

Inquiring Parents Want to Know: Part 2

Healthcare services: Personal Care Assistants (PCAs)

What is a PCA?

PCA stands for personal care assistant. This is a disability service provided for qualified individuals that are dependent in Activities of Daily Living (ADLs). The individual with a disability must not live in an institution. If approved for PCA hours, the PCA may assist with ADLs, health-related procedures, and behavioral issues.

[PACER.org/health/mnpca.asp](https://pacer.org/health/mnpca.asp)

What are ADLs (activities of daily living)?

ADLs include grooming, dressing, bathing, transferring, mobility, positioning, eating, and toileting. Dependence in ADLs (e.g., hands-on assistance or requiring constant cues to complete the task) are used to assess individual needs for PCA services and the amount of PCA time for which an individual qualifies.

How do I get a PCA?

To receive PCA services, a person must be enrolled with Medical Assistance (MA), MinnesotaCare expanded benefits, an Alternative Care Program, or a waiver program. Eligibility is determined by a PCA assessment completed by your local county agency, tribe, or health plan member service. An assessor will visit your home to review your daily tasks and overall health. This assessment is part of the MnCHOICES Assessment. After the assessment is complete, you will receive a letter that tells you how many hours of PCA care you qualify for and a list of providers you can choose from.

What is PCA Choice vs. Traditional PCA?

PCA Choice is an option that allows you to choose, hire, and manage your PCAs. Some PCA agencies only provide services for PCA choice. With this option, the agency only provides the background check, payroll services, and some basic training. PCAs are generally paid at a higher rate since the agency is not responsible to advertise and train the PCA on your needs. If you choose to use traditional PCA services, the agency you hire will perform all of these tasks for you and the PCAs are generally paid less.

<https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/people-with-disabilities/services/home-community/programs-and-services/pca/pca-choice.jsp>

What is a Parent PCA provider?

A spouse or parent of a minor is allowed to be paid up to 40 hours a week to provide personal assistance to their child (or spouse) who qualifies for PCA services and chooses to use funds from either a Consumer Support Grant (CSG) or Consumer Directed Community Supports (CDCS).

What is a Consumer Support Grant (CSG)?

CSG is a state-funded program that provides alternative funding to help people with functional limitations purchase services to keep them safe and in their own home. Services available for purchase include home care nursing, home health aide, personal care assistance, a special diet, music therapy, hypo therapy, special equipment, etc. CSG is voluntary for consumers and counties but allows flexibility for a person's specific needs, when available. It is also the mechanism by which parents or spouses can provide PCA services.

[PACER.org/health/pdfs/HIAC-h33.pdf](https://pacer.org/health/pdfs/HIAC-h33.pdf)

[PACER.org/health/pdfs/HIAC-h34.pdf](https://pacer.org/health/pdfs/HIAC-h34.pdf)

What is a Consumer Directed Community Support (CDCS)?

CDCS is a choice that individuals on waivers can make about how to spend their waiver dollars. This provides more choice and responsibility for a person's services and supports through directing their own needs described in their most recent developmental or long-term care screening. Individuals receive a budget allowance and can use the money to hire individuals and service providers that best meet their needs. They have full employer responsibility.

[PACER.org/health/pdfs/HIAC-h32.pdf](https://pacer.org/health/pdfs/HIAC-h32.pdf)

Can family members be paid as a PCA to care for my child with special health care needs?

Yes. The relative would need to enroll with the Minnesota Department of Human Services and complete an Individual Personal Care Assistance training, which is offered online with a completion certificate. After the training is complete, the individual would then forward the certificate to their PCA agency and the recipient would elect their relative as their caregiver.

Still have questions?

Contact PACER's Health and Information Center for clarification on any topics covered in this document or with additional questions at (952) 838-9000 or PACER@PACER.org.

[PACER.org/health/contactus.asp](https://pacer.org/health/contactus.asp)