



Developmental
SERVICES

Hiring a Support Worker

A guide for Ontarians with a
developmental disability



Please note: This guide is not financial or legal advice. It is intended to provide general information to help you learn more about the employment process. For legal, financial or other professional advice, contact a lawyer, accountant or other appropriate professional. People who hire workers are required to follow all the laws and rules related to the employment process. If there is any conflict between the laws and this guide, the laws will prevail. The Ministry of Community and Social Services is not responsible or liable for any problems that come up when people employ their own workers.

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Is this guide for me?

Are you a person with a developmental disability in Ontario? Do you get money from a job, a direct funding program, the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) or another source? Would you like to use some of that money to hire someone to support you and your life in the community? Are you a friend or family member of someone who wants to hire their own worker?

If you answered yes to these questions, this guide may help you or someone you know hire a support worker. Hiring a worker may give you more choice and control. But hiring a worker also involves many responsibilities or things you'll have to do. For example, when someone starts working for you, you are responsible for training, paying and managing that person.

As you read through this guide, consider the responsibilities carefully. Hiring a worker can be complicated. This guide does not provide all the information you need to hire a worker, but can introduce you to the responsibilities and help you get started.

If you want to hire a worker, you may want to talk to a family member, friend or someone else you trust. They can give you advice and help you. Professionals, such as lawyers and accountants, may also be able to give you advice and help you hire a worker.

What's in this guide?

This guide is divided into sections about the steps involved in hiring a support worker. Hiring someone to work for you is a big job. You may want to read through the whole guide before you decide if you want to hire someone.

Here is a list of the sections in the guide:

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What do I need help with?

Before you can hire a support worker to help you with your day-to-day activities, you need to know what you need help with.

What do I do every day?

When you are trying to find out your needs, a good place to start is by listing the things you do every day. Make a schedule of the things you do. After you list the things you do now, you can add things you would like to do in the future.

Example

This is what Tanya normally does Monday to Friday:

Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Making breakfast Getting dressed Going to work	Eating lunch Working Going home	Making dinner Walking my dog Watching TV

On Saturdays and Sundays, Tanya likes to clean her home, play with her dog and spend time with her family and friends.

In the future, Tanya would like to take a swimming class on Thursday nights and do errands on the weekend, such as going to the bank and buying groceries.

Which activities do I need help with?

After you make a schedule, look at all of your activities. Think about which ones you can do on your own and which ones you need help with.

Make a list of the activities you need help with, when you do them and how much time each one takes. This will tell you why and when you need support from a worker. This information will help you write a job description and hire someone who is right for you.

Example

Tanya needs help:

- going to the bank and grocery store (every Saturday for 1 hour)
- learning how to swim (Thursday nights for 1 hour), and
- planning new activities with friends (2 hours each month).

How much help can I afford?

Before you can hire a support worker to help you with your day-to-day activities, you need to make sure you know how much help you can afford. The amount of money you can afford to spend on a worker each month depends on how much money you have after you pay your monthly expenses, such as rent, food, telephone bill and other expenses.

How do I figure out how much help I can afford?

If you are not sure how much money you can afford to spend on a worker each month, here is one way how you can figure it out:

1. Add up all the money you get each month (from a job, the government, such as Ontario Disability Support Program or Passport money and other sources). This is your total monthly income.
2. Add up all the money you spend each month (on rent, food, bills and other expenses). Other expenses could be transportation, entertainment, savings and telephone costs. This is your total monthly expenses.
3. Subtract your total expenses from your total income. The amount is how much you can afford to spend on a worker.

Example

Tanya's monthly income	Tanya's monthly expenses	Amount Tanya has after she pays all expenses
\$800 (government) + \$100 (job) \$900 total monthly income	\$400 (rent) \$200 (food) + \$100 (bills and other expenses) \$700 total monthly expenses	\$900 (total income) – \$700 (total expenses) \$200

How much do I need to pay a support worker?

It is up to you to decide how much you want to pay someone to work for you. However, Ontario's Ministry of Labour sets the minimum amounts that employers can pay workers. This is called minimum wage. You must pay at least the minimum wage. To find out more, visit www.ontario.ca/minimumwage.

Talk to someone who knows about hiring people to find out more about how much you should pay a worker. For example, you can talk to a family member or friend who owns a business. Or you could talk to a person with a developmental disability who already has a worker.

