

HOW SMALL FAVORS MIGHT TURN INTO BIGGER ISSUES

When it comes to caring for people with disabilities, or seniors needing assistance, we see many caregivers who go above and beyond in their required duties, with their hearts and good intentions in the right place to help those they are caring for. We also see that sometimes, the requests attendant care workers receive go far beyond what they are expected to do.

Every person requiring care should have a plan of care, (or care plan) that specifies the duties that the attendant care workers who are coming in to help them are required to perform. Abiding by the care plan will keep things simple, honest and in compliance.

Then time goes by and the care plan has been forgotten and a consumer would like their holiday decorations taken down out of storage and put up on display. It sounds simple enough, and the caregiver agrees to help (who wouldn't want to help decorate!), until they are up on a shaky ladder, going into an attic to get the heavy boxes and something goes wrong and the worker ends up falling, with an injury that takes them out of work for months.

Or maybe a worker is normally tasked with doing laundry, cooking supper, washing the dishes, and performing various personal care duties for their consumer. Suddenly the consumer has their grown child with her three children move into the house because there were no other options and the grown child has to work a full time job. The consumer is not able to care for the children's needs, and laundry and meal preparation is now being done for all living in the house by the worker, as the worker feels badly for the consumer and the whole situation, but other tasks the consumer needs are being neglected.

It could be as simple as a consumer asking a worker to walk their non-service dog because the person who normally walks the dog is away. Then that one time turns into every time and then the consumer is calling the worker outside of their scheduled shifts to ask if they can just come to walk the dog as a favor because there is no one else who can do it.

So we see how one small favor can grow and then becomes something else altogether. What a worker intended as being helpful is now an issue because it has grown into a much larger project, and the worker feels like they are being taken advantage of. Being out of compliance is now a reality.

So how does a consumer know if their requests are crossing the line? If the request is not on the plan of care, one should not ask a worker to do whatever is not on the plan. If the duty is part of what a worker is required to perform, but it exceeds the requirement, one should not ask the worker to do that (meal prep for 6 instead of one, laundry for the family instead of just the consumer). If one questions whether or not they should ask a worker to do something, look at the care plan and follow those guidelines.

Keep in mind that many workers are happy to help out when they can, and many will never say no (even when they should). Also keep in mind that many workers may feel like they should not or cannot say no to their consumers' needs, even if that request does not fall under what they are normally responsible for doing, so they say yes, when they should be saying no – again, crossing the lines could be a compliance issue. If a consumer thinks their request to their worker is crossing the lines and not work related, or if their request is taking advantage of their workers good heartedness, then they should ask someone else to help with those tasks. As always, if a consumer is unsure if a requested task is possible or not, they should contact their service coordinator for verification.