

24

Managing Time, Energy, and Money

1. Explain three ways to work more efficiently

Taking care of the client and other family members who need assistance and support is the home health aide's most important responsibility. For this to be accomplished, an orderly and clean environment must be maintained. To balance these responsibilities, HHAs must manage their time and energy efficiently. The following are guidelines for working efficiently:

Guidelines: Working Efficiently

- G Distribute tasks.** Look at the client care plan and your assignments. Note the assigned housekeeping tasks. Divide the tasks and schedule them for the week and the month. Make sure all your assignments can be completed in the time allowed. Some tasks are best accomplished together. For example, it is most efficient to do all the laundry on one day. Then you are able to do larger loads and fold and iron all at once. Plan one morning or afternoon to do the laundry. For greater efficiency, plan other tasks to do while loads are in the washer or dryer.
- G Prioritize tasks.** Prioritizing your tasks is an important time and energy management skill. Think about the jobs you want to complete throughout the day. Which ones must be done immediately? Which ones must be done at a certain time? Which activities are not absolutely essential and could be put off? Spend time on activities that are most important first.
- G Simplify tasks.** Take time to think about how you will go about doing a task. Try to eliminate a few steps but still get the same result. For example, when baking a cake, can you mix everything in one bowl? When you clean up, can you stack everything on a tray and take it all to the sink at one time?
- G Be realistic.** You may not be able to get everything done even if you plan carefully. Reassess your schedule during the day. Have you finished what you planned or are you behind? When tasks take longer than you expected, or when unexpected tasks need to be done, be realistic about what you can do. Do not be afraid to change your plan. It is better to accomplish the highest priority tasks and let others go unfinished than to do everything halfway. The key to success is to be flexible.

Here are ways to conserve time and energy:

- G Energize.** Use proper body mechanics. Take occasional breaks to restore your energy. Alternate longer tasks with shorter tasks, and high-energy tasks with low-energy ones. Take care of yourself—eat right, exercise, and get plenty of rest.

- G Organize.** At the beginning of the day, do a mental rundown of the tasks that must be done, and rearrange your schedule if necessary. Plan what must be done and do it. Store frequently used items in convenient places near the work area. Assemble your equipment and materials before you begin a task. Keep clutter under control, and work in good light. Think about how to organize activities and equipment to avoid unnecessary work. Make and use shopping lists.
- G Economize.** Save time and energy by doing a little extra ahead of time. Use trays, baskets, or carts to carry several things at once. Prepare often used food items ahead of time and freeze them. Cook larger quantities and freeze meal-size portions. Cook more than one item in the oven at a time.
- G Minimize.** Look for ways to make tasks shorter and easier. Modify your workspace to make your work easier and more comfortable.
- G Specialize.** Use the right tool for each task. For example, a vegetable peeler is more efficient than a knife for peeling carrots. Take pride in what you are doing.
- G** Finally, be sure to thank family members who have picked up, cleaned up, or participated in household chores.

2. Describe how to follow an established work plan with the client and family

The client care plan and an HHA's assignments will explain the tasks that are required. The HHA can develop her own work plan. This will allow her to finish all of the assigned tasks as quickly and efficiently as possible. For each day or block of time spent in a home, the HHA can list all the tasks that need to be completed and then prioritize them. The most important should be marked 1, and the next most important 2, and so on. Finally, the HHA can write out a schedule for the day, filling in the highest

priority tasks first. If there are tasks that must be done at a certain time, those tasks must be put on the schedule at the appropriate time.

Tasks should be distributed so that the HHA is not trying to do all the house cleaning in one afternoon. She may then end up with no time to bathe or care for a client. Simplifying tasks whenever possible will allow the HHA to accomplish more.

Following an established work plan means more can be done in less time. It will also allow clients and families to know what to expect. The HHA may even want to discuss the plan with a client or family member as she is preparing it or when it is finished (Fig. 24-1). Some people appreciate knowing what will be happening in their homes at any given time.



Fig. 24-1. Prioritizing assignments helps a home health aide work more efficiently. The client should be included in the planning.

3. Discuss ways to handle inappropriate requests

Occasionally, an HHA may be asked to do something that is not in the care plan or her assignments. Because each client's situation is unique, HHAs are not assigned the same tasks for every client. For example, the care plan may specify grocery shopping for Mrs. Singer, who lives alone and cannot drive. But if another client who lives with family members asks the HHA to run

to the store, the HHA has to say no if it is not in the care plan or her assignments.

