



## Can I get a Personal Care Assistant (PCA)?

### What is the Personal Care Assistance program?

The personal care assistance program provides services to you at home and in your community if you need help with basic day-to-day activities. These can be things like bathing, dressing, or transferring and moving about. A personal care assistant (PCA) is a person trained to help with basic daily routines.

A PCA may be able to help you if you have a physical, emotional or mental disability or a chronic illness or injury. Having a PCA can help you stay independent in your own home instead of having to move someplace to be taken care of, like a nursing home.



### Who can get PCA services?

If you have money you can pay for PCA services, help with chores, or other home care needs. You may be able to connect to some of these services by calling the Senior LinkAge Line at 1-800-333-2433 or Disability Hub MN at 1-866-333-2466.

If you fall into certain financial or disability categories a state health care program might be able to pay for your PCA services. To get a state health care program to pay for PCA services, you need to:

- Enroll with Medical Assistance (MA), MinnesotaCare expanded benefits, Alternative Care or a waiver program
- Be able to make decisions about your care or have someone available who is responsible for making decisions for you
- Live in a home or apartment, not a nursing home or hospital
- Meet certain rules about how much care you need
- Have a PCA assessment to see if you qualify for services

## How do I apply for the PCA program?

[Contact your county social services office](#) to find out how to set up an assessment. Tell them if you need an interpreter.

You can also get information and help from the Senior LinkAge Line at 1-800-333-2433 or Disability Hub MN at 1-866-333-2466. Ask about PCA options available, agencies that offer PCA services and how to hire a PCA yourself.

If you are enrolled in a managed care health plan, like UCare, Medica, and others, contact them for help and instructions.

## The Assessment

The assessment is done in your home. You get an assessment when you first ask for PCA help and then once a year after that. If your health condition changes or your need for PCA help changes during the year, you can ask for an early assessment.

The assessment can take up to a few hours.

## What kinds of things do they ask me about during the assessment?

They ask you questions to learn about:

- if you need a responsible party
- if you need help to do basic activities on an average day
- your medications
- your health
- your behavior

Tell the person doing the assessment what things you need help with every day or things you need help with every time you do them. This can include hands-on help, help with remembering, and/or being supervised while you do something.



## How do they decide if I can get a PCA?

The assessment helps the county decide **if** you can get help, and how much you can get. The decision depends mostly on if you need help with these daily activities:

- Getting dressed and undressed
- Clipping your nails, brushing your teeth and hair, and other grooming

- Bathing and showering
- Eating and feeding
- Transferring from where you are sitting or lying down to another place
- Walking and getting around
- Turning and moving your body and other positioning in place
- Using the toilet

### **Give Details About Everything**

It's important to tell the person doing the assessment if you need help every time you do any of these activities, or if there are times during the day that you can't do an activity because of your condition.

Give as much detail as you can about your health care needs or limitations. For example, you can get more PCA help if you have complex health issues like wound care or need special equipment to breathe, and you can get more PCA help because of certain kinds of behavior.

Make sure to explain any changes in your health since your last assessment and if you think it has affected your need for PCA services.

### **Good Communication is Really Important**

You need to be understood to get a good assessment. Tell the person doing the assessment if you don't understand things or feel like they don't understand you.



If your interpreter is not doing a good job, tell the person doing the assessment.

### **After the Assessment**

- You get a copy of your PCA Assessment and Service Plan within 10 days. Sometimes it's called a MN Choices Assessment.

- You also get a “notice” about the PCA decision. This “notice” is a letter that tells you if you are getting PCA help and how much. Sometimes it is called a “service agreement” or an “authorization” or “denial.”

### **What if I don’t agree with the assessment?**

If you don’t agree with the decision about your PCA services, you can appeal. The notice should have instructions on how to do this. In general, it is easier to win an appeal if your services are reduced from past years than if you are asking for more PCA hours than you used to have.

See our factsheet [PCA Appeals](#).



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