

Who is a Caregiver?

Types of Caregivers?

- **Family (informal) caregiver:** An unpaid adult—often a spouse/partner, relative, or friend—who assists with daily activities (e.g., bathing, dressing, meals), transportation, care coordination, and sometimes medical tasks at home or in the community.
- **Paid (formal) caregiver:** A worker employed directly by a family or through an agency (home care, home health, residential/long-term care) to provide personal assistance and basic health services within the scope of their training and role.

What caregivers do (typical tasks)

- **Activities of Daily Living (ADLs):** Bathing, dressing, toileting, transferring, eating.
- **Instrumental ADLs:** Meals, housekeeping, shopping, managing appointments/medications.
- **Health-related tasks (role-dependent):** Vital signs, simple wound care, catheter/ostomy assistance, under nurse supervision in many settings.
(Scope varies by role and state.)

Pathways to Become a Caregiver

Becoming a family caregiver (unpaid)

There is **no license required** to help a loved one at home, but families benefit from preparation:

1. **Learn the role.**
2. **Clarify legal/financial authority** (HIPAA releases; powers of attorney; advance directives).
3. **Pursue core skills** (CPR/First Aid) via the American Red Cross or equivalent.

4. Explore support/benefits:

- **Job-protected leave:** The U.S. **FMLA** grants eligible workers up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to care for a spouse/child/parent with a serious health condition.
- **Getting paid as a family caregiver:** Many states' **Medicaid consumer-directed** programs allow some family/friends to be paid; rules vary by state. Federal and state portals summarize options.
- **Veterans Affairs (VA) caregivers:** Eligible Veteran households may qualify for the **Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC)** (monthly stipend, training, respite, etc.).

Becoming a Paid caregiver

1. Core training content across entry-level aide roles

- Personal care & safety: Body mechanics, transfers, hygiene, nutrition, falls prevention, infection control.
- Observation & reporting: Vital signs basics, recognizing changes, incident reporting.
- Client rights & communication: Confidentiality, boundaries, cultural humility.
- Emergency response: Basic first aid/CPR (often required by employers).

2. Registration (Varies from state to state)

For example, California Home Care Aide registration:

- HCA Registry (non-medical home care) online application, Live Scan fingerprint background check, and training (initial + annual); agencies often require TB clearance before work.

Takeaway: Federal rules set floors; states and employers often set higher bars.

3. Medical & Safety Requirements for Caregivers

- Baseline health screening

- Tuberculosis (TB): CDC and the National TB Controllers Association recommend baseline TB screening for healthcare personnel and no routine serial testing unless exposure/ongoing risk; state/local regulations may require specific tests or timing. Employers typically require documentation before patient contact.
- Physical exam/fit for duty: Frequently required by employers/registries (state-specific).

- Immunizations & infection prevention

- Vaccination expectations: Employers follow ACIP/CDC guidance for adult and healthcare-personnel immunization (e.g., Hepatitis B, MMR, Varicella, Tdap, Influenza, COVID-19 per current recommendations). Requirements can vary by state/employer and patient population.
- Standard precautions: Hand hygiene, PPE use, and safe handling of sharps are universal expectations embedded in employer policies.

- Certification in emergencies

- CPR/First Aid/AED: Frequently required or preferred for HCAs and strongly recommended for family caregivers; reputable options include the American Red Cross (nationwide, blended/online + in-person skills). Renew at the interval specified by the certifying body/employer.

Ethical, Legal, and Safety Considerations (for Families and Workers)

- **Know the scope:** Aides must work within their training and the employer's policies; invasive tasks typically require a nurse or higher license. (See agency CoPs/policies.) [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#)
- **Respect privacy:** Follow HIPAA rules when handling medical information in regulated settings; family caregivers should still use consent forms and secure storage. (See NIA caregiver guidance.) [National Institute on Aging](#)
- **Protect against infection & injury:** Use standard precautions and proper body mechanics; request lift/transfer training. OSHA and employer safety programs govern on-the-job hazards. [OSHA](#)

To learn more, explore the resources provided below:

https://order.nia.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/caregivers-handbook-nia_0.pdf?

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/caregiving?>

<https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/cpr?>

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/28-fmla?>

<https://www.usa.gov/disability-caregiver?>

<https://www.usa.gov/disability-caregiver?>

<https://www.va.gov/family-and-caregiver-benefits/health-and-disability/comprehensive-assistance-for-family-caregivers/?>

https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/community-care/home-care-services/home-care-aide-application-process?utm_source=chatgpt.com

<https://www.cdc.gov/tb-healthcare-settings/hcp/screening-testing/index.html?>

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/imz-schedules/index.html?>