Several things can help an HHA handle requests that she must refuse. First, she must explain that she is only allowed to do tasks assigned in the care plan. She can explain that nurses familiar with the client's condition give her assignments. It is helpful for the HHA to emphasize that she would like to help, but that she is limited to the tasks outlined in the care plan and her assignments. After explaining this to the client, she should contact her supervisor and discuss the request. The supervisor may add the task requested by the client to the HHA's assignments. It is possible it was left out by mistake. The HHA should document the client's request and the actions she took to address it.

Establishing a work schedule will also help an HHA handle inappropriate requests. If a client and family know what to expect, they may not be tempted to ask the HHA to do other tasks. Sharing a schedule of everything she must accomplish in a visit may help the client understand the HHA's job. If inappropriate requests continue, clients or family members should be referred to the supervisor.

4. List five money-saving homemaking tips

The home health aide can use these tips to help save the client money:

Check store circulars for advertised specials. The HHA should plan menus around foods that are a good value; for example, raw foods are less expensive than prepared ones. Chapter 23 discusses more ways to plan economical meals.

Use coupons. The HHA can check online for coupons or scan the newspaper if a client receives one.

Shop from a list. The HHA should not be tempted by items that are not on the list, even if they are on sale.

Avoid convenience stores. Shopping at large supermarkets or discount stores usually guarantees the best prices.

Plan ahead. Restocking needed items before they run out will save money. Planning will also save time and energy. For example, the HHA will not have to make a special trip when she discovers the client is out of laundry detergent.

5. List guidelines for handling a client's money

Different states and employers have different regulations and policies regarding healthcare employees handling clients' money. An HHA must find out from his employer whether he will be expected to handle a client's money. If he is not allowed to handle money, he should never agree to do so, even occasionally. He could get himself and his employer into serious trouble. If an HHA's state and his employer permit him to handle clients' money, there are several guidelines he must follow:

Guidelines: Handling a Client's Money

- G** Never use a client's money for your own needs, even if you plan to pay it back. This is considered stealing. You could lose your job and/or be arrested.
- G** Estimate the amount of money you will need before requesting it. If you are going to the grocery store, show the client your list and ask how much he is willing to spend on groceries or how much is budgeted. You may need to take things off of your list or calculate the total bill as you shop in order to stay within the budget allotted (Fig. 24-2).
- G** Get a receipt for every purchase. This proves how much you spent and provides a record for the client and you.
- G** Return receipts and change to the client or family member immediately. Do not wait

until the end of the day or week to settle up. Do it right away while everything is fresh in your mind. Forgetting to return change could be viewed by the client or a family member as stealing.

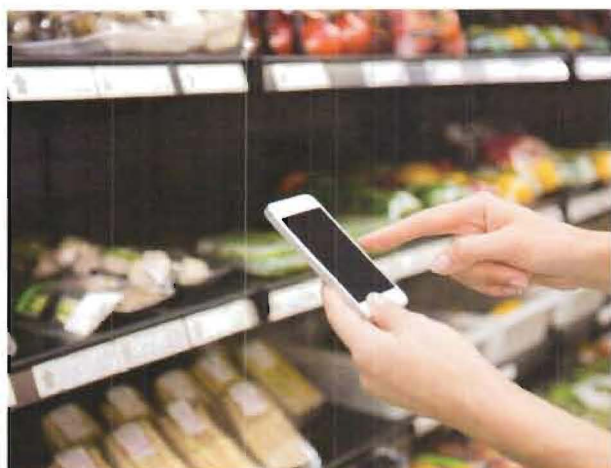


Fig. 24-2. Using your phone's calculator in the grocery store helps you stay within the client's budget.

- G** Keep a record of the money you have spent. Follow your agency's policies and procedures for documenting money issues. Write down how much you spent and where. Note any change returned to the client. The better record you have, the smaller the chance of any misunderstanding.
- G** Keep a client's cash separate from yours. If you use the client's cash, do not put it in your own wallet. Keep it in a separate, safe place. Do the same with change. This will prevent confusion.
- G** Never offer money advice to a client. Do not refer a client to others regarding financial matters.
- G** Remember, your clients' financial matters are private. Never discuss your clients' money matters with anyone.

Chapter Review

1. List three ways to work more efficiently.
2. What does it mean to prioritize tasks?
3. How should the HHA handle requests that are not in the care plan?
4. How might an HHA help a client and his family understand the HHA's job? How might this reduce inappropriate requests?
5. List five money-saving homemaking tips.
6. List six guidelines for handling a client's money.
7. Why is it important to get a receipt for anything purchased with a client's money?
8. When shopping for clients, how can calculating costs in the store be useful?