How many hours of help will I be able to get each month?

When you decide how much you want to pay a worker, you can figure out how many hours someone can work for you each week.

Example

Tanya has \$200 each month to hire someone. After thinking about the activities she needs help with, Tanya wants to hire someone for 10 hours each month. She wants to pay the worker she hires \$15 per hour. That's \$150 per month. Tanya can afford that.

The Ontario Ministry of Labour sets rules about how many hours people can work in a day and week. For more information, visit www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/pubs/guide/hours.php.

How do I support all the activities I want to do?

You may not always need a paid worker to help you do activities and get more involved in your community. Talk to family members and friends to see if there are other ways you can get support for the activities you want to do. For example, local volunteers, community centres, clubs, places of worship and other groups could help you with activities you want to do.

Look at your list of activities. Decide which things are most important for you and when you need the most support from a worker. Pick the activities you need help with the most.

How do I create a job description to meet my needs?

Now that you know what your needs are and how much help you can afford, you can write a job description to meet your needs.

What is a job description?

Job descriptions outline basic information about a job. Job descriptions tell people who are interested in the job what the job is about. A job description can help them decide if they are qualified for the job and if they want to apply for it.

How do I write a job description?

When you are ready to write a job description, think about the activities you want help with. What skills would a support worker need to help you with those activities? Did you have a worker before that you really liked? Think about that worker's qualities and skills.

When people write job descriptions, they usually include:

- **Job summary:** a short description of the job
- **Duties:** a detailed list of the activities you want the worker to do. Put the most important duties first. Decide if people must have these skills or if they can learn them on the job.
- **Qualifications:** the things someone requires to do the job right, such as education, skills, experience and personal traits
- **Working conditions:** the job's physical requirements, location and hours of work
- **Wages and benefits:** how much you will pay the worker and information about any other benefits you will offer, such as vacation time or access to a car.

Example – Job description

Job summary

Support worker for young woman with a developmental disability.

Duties

- Help person do errands like going to the bank and buying groceries
- Help person learn swimming at community-based swimming lessons
- Help person plan new activities with friends and in the community

Qualifications

- At least two years training and/or experience working with someone with a developmental disability
- Valid Driver's Licence, reliable vehicle and valid car insurance
- Valid Criminal Record Check and Vulnerable Sector Search from this year
- Good attitude and desire to work with someone one-on-one
- First Aid and CPR Certified

Working conditions

Some lifting required for grocery shopping and helping with swimming lessons. Work will occur in the person's home and community. Work is part-time: 10 hours per month during evenings and weekends.

Wages and benefits

\$15 per hour

What is a valid Criminal Record Check and Vulnerable Sector Search?

The people who apply for the job could be strangers. A **Criminal Record Check** and **Vulnerable Sector Search** are documents that can help you know the people who apply for the job are safe. Police departments make these documents. You can call your local police department for more information about these documents.

You may want to ask the people who apply for the job to give you a recent Criminal Record Check and Vulnerable Sector Search. If these documents are old, they may not contain all the information you need to know if a person is safe.

How do I advertise that I'm hiring a support worker?

When your job description is ready, you can:

- tell people about the job
- advertise the job, and
- accept job applications from people.

How do I tell people about the job?

The best way to start spreading the word about your job is by talking to people, such as:

- family and friends
- people you know at agencies where you may have received support, and
- people with a developmental disability who already have a worker or who have hired a worker in the past.

They may already know about workers who can support your needs. If this doesn't help you find possible workers, you can advertise the job. It can help you tell even more people about the job.

How do I advertise a job?

There are many ways you can advertise a job. You can make a poster using your job description and post it on bulletin boards in your community. For example, you could post it at libraries, businesses, community organizations, universities and colleges.

You may want to advertise your job on the Internet. You could talk to community organizations and associations you deal with. They may be able to post your job ad on their websites.

You can also post job ads for free online using such websites as:

- Kijiji (www.kijiji.ca), and
- Craigslist (www.craigslist.ca).

If you have your own website, you could post the job there. And, you could use social media tools, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube or Twitter, to tell people about the job.

