

# PASS

Tennessee Personal Assistance Supports and Services

**Mentor's Guide**

**A Handbook  
for  
Mentors and Agencies**





# **Tennessee PASS Project Mentor's Guide**

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## The Purposes and Benefits of Mentoring

Mentoring is designed to make an important contribution to the professional and personal development of the person being mentored.

Through the Tennessee PASS Project, people with disabilities will have the opportunity to self direct the care and assistance they receive in order to live full, productive lives in their own homes and communities. As a mentor with this Project you will be helping people achieve their goals.

For **the participant**, the mentoring process can help to:

- Encourage reflection in practice
- Develop understanding and skills
- Recognize effective practice
- Identify areas for development
- Help to develop an overview of their own role
- Enhance self-confidence and self-esteem
- Provide a sense of being supported (and reduce any feelings of isolation or stress)
- Give them a role model
- Provide professional information and advice
- Offer personal support

For **the agency**, the mentoring process can help to:

- Establish a better understanding and benefits of self-directed care
- Identify areas where agency can provide support with the hiring process, payroll, and substitute or replacement PAs
- Broaden experience by allowing the individuals to train and manage their own PA

Equally there are benefits for **the mentor** such as:

- Improved personal relationships skills
- Developing specific skills
- Self-reflection that can lead to development in the mentor's own practice
- Development of professional relationships
- Enhancement of peer recognition

## **Being a Mentor**

Becoming a mentor is a selfless act and a rewarding experience. Choosing to give of yourself to assist others is truly commendable.

Your own life experiences in learning and working with others qualifies you to be a mentor. For this program, your experience working with Personal Assistants (PAs) is specifically why you are involved. The best mentors are people whose own enthusiasm is so contagious that they inspire others. Sharing your own experiences, expertise and interests is the beginning of mentoring. The object of mentoring is to encourage a less experienced person and to support their interests.

As part of the Tennessee PASS Project, you will be mentoring people who are about to start receiving PA services. This is a new experience for many of them, and as you know, the recruiting, hiring, training and managing of a PA can be very challenging. Participants in this program need your support and encouragement. They also need to draw upon your knowledge and experience to guide them through this life changing time.

### **Topics to Discuss:**

- How the Participant and PA can and should respect each other's differences.
- How to communicate well with their PA.
- Developing a successful working relationship takes:
  - Time
  - Patience
  - Trust
  - Communication
- How to identify potentially abusive situations.
- How to protect oneself against abuse.

## **The Role of a Mentor**

A mentor is a caring adult who will serve as a positive role model, providing support, friendship and encouragement to an individual about to embark on self-directed, PA services.

### **The Role of a Mentor**

- Serves as a role model
- Provides support, encouragement, and positive perspectives
- Serves as a resource person and confidant when challenges occur
- Provides encouragement and support while participant is in the process of preparing to move or make life changes into the PA program
- Is knowledgeable of materials the participant will be using to recruit, hire and manage their PA
- Asks for and uses the participant's knowledge and experience
- Is aware of and tells participant about additional learning opportunities and resources for information
- Shows participants what is in this for them, how their life will be changed through self-direction and the use of Personal Assistance Services
- Is enthusiastic
- Provides support and suggestions if participant needs to fire a PA
- Participates in Mentor training and support group meetings to share resources and experiences
- Seeks information and assistance to resolve questions or problems
- Advises the Mentor Coordinator of problem resolution and program changes
- Maintains a journal of mentor activities to record mentor experiences and periodically shares this information with the Mentor Coordinator
- Agrees to a no-fault conclusion of the mentoring relationship when (for any reason) the time is right

## **Guidelines for Training**

For the purpose of the PASS Project, part of your mentoring will be to prepare the person you mentor to train and supervise his/her PA.

The person you will be mentoring has been given a User's Guide to assist him/her through each step of recruiting, screening, hiring, training and managing his/her PA. You may want to access this guide in order to help him/her through the process.

The following is a guideline to help you as you prepare to mentor.

### **Issues to be addressed...**

1. The role of the Employer, PA and Agency.

Remind the person you are mentoring that s/he is the employer. Regardless of who pays the PA, the employer determines what, when and how his/her services will be provided. The User's Guide contains a section that details the responsibilities of the Employer, PA and Agency. Reviewing this material will help you mentor on the roles of each.

2. Self-assessment and PA job description.

Encourage each person to complete a self-assessment process (one tool is provided with the User's Guide). If necessary, you can help them determine exactly what his/her needs are. You can also discuss the importance of determining what characteristics s/he will want the PA to have. Helping the person you mentor to develop an individualized job description is the first step in establishing his/her training program. The User's Guide is a helpful tool for understanding and creating a job description.

3. Recruiting, screening, interviewing and hiring a PA.

Since you are aware of the many challenges this part of the process presents, your support during this time will be crucial. You can help the person you mentor avoid some of the obstacles you may have experienced. You may want to utilize the User's Guide for direction as the participant may be referring to it for guidance.

#### 4. Training a PA.

This is the part of the process that may be the most unnerving for the person you are mentoring. Encourage him/her to use the job description as a training tool. It should outline the specifics of the care needed. Support and guidance in the areas of orientation, being assertive and training method are key components of this aspect. The User's Guide will assist you both through this process and help you to provide the encouragement and support necessary.

#### 5. Supervising a PA.

Your experience and expertise in managing and supervising PA's will be very useful to the person you mentor. Once the training process is complete, maintaining the employer/PA relationship is the next challenge. The person you mentor may need to call on you for support from time to time after the training phase. Part of your role will be to serve as a confidant and provide encouragement as needed. The User's Guide has a section on the elements of management and direction that may help you as you assist the participant with this aspect of the process.

