefly with the applicant, you feel he/she is someone who is a strong applicant, set up a time and place for an interview.

Before hanging up, make sure you have their name and phone number. Be prepared to give clear directions to your meeting site (a neutral site such as the library or your home) and mention anything you want the applicant to bring such as references or a driver's license. Make sure they have your phone number and make sure they understand you will expect them at the designated time. Tell them to call if anything should come up and they can't make it

Interviewing

The interview is an opportunity for you and your potential PCA to get to know each other. Some preparation will help you feel confident and help the interview run smoothly.

- Have a clean copy of an application ready for the applicant to fill out. This will be for your records.
- Have a job description ready. Know your needs.
- Consider holding interviews at a neutral location, such as the library. In doing this, the applicants you choose not to hire will not know the location of your home.
- If you are uncomfortable doing interviews on your own, ask someone to join you.
- Make sure you discuss the wage and benefits of the job, as well as your schedule and any rules or policies you have established. (Reference Helpful Suggestions)
- Have your interview questions prepared. It may be helpful to have a copy of the questions in front of you while interviewing. This will help you remember to cover all important points and also is a good place to take notes. The next page contains a list of possible interview questions

Sample Interview Questions

What is your past experience and background?	Would you be able to lift me or help with transfers?
What made you want to apply for this job?	How do you feel about helping with personal care tasks such as bathing, hygiene, etc.?
What hours are you available?	What do you consider your strongest quality?
How many hours per week are you looking for?	Why did you leave your last job?
Are you willing to fill in if an illness and/or emergency occur?	Do you have reliable transportation?
Would you work weekends and holidays?	Discuss examples of situations that might arise, and how they would react.

Checking References

Ask for at least two references- both work related and personal. Not all of the references will be usable; a supervisor may be away, or a company may have closed. If a person has been out of the work force for a while, find out if they have been involved in any community activities or taken any classes. A professor or committee chairperson can tell you whether the person completed tasks properly and on time. A reference from their medical provider may also help clear the PCA for ability to perform duties.

Some companies require a written release before telling you anything about an employee. Others have a policy not to give out any information except for the dates of employment. This is another reason to ask for more references than you think you may need. If companies refuse to give you information, call the applicant, explain the situation, and ask for additional references.

When checking references, briefly verify what the applicant told you about dates of employment and the job title. Determine if his or her job performance was satisfactory. If the applicant no longer works there, ask about eligibility to rehire.

Some applicants may refuse to let you talk to their present employer, fearing that they will lose the other job. This is probably okay, as long as they provide you with other references. When talking to present employers, it is always helpful to stress that the hours are at night or on weekends, and that this job will no way interfere with the other position.

Successful reference checking is mainly a question of balancing the information you obtain. Weigh employment references (including babysitting and classes) more heavily than personal references. Naturally, the applicant's brother and best friend will have only good things to say, but sometimes you can tell something about people by the company they keep.

If you get one bad reference and three good ones, try to determine which source has more credibility. An employer could have a personal grudge against a former employee, or the employee may have been fired for opposing an unjust situation at the worksite, and this would actually end up being a positive recommendation.

Once you have spoken to all of the references and weighed them against one another, *it's* time to make a decision. Ultimately, you will have to trust your instincts, and the accuracy of your judgments will improve *over* time.

Even if all of the references are good and you think you'll like the person, you never know until the last minute whether he or she will end up working for you. You may call to offer the job, only to have the person say "I found someone else" or " *I've* been thinking it *over* and *I'm* no longer interested." Don't take it personally. Keep a sense of humor and do some additional interviews.

HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS FOR PCA CONSUMERS TO MENTION DURING AN INTERVIEW:

- *Because I am the employer, I know my needs best. My PCA Services are my prescription for care.*
- *My schedule is based on my needs and when I need the help.*
- *Punctuality is a must. I depend on you to be at work on time. If you are going to be late, please call. Abuse could mean termination.*
- *Please keep my information confidential. Please DO NOT talk about my condition- this is the LAW.*
- *Following instructions is a must. I do things a certain way because they work for me. Please DO NOT try and change this unless you ask.*
- *My phone is not for your personal use. DO NOT give out my number, unless you ask. (Emergencies are the only exception).*
- *PCAs should NOT call Tempus PCM or Tempus F.I. If there is an error or pay is late, I will address this.*
- *Timesheets are **MY** responsibility to process. PCA hours documented are actual PCA hours worked. All time entered must be in 15 minute increments as follows:*
 - *.25 = 15 minutes*
 - *.50 = 30 minutes*
 - *.75 = 45 minutes*
- *Sick Time is based on regulations located at www.mass.gov/ago/earnedsicktime. If you or an immediate family member is ill, please call me as soon as you know that you may be out. I must cover your time. Abuse of sick time could result in termination. I may require a doctor's note after more than 2 days sick.*

- There is no paid vacation time. Requests for unpaid leave must be submitted at least 2 weeks in advance and in writing. PCAs should always give as much notice as possible.
- Holidays- Christmas, Thanksgiving, July Fourth, and New Year's Day are paid at time and a half only if you are scheduled and work either of those four holidays.
- Respect in all communication is expected.
- I need to know my PCA is trustworthy.
- NO drugs or alcohol before or while on duty.
- Please DO NOT bring your children to work, it is difficult to keep your mind on your job if you are caring for children.
- Please leave your personal problems at home while working as my PCA. Tell me good news!
- Please DO NOT smoke in my home/place of employment.



Find PCAs who are ready to work...

www.masspcadirectory.org

...by using the
Massachusetts PCA Directory

Find a PCA for yourself or someone in your care who needs assistance with personal care needs and other daily activities

Find the right PCA – right now

Finding and hiring a personal care assistant – or PCA – to work with elders and individuals with disabilities is quick and easy...when you use the **Massachusetts PCA Directory**. This service provides an up-to-date listing of PCAs who are ready and willing to work. It's available online at www.masspcadirectory.org.

The Directory will help you find PCAs willing to work part time or full time – or even nights, early mornings and weekends. You can also specify whether you need a PCA who will...

- Work with adults, elders, or children
- Drives or has a car
- Speaks your language

Best of all, the Massachusetts PCA Directory is free if you receive PCA services from MassHealth. As an employer you are responsible for conducting all mandatory background checks.

Register and subscribe today at:
www.masspcadirectory.org

For more information

Contact your Personal Care Management agency or call toll-free 1-866-212-9675 to get quick answers to any questions you have.

Para Mayor Información

Comuníquese con su agencia de Manejo de Cuidado Personal o llame gratis al 1-866-212-9675 para obtener contestaciones rápidas a cualquier pregunta que tenga.

Encuentre al Asistente Personal idóneo ahora mismo

Encontrar y contratar a un asistente personal--(o PCA por sus siglas en inglés)--para trabajar con ancianos y personas incapacitadas ahora es rápido y fácil...cuando usted usa el Directorio de Asistentes Personales de Massachusetts. El directorio está disponible en www.masspcadirectory.org.

Si usted es residente de Massachusetts y recibe servicios de asistentes personales de MassHealth, incluyendo CommonHealth, este servicio gratuito proporciona un listado actualizado de ***PCAs que están listos y dispuestos a trabajar.***

Use el Directorio para localizar PCAs dispuestos a trabajar a tiempo parcial o completo...o noches y fines de semana. Usted puede especificar si necesita un PCA quien...

- Trabajaré con adultos, ancianos o niños
- Maneja o tiene un carro
- Habla su idioma

Como empleador, usted proporciona el entrenamiento conforme a sus necesidades específicas y se responsabiliza de las revisiones obligatorias de los antecedentes del candidato.

El directorio está disponible en
www.masspcadirectory.org.

www.masspcadirectory.org is an online resource that connects PCAs with elders and people with disabilities. It is a service of Rewarding Work Resources, a non profit organization, in collaboration with the PCA Quality Homecare Workforce Council.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
PCA Quality Homecare Workforce Council

Tips for Hiring

When hiring a new PCA, it is important that you trust that person before bringing him or her into your home. Below are suggestions to help you stay safe and begin a successful relationship with your new employee.