Also, you could talk to someone at your local newspaper about advertising the job. These job ads usually cost money. To save money, keep the ad short. Rather than including all the information that is in your job description, just include a few details and ask people to contact you for more information.

What information should I include in the job ad?

Most of the information in the ad should be about the job. These are details that you wrote in the job description. But make sure you include your contact information, such as your phone number and/or email address.

You can also ask people to apply for the job in a specific way. For example, you may want them to send you a resumé.

Example – Job ad

Wanted: support worker for young woman with a developmental disability.

Needs help with banking, grocery shopping and learning to swim. Evenings and weekends. Training provided. Valid Criminal Record Check and Vulnerable Sector Search required.

Please send resumé to Tanya by June 1 at workerneeded@email.com.

Call 555-555-5555 for more info.

How should I ask people to apply for the job?

You can ask people to apply for your job by sending a letter and/or resumé that outlines why they are a good person for the job.

You can decide how you want people to apply for the job you are offering. But whichever way you choose, you may want to receive all resúmes in the same way. This will make it easier to pick the people you want to interview for the job.

How do I interview people for the job?

Once people apply for the job, you need to interview the best people who applied to find out which one you would like to hire. This involves:

- looking at the resumé and picking the people you want to interview
- calling the people you want to interview
- interviewing the people, and
- thinking about and deciding who you may hire from the interviews.

How do I pick the people I will interview?

To pick the people you want to interview, you need to look at and think about all the resumé you received. Depending on how many resumé you received, this can be a big job. You may want to ask a family member, friend or someone else you trust to help you.

Look at all of the applications you received. Compare them to the information you put in your job description. Do any of the people that applied sound like they would be a good worker for you? Which applications are the best?

If some of the people who applied sound good, you can invite them for an interview to find out more about them. If you did not receive any good applications, you do not have to interview anyone. Instead, you could try posting your job ad in different places.

Where should I do the interviews?

You could do the interviews in a public place, such as a community centre or coffee shop. This is for safety because some people you interview could be strangers. For added safety, you may want to ask someone you trust to attend the interview with you.

What do I need to tell people when I contact them for an interview?

When you call people to invite them for an interview, tell them:

- where and when you will do the interview.
- how long you think the interview will take, and
- what they need to bring with them.

You call people about an interview, you can also ask them if they will need any accommodations or support at the interview. For example, if one of the people you are going to interview uses a wheelchair, you can accommodate that person by doing the interview in a place that is wheelchair accessible.

What should I ask people to bring to the interview?

You should ask everyone you interview for a **list of references**. This is a list of people, such as past employers and/or teachers, who know the people you are interviewing. You can call references for more information about the people you are interviewing. This information can help you decide who to hire.

Ask people to bring valid **Criminal Record Check** and **Vulnerable Sector Search** documents with them to the interview. The people you interview will have to get these documents from their local police department. It is their responsibility to pay for these documents.

Also, ask people you are interviewing to bring **proof of qualifications** you require for the job, such as a driver's licence if you will need the worker to drive you places.

How do I prepare interview questions?

You can use the job description you created earlier to help you prepare interview questions. Look at the duties and qualifications you want the worker to have. Ask questions that will help you find out if the people you are interviewing have the right experience, skills and attitude for the job. You can ask a friend, family member or someone you trust to help you prepare and help you at the interview.

Example

Tanya wants to find out about people's training and past work experience. She decides to ask these questions:

- Are you trained to work with people with a developmental disability? Tell me about your training.
- What experience do you have working with people with a developmental disability?

Tanya also wants to know how people will act and support her in certain situations. To do this, Tanya comes up with two situations that could happen when she is with a worker:

1. When you come to work at my home one Saturday, my mom is over and tells you that we should go shopping, but I would rather stay home and watch a movie. What would you do?
2. We arrive at my swim class and it is cancelled. I get very upset when I miss swimming. How would you handle this situation?

Are there interview questions that I should not ask?

Yes, interview questions should always relate to the job.

Interview questions that are too personal are inappropriate, such as questions about a person's age, race, religion, sexual orientation and politics. Visit the Ontario Human Rights Commission's website for more information about this: www.ohrc.on.ca/en/issues/employment.

What are the best answers for my interview questions?

After you have written all the interview questions, think about each question. What is the best answer for each one? What are all of the things you would want someone to say? Make a list of these things. When you need to pick a worker, your answers will help you decide who is best.

