What is the Personal Care Assistance (PCA) Program?

Ohio’s PCA program provides financial resources for personal assistance services to Ohioans with severe physical disabilities. Personal assistance services help people with severe physical disabilities perform activities of daily living. Such activities may include (but are not limited to) dressing, grooming, bathing, toileting, preparing food, feeding, giving medications, turning, repositioning, transferring and assisting with ambulation.

Through participation in the PCA program, many people have been able to obtain or maintain employment. Individuals have left institutional settings, avoided nursing home situations or gained personal independence by moving into their own homes or apartments.

Eligibility

To be eligible for Ohio’s PCA program, a person must:

- be 18 years of age or older;
- be an Ohio resident and be willing to receive services within Ohio unless otherwise approved;
- be severely physically disabled (require assistance in a minimum of three activities of daily living);
- not be receiving services through the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission’s (RSCs) vocational rehabilitation program or other community programs which would duplicate services funded through the PCA program (participants can use more than one resource but may not bill for the same hours of personal assistance services from more than one resource);
- need no fewer than eight consecutive weeks of PCA and no more than 455 hours per quarter (a personal assistant can be employed for additional hours at the participant’s expense);
- have adjusted income of not more than 600 percent of the federal poverty level for a single individual (adjusted income is applicant’s total income plus spouse’s income in excess of $10,000 less impairment-related expenses);
- be capable of instructing and supervising an assistant or arranging for such instruction and supervision;
- be living, or through the PCA program be able to live, independently of family or an institution (person can live under the same roof as family); and
- agree that need for continuing PCA be subject to periodic evaluation.

Application Process

Any Ohioan with a severe physical disability who needs assistance with activities of daily living and meets the program’s eligibility requirements may write or call to request an application from RSC or a local facility chosen by RSC to operate the program (see list of participating facilities).

The person sends the completed application to the appropriate facility, which does a pre-screening evaluation of need for service, number of hours and financial assistance and makes an acceptance recommendation to the PCA program coordinator at RSC. The program coordinator reviews the recommendation and determines the applicant's eligibility. The applicant is then put on a waiting list according to priority.

Although there is a waiting list, Ohioans with disabilities are encouraged to complete an application. It’s important to show the continuing need for personal care assistance in Ohio. In the meantime, coordinators at participating facilities may be able to identify alternative resources.
Participant Responsibilities

- screening, interviewing, selecting, instructing and supervising assistants;
- paying the assistant’s wages in a timely manner agreed upon by the two parties; and
- adhering to all procedures, payments and obligations of employer costs as required by law.

Who Can Be an Assistant?

Anyone who agrees to the following responsibilities with the person eligible for the PCA program may be an assistant:

- the terms of work;
- performance of tasks agreed upon;
- performance of tasks to avoid injury and/or discomfort;
- reporting to work as scheduled; and
- maintaining the person's privacy.

If you’re interested in more information about becoming an assistant, contact one of the participating facilities listed.

Comments

When asked the “greatest benefit” or “most significant change in your life” from the PCA program, participants praise the program for:

- improving health;
- improving quality of life;
- allowing employment of self/spouse; and
- restoring control over own life.

Participants Facilities

The Ability Center of Greater Toledo
Jim Etzel
5605 Monroe St., Sylvania, OH 43560
419. 885. 5733 voice/TTY
419. 882. 4813 fax; 866. 885. 5733 toll free
jetzel@abilitycenter.org

The Center for Independent Living Options, Inc.
Suzanne Hopkins, director of programs
2031 Auburn Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45219
513. 241. 2600, ext. 17 voice; 513. 241.1707
TTY/fax; shopkins@cilo.net

Mid-Ohio Board for an Independent Living Environment, Inc. (MOBILE)
Pamela Wright, intake coordinator
690 S. High St., Columbus, OH 43206
614. 443. 5936 voice; 614. 443. 5957 TTY
614. 443. 5954 fax

Prowork Center
Karen Schneider, vocational specialist
360 S. Main St., Dayton, OH 45402-2716
937. 208. 8163 voice; 937. 341. 8837 fax

Services for Independent Living, Inc.
Vincent Murphy
25100 Euclid Ave., Suite 105, Cleveland, OH 44117
216. 731. 1529 voice/TTY; 216. 731. 3083 fax
vmurphy@sil-oh.org

United Disability Services
Kristy Griffith, services coordinator
701 S. Main St., Akron, OH 44311-1019
330. 762. 9795 voice; 330. 762. 0912 fax
kgiffith@udsakron.org

Society for Equal Access/Independent Living Center
Heather Heid
1458 5th Street NW, New Philadelphia, OH 44663
330. 343. 9292 voice; 330. 602. 4515 TTY
hheid@seailc.org

RSC Responsibilities:

- establish maximum reimbursement rates;
- choose non-profit facilities that exist, at least in part, to provide services to people with disabilities to operate the program at the local level;
- assist the facilities in locating people with severe physical disabilities to apply for the PCA program;
- make final eligibility determinations on PCA program applicants based on the facilities’ assessments;
- periodically evaluate the program to ensure efficiency and effectiveness; and
- issues reimbursement checks to participants.

Local Facility Responsibilities:

- locate citizens who have a severe physical disability and may be eligible for the PCA program;
- assess applicants’ potential for the PCA program, including the ability to instruct and supervise assistants and to maintain schedules and records;
- assess applicants’ personal assistance needs;
- provide assistant management training to participants to include (but not be limited to) training in how to recruit assistants, how to conduct interviews and screen applicants and how to supervise and instruct assistants on tasks required;
- assist RSC in conducting annual evaluation of each participant’s need for continued personal assistance services; and
- serve as an information resource on alternate community programs that provide personal assistance services.

How PCA Got Its Start

In 1981, the Ohio General Assembly enacted legislation that gave RSC authority to “establish and administer a program... to provide personal care assistance to enable eligible, severely disabled persons to live independently or work.”

PCA program services began in October 1982 with funds allocated for the pilot project. Beginning in 1984, the PCA program received line item funding in Ohio’s Biennial Budget. The program’s budget is renewable every two years.

For more information:

Katie Scheetz, PCA program coordinator
Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission
895 Central Ave., 7th Flr.
Cincinnati, OH 45202-1961
Toll-free in Ohio, 1. 800. 686. 3323 or 513. 314. 7650.
E-mail: katie.scheetz@rsc.ohio.gov

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“...You make it possible to look to the future with a degree of confidence. Thank you.”
– PCA participant

“...[the program is] especially wise and understanding in that the participants choose, hire and train their own attendant...”
– PCA participant