

Overview

Home health aides help children with medical and functional needs live at home with their families. The aide comes to the home, school or community setting to assist with activities such as dressing and toileting or to perform simple procedures as extensions of therapy or nursing. Home health aides are trained and employed by home health agencies. Personal Care is an alternative service that does not require training or employment by an agency but is more difficult to arrange and get authorized.

Medical Assistance (MA, also called Medicaid) Coverage

Under MA's children's benefit (called EPSDT), children under 21 are entitled to receive home health care to the extent it is medically necessary (private insurance, if any, must be billed first.) A doctor's letter explaining the medical necessity must be submitted to the child's MA plan. Home health aide or personal care services are not considered medically necessary when a parent is able and available to provide the care, taking into consideration their need to sleep, work, and attend to other responsibilities. If your child's MA plan denies some or all of the services, you have the right to file an appeal. If filed within 10 days of a denial notice, current services must continue pending the outcome of the appeal. If aides are authorized but not available, call the Special Needs Unit at your child's MA plan for assistance. A national shortage of direct care workers, including home health and personal care aides is an ongoing barrier to needed care. Parents can be hired and paid by home health agencies to provide the authorized home health aide hours, (see [Fast Facts: Parents as Home Health Aides](#)) but cannot be paid to provide personal care services.

Other Funding Sources

MA's Home and Community-Based Service (HCBS) waivers do not offer services that can be provided by the regular MA program (EPSDT for children) but, because MA will not pay for an aide when a parent is available, the HCBS waivers do offer Respite by an aide when parents are available but need a break (see [Fast Facts: HCBS Waivers](#)). Children are also entitled to aides provided by the school district if needed to attend school. You may rely on your child's MA benefit for this service or on the school district. Be sure to list the service in your child's Individualized Education Program or "504 Plan."

How to get started:

- If you haven't done so already, enroll your child in MA at your local County Assistance Office or online at www.compass.state.pa.us.
- Get a letter of medical necessity for home health aide services from your child's doctor.
- Find a home health agency in your child's network through the plan's online directory or by contacting their Special Needs Unit.
- Submit the letter of medical necessity to the home health agency that you choose.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Special Needs Units](#)

[PH-95: A Guide to Getting Medicaid for a Child With a Disability \(PHLP\)](#)

Pennsylvania Health Law Project www.phlp.org

Disability Rights Pennsylvania
www.disabilityrightspa.org