What do I need to do at the interview?

At the interview, you are the interviewer. Here is a list of what you can do at an interview:

1. Welcome the person you are interviewing and introduce yourself.
2. Review the person's job application with them and ask any questions you have.
3. Review your job description with the person and ask if they have any questions.
4. Ask your interview questions and take notes on the answers you get.
5. Ask the person if they have any questions and answer them.
6. Ask the person for their list of references, Criminal Record Check and Vulnerable Sector Search and anything else you asked them to bring.
7. Thank the person for coming and tell them when you will decide who you want to hire.

This list outlines what most employers do at interviews. You can use this list to help you keep track of what you need to do, but feel free to change it to meet your needs.

You do not need to pay people to be interviewed. It is important to listen and let the people you are interviewing do most of the talking.

If I get someone to help me with the interview, what is their role?

If you ask someone to help you with the interview, it is up to you to tell them what you want them to do. You can ask them to:

- just be there for support.
- help you ask interview questions, or
- take notes on how the people answer your interview questions.

When the interviews are finished, you could also ask this person to help you decide who to hire.

How do I decide who to hire?

When you finish interviewing people, you need to decide who to hire. Here are some things you can do to help you decide:

- Look at the notes you took about each person's answers to your interview questions. Think about their answers and the best answers you made for each question. Which person's answers are closest to the ones you wanted to get?
- If someone helped you with the interview, you can ask them for advice and talk to them about the people you interviewed.
- Contact the references people gave you for more information.
- Look at the Criminal Record Check and Vulnerable Sector Search documents you received to make sure the people you interviewed are safe.

After you get all this information, compare it to your job description. Which person has all of the skills you want in a worker? Which person do you think will be the best worker for you?

What do I need to do to call references for more information?

Before you call references, prepare questions you want to ask them. These questions may be different from the interview questions you asked. You can also ask questions about things the person said in the interview. But don't ask questions that are too personal, such as questions about a person's age, race, religion, sexual orientation and politics.

Example – Questions to ask references

Tanya interviewed Jen for the job. Jen gave Tanya three references she could call. The references are all past employers. Tanya will ask Jen's references these questions:

- What were Jen's duties as your employee?
- What were Jen's strengths and weaknesses?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how was Jen at her job and why?
- I need someone to help me with banking, grocery shopping, swimming and planning new activities. Do you think Jen could do these tasks well? Why?
- Would you hire Jen again?
- Is there anything else you would like me to know about Jen?

When you call the references, introduce yourself and say why you are calling before you start asking questions. After the people answer your questions, thank them for their time.

What if I don't think any of the people I interviewed will be a good worker?

If you don't think any of the people you interviewed will be a good worker, you don't have to hire anyone. Don't worry. This happens sometimes. You can advertise the job again, get new applications and do new interviews.

You could call the people you interviewed to thank them for applying for the job and tell them your decision. They may want to know why you do not want to hire them. You can tell them, but you don't have to. If you do tell them, be honest and give them useful advice about what they could do better next time. Do not tell them what their references said about them. That information is private.

How do I hire someone?

After you decide who would be the best worker for you, you can call the person to say that you would like to hire them if they are still interested in the job. This section will tell you about:

- what to do whether the person refuses or accepts your job offer
- employment contracts, and
- paying your worker.

What do I do if the person does not accept the job offer?

If the person is not interested in the job you need to decide if you would like to offer the job to any of the other people you interviewed. If you don't think any of the other people you interviewed would be a good worker for you, you can advertise the job again, get new applications and do new interviews.

What do I do if the person accepts the job offer?

If the person accepts the offer to work for you, set up a meeting to discuss the details of the job. You can meet the person at your home to show them where they will be working. You do not pay the person to attend this meeting.

Before you meet the person you are hiring create an **employment contract or agreement**. The contract outlines all the details about the job, including your responsibilities and your worker's responsibilities.

You and the worker can sign the contract at the meeting. This will help protect you and your worker if there are any disagreements about your responsibilities later on.

What information do I need to put in an employment contract or agreement?

Making employment contracts and agreements for workers can be complicated. The information you include in a contract or agreement can depend on the employment status of the worker. There are two types of employment status:

1. employee, and
2. self-employed.