These suggestions are offered as a service to you as an employer of PCAs. Rewarding Work cannot be held liable for any interactions between people who use this website.

Develop a telephone interview to determine that the applicant meets the minimum requirements of the job. Be honest about your needs, the requirements of the job, the pay, and the hours.

Prepare a list of questions and priorities to help you focus the interview on what is most important to you. To prevent discrimination, ask every applicant exactly the same questions.

Determine your level of comfort before meeting the applicant for the first time. Will you hold the interview in your home? If so, will there be anyone else in the house? Would you prefer to meet in a public place, such as a restaurant or library?

Listen to your instincts. If you have a bad feeling about someone you are interviewing, there may be a good reason for your feelings.

Be as clear as possible about the job, your expectations of your employees, and what they may expect of you. Present a job description that describes the duties they will need to perform.

Always ask for and thoroughly check people's character and employment references. Keep in mind, however, that sometimes former employers will say good things about bad people or bad things about good people.

You may want to do a [criminal background check](#), but do not rely on it completely when making your decision. A clean record does not guarantee that an assistant will be trustworthy. Be especially cautious with people who lie about their criminal history.

After hiring, **develop a simple contract** that you and your assistant can discuss and sign. This lists the requirements of the job, the pay, and the hours. It is a good way to prevent misunderstandings later on.

Have a backup worker available for the first couple of days, in case the new person doesn't show up for work. If the assistant doesn't show up and doesn't call, hire someone else! Behavior like this does not improve with time.

“Tips for Hiring.” *Rewarding Work*, www.rewardingwork.org/State-Resources/Massachusetts/Your-responsibilities/when-hiring-PCAs/Tips-for-hiring.

Massachusetts Care Provider- Rewarding Work

Register for access to a list of candidates:

1. If you receive PCA services from MassHealth or have an access code from DDS (Department of Developmental Services), you may obtain **free** access to the list of available candidates.
2. First, you will need to register by visiting <https://rewardingwork.org/Join-today>. As part of the registration process, you will be asked to enter your access code or MassHealth number. This will verify that you are eligible for free access. This will take only a few seconds. **You will need to enter your MassHealth number this one time only.**
3. After you receive verification from MassHealth, you may immediately search the list of available PCAs. Your free subscription will be active for 12 months from your date of registration.
4. A password will be sent to the email you entered as your username on the registration form.
5. On your next visit to www.rewardingwork.org or www.masspcadirectory.org log in using your username (email) and the password that was sent to you. At this time you will be asked to change the password you received to one of your own choosing.
6. Whenever you return to www.rewardingwork.org or www.masspcadirectory.org to look for candidates, log in using your username (email address) and the password that you chose.

Contact the candidates you want to interview:

1. When you find one or more people who meet your specific needs, you contact them by phone or email to arrange an interview. Before you interview your PCA candidates, check the [List of Excluded Individuals/Entities](#) maintained by the [Office of the Inspector General](#) (OIG) of the US Department of Health and Human Services. **The MassHealth PCA program can NOT pay you for a PCA whose name is listed.**
2. When you find someone who meets your needs and who wants to work for you, you hire that person. Visit <https://rewardingwork.org/State-Resources/Massachusetts/Your-responsibilities/when%20hiring%20PCAs/Tips-for-hiring>.
3. If you need additional information on how to screen, interview, or conduct reference and background checks, you should contact your [Personal Care Management](#) (PCM) agency.

***If you have questions, please contact the [PCM agency](#) assisting you.**

***Job candidates in the Rewarding Work database have NOT been screened in any way and their backgrounds have NOT been checked.**

It is your responsibility as an employer to check references and backgrounds of people you may hire.

“How It Works.” *Rewarding Work*, www.rewardingwork.org/State-Resources/Massachusetts/How-it-works.