#### 6. Protective Oversight/Personal Safety

It is imperative to discuss personal safety with the person you are mentoring. Encourage him/her to do a criminal background check on any individual they are considering for employment, prior to offering the job. Making the person you are mentoring aware of what to look out for and how to avoid dangerous situations could prevent him/her from becoming a victim of abuse, neglect or exploitation. Be sure to discuss the different types of abuse that can occur including physical, sexual, emotional, verbal and criminal. Encourage him/her to report any type of abuse, neglect or exploitation by confiding in someone they trust even if they are being threatened or feel embarrassed. Help them identify the people in their life that they trust and who they can rely on for help. Let them know that if an incident occurs, they can report it and will receive the support they need.

The Tennessee PASS Project User's Guide is available for use from The Arc of Tennessee. Both the participant and the mentor can utilize this tool as a step by step guide through the process of self-directed PA services.



The Arc of Tennessee also has a Lending Library. There are books, videos, brochures and tapes available for use to anyone in this Project or anyone interested in self-determination and self-directed services.

For a list of consultants eligible to provide Consumer-to-Consumer mentoring and Consumer-to-Agency mentoring please call The Arc of TN at 615-248-5878.

### **Priorities and Outcomes**

The following is a chart/checklist you may want to utilize to help identify priorities, whose responsibility it is to carry out those priorities, and the expected outcome. This can be used to establish specific areas of training you and the participant agree to address in the mentoring relationship.

Priority	Responsibility	Expected Outcome
Personal Safety		
Self-assessment		
Job description		
Recruiting PA		
Screening PAs		
Interviewing PAs		
Hiring PA(s)		
Training PA		
Managing/Supervising PA		

# Personal Stories

## Meet Floyd Stewart, Jr.

My name is Floyd Stewart, Jr., my disabling condition, quadriplegia, came as the result of an automobile accident January 15, 1984. I was 35 years old. I spent six and one half months at the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center in Smyrna, Tennessee.

I entered Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, sponsored by the Division of Rehabilitation Services, in January of 1985. As a freshman, I majored in psychology. There I had my first taste of working with personal assistant (PA), i.e. screening, interviewing, hiring, orientating, training and managing my personal care arrangement. ***I quickly learned that it is better to do a good job on the front end than to try and patch things up midstream.***

The first issue, in my opinion, when seeking a PA is honesty. Find a person you can trust and the rest is simply training through open communication. Once this hurdle is bridged it was up to me to manage time and fiscal resources so that this relationship ran like clockwork. John Lennon once wrote, *"Life is what happens after we've made other plans"* so prepare for the inevitable. Good backup plans are imperative.

I graduated December 16, 1989. I was the intern in a nursing home from March of 1986 to October 3, 1992. I commuted from the nursing home to MTSU and later to work, volunteering at the Technology Access Center. I became a program coordinator for People First of Tennessee, Inc., working as a VISTA worker (Volunteer In Service In America or domestic Peace Corp).

I basically used the same screening technique when interviewing PA's upon moving out of the nursing home. Finding a PA was easier for me than most. The nursing home I lived in warehoused over 650 souls with, as you may imagine, a huge nursing staff. Finding a PA consisted of developing a makeshift application and distributing it to the various nursing stations throughout the facility. Within today's PA market one must use the resources available to her/him (e.g. newspaper, church bulletins, word of mouth etc.) creatively.

I am now employed (since September 2, 1992) full time at the Center for Independent Living of Middle Tennessee (CIL) as a Peer Support Coordinator. I now live in the community independently with the aid of my family and 2 personal care assistants.

## Meet Andrea Cooper

My name is Andrea Cooper. In 1997 while representing my company at a hearing, I had a spinal stroke. I suddenly lost a lot of feeling and movement, and had difficulty breathing. Within minutes I couldn't do anything. I was married, had a house and a pet. I was living life at full speed. I was working, very socially active and doing a lot of volunteer work. Then without warning, I was on a ventilator for two months, in ICU for two and a half months, then in inpatient rehabilitation for five and a half months.

The assistance I needed was more than my husband could provide, especially while working full time. My parents lived 300 miles away so their help was limited. I had quadriplegia and needed assistance with everything including eating, dressing, bathing and transferring in and out of my wheelchair. My hospital nurse and my husband began research to find a suitable nursing home. They found few satisfying answers.

My hospital physical therapist came to my room with a bossy look she often used to get me out of bed on my weakest days. She looked me straight in the eye and said "You need to go home." She made it clear that home was my house, where my husband and pets lived. She explained that home health could provide the therapy I needed, but my job was to find help at home for my "non-medical" needs. I did what I was told but the hourly rates and high turnover meant that care would be costly and not provided consistently by the same caregivers. Still, my therapist was right, and in an instant she opened my eyes to the concept of home-based care. My husband and I decided to hire someone on our own. We were lucky enough to find someone who knew my routine, had my trust and made me laugh. My husband and dad rushed home to build a wheelchair ramp and buy a van. I went home to my two-story house, where we turned the dining room into my bedroom, and my new PA became a part of our family.

I have been back in my house ever since my discharge from the hospital. I have employed dozens of PA's. They have worked in full-time, part-time, respite or travel capacities. Since my divorce, I have become familiar with employing PA's in a live-in capacity as well. Regardless of the hours they serve, my PAs are the backbone of my return to society. I own my house, work full-time, volunteer as a disability advocate and keep an active social life.

***"You need to go home" still rings in my ears. Now I know where home is, and to me, going home is not a routine, it is a victory.***

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44 Vantage Way, Suite 500  
Nashville, TN 37228  
1-800-835-7077  
615-248-5878  
Fax: 615-248-5879  
[www.thearctn.org](http://www.thearctn.org)

PASS Project Director: Michelle Taylor – [mtaylor@thearctn.org](mailto:mtaylor@thearctn.org)