Whether your worker is an employee or is self-employed can depend on many factors. For example, if you control when your worker works for you and what your worker does for you, your worker could be an employee. Self-employed workers have more control over what they do. Self-employed workers usually can work whenever they want to work. Self-employed workers could also take the money you are paying them and hire someone else to do the work.

A lawyer can help you decide if a worker is an employee or is self-employed. Consulting a lawyer could cost you money. If you can't afford to pay for legal costs, Legal Aid Ontario gives low-income people access to a range of legal services. For more information about Legal Aid Ontario, visit its website: www.legalaid.on.ca.

Also, the Canada Revenue Agency created a guide to help people find out if a worker is an employee or is self-employed. You can read the guide online: www.cra-arc.gc.ca/E/pub/tg/rc4110/rc4110-e.html.

You may want to talk to a lawyer about making an employment contract or agreement that's right for your worker. Contracts and agreements often include sections on:

- job duties and tasks.
- personal rules and requirements (for example, being on time, not using your phone for personal calls, not smoking in your house, etc.).
- work schedule (days and hours of work).
- rate of pay and pay schedule (how much and when you will pay the worker).
- vacation and holidays.
- information about taxes and other government rules.
- trial period (this is trying out your worker for a short period of time, such as three months, to make sure the worker can support your needs. At the end of the trial period, you can decide to keep the worker or let the worker go, based on how well they work), and
- ending employment (this could include rules about when a worker wants to quit, such as how many days notice they need to give you before they can quit).

You can include other information in the contract you or a lawyer think is important. Make sure everything in the contract obeys laws related to taxes, employment and human rights.

Should I tell the other people I interviewed about my decision?

After you and your worker sign the contract, you could call the other people you interviewed to thank them for applying and tell them your decision to hire someone else.

They may want to know why you don't want to hire them. You can tell them, but you don't have to. If you do tell them, it is good to be kind, but honest, and give them useful advice about what they could do better next time. Do not tell them what their references said about them. That information is private.

How do I pay my worker?

Paying your worker can be complicated because there are several laws you need to follow. How you pay your worker can depend on whether your worker is an employee or is self-employed. You may want to discuss payroll with professionals, such as an accountant and a lawyer. You could ask a family member or friend to help you find and contact a professional.

The Canada Revenue Agency website outlines the steps you need to take as an employer to setup your payroll. For more information visit www.cra-arc.gc.ca and click on "payroll" under "links for businesses." The Ontario Ministry of Labour also has information for employers about paying wages: www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/pubs/guide/paywage.php.

Are there any resources that can help me with my contract and payroll?

Yes, there are resources that can help you with making a contract and setting up a payroll for your worker. Other than talking to professionals, such as a lawyer and an accountant, you may want to take a look at some of these links:

- Complying with the Employment Standards Act (ESA) - A Workbook for Employers (Ontario Ministry of Labour): www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/tools/esworkbook/index.php
- Employment: Your Rights and Responsibilities (Ontario Human Rights Commission): www.ohrc.on.ca/en/issues/employment
- Employers' Guide - Payroll Deductions and Remittances (Canada Revenue Agency): www.cra-arc.gc.ca/E/pub/tg/t4001/

What do I do when my worker starts the job?

When your worker starts, you may need to:

- train them
- build a good working relationship with them, and
- protect yourself and your property.

What does training include?

Training your worker means showing and telling your worker what you want them to do and how you want them to do these things. This could include talking about:

- your daily activities
- your worker's duties, and
- any rules you have, such as not wanting your worker to smoke in your house.

Writing instructions about things your worker needs to do could help them learn, because they could be learning a lot of new things all at once.

Example – Tanya trains Jen, her new worker

Tanya wants Jen to help her with grocery shopping. When Jen starts, Tanya gives Jen a list of her favourite meals to help her know what they'll need to buy at the grocery store on the weekend.

Training your worker is also an opportunity for you to get to know each other. You can introduce your worker to your family and friends. Try to build a good working relationship with your worker. But remember, you are in charge. Your worker should follow your directions.

You must pay your worker for training.

How do I protect myself and my property?

The worker you hire may be a stranger. It is very important to protect yourself and your property. Here are some tips that may help you do that:

- Get a Criminal Record Check and Vulnerable Sector Search before you hire the worker. Your local police department can give you more information about this.
- Know when abuse or neglect might be happening.
- Never give your credit card, banking information, PIN numbers and other personal information to your worker.
- Check your bank and credit card statements each month for strange activity.
- Check your phone bills to make sure you are not charged for calls you did not make.
- Keep your medications, valuables, money and personal documents in a safe place.
- Have a plan in case your worker stops working for you and make sure you get back any house keys you gave them. If you can't get them back, change your locks.

How do I know when abuse or neglect might be happening?

Knowing when abuse or neglect might be happening is one of the most important ways to protect yourself and your property.

There are many kinds of abuse, including:

- **Physical abuse** (pushing, hitting or rough handling)
- **Sexual abuse** (inappropriate touching, forcing you to do sexual acts, making you look at sexual pictures or videos or making offensive sexual comments)
- **Emotional abuse** (bullying, creating fear, keeping you away from family and friends or not giving you privacy)
- **Verbal abuse** (using offensive language or making threats)
- **Financial abuse** (stealing your money or financial information or forcing you to give your financial information)

Neglect is when someone is not taking care of your health and safety needs or denying you food or medication.

If you think you are being abused or neglected in any way, talk to a family member, friend or someone you trust. If you need urgent help, contact the police.



What happens when the job ends?

Sometime in the future, your worker's job may end. This could happen because:

- you no longer need or want your worker's support, or
- your worker decides to quit.

Why would I no longer need or want my worker's support?

Someday you may no longer need your worker. This could happen because your needs have changed and you no longer need support.

You may decide you don't want your worker's support because your worker:

- stops providing the support you need.
- does not follow your rules or instructions.
- does not show up for work or often arrives late.
- steals your money or personal property, or
- abuses or neglects you.

What do I do if I no longer need or want my worker's support?

Whether you no longer need or want your worker's support, you need to end your worker's employment. Sometimes this is called firing your worker.

Think carefully about the reasons why you think the job should end. If you are having problems with your worker, you may want to discuss them and try to solve them as they come up. You could give your worker a chance to improve (unless it is a serious situation like theft or abuse). But if the problems continue, you can end your worker's employment.

How do I end my worker's employment?

Plan how you will end your worker's employment. Some steps you could take include:

- Deciding when the worker will stop working for you:
 - In serious cases, such as theft or abuse, you could fire the worker right away.
 - In other cases, you should give the worker days or weeks of notice. Ontario's Ministry of Labour sets how much notice you must give. For more information, visit:
www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/pubs/guide/termination.php.
- Writing a letter to your worker that says you are ending their employment. You do not have to give reasons why you are ending their employment.
- Creating a list of things that the worker needs to return to you, such as your house keys.
- Having a back-up plan until you hire someone else or having another worker in place who will be able to start right away.
- Completing any financial or legal documents that may be needed (you should discuss this with a professional, such as a lawyer or an accountant).

- Having a family member, friend or someone else with you when you fire the worker (this can be for safety reasons if the worker gets angry or starts arguing with you).

Be professional and respectful when you talk to your worker about ending their job.

Why would my worker quit the job?

Your worker could decide to quit for many reasons. For example, your worker may have found a new job or decided to move out of town. You can ask your worker why they are quitting, but they do not have to tell you.

What happens if my worker decides to quit?

If your worker decides to quit, make sure they tell you ahead of time so you can find a new worker or get a back-up worker to help you. Your employment contract should say how much notice your worker needs to give you before they quit.

If they were a good worker, you may want to offer to provide a reference for them in the future.

How can I build a good working relationship with my worker?

Building a good working relationship with your worker can help them provide you with the support you need. Sometimes managing relationships with workers can be difficult. If you are having a hard time with your worker, you may want to ask a family member or friend for help.

Here are some tips that may help you build a good relationship with your worker:

- Talk and listen to each other.
- Regularly tell your worker how they are doing. This will help them improve.
- Let your worker tell you about concerns, ideas and suggestions.
- Train your worker and help them learn how they need to support you.
- Give your worker a chance to improve unless it is a serious situation like theft or abuse.
- Tell your worker when they do something well and thank them for doing a good job.
- Support your worker when they want to improve their knowledge and skills. Give them time to take courses.

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