



# EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK FOR HOME HEALTH AIDES



PERSONAL CARE

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## MISSION STATEMENT



Lillian Wald

*To improve the **health** and well-being of people through high-quality, cost-effective healthcare in the home and community.*

## VNS HEALTH CORE VALUES

- Our Core Values guide everything we do
- They unify us around a same set of shared principles and behaviors



## **WELCOME TO VNS Health PERSONAL CARE**

Congratulations! You've joined an outstanding team of dedicated employees at VNS Health Personal Care. Our clients and their families often describe our caregivers as "invaluable," "gentle," "honest" and "patient". As a VNS Health Personal Care home health aide, you'll deliver care, companionship, and compassion so we can help make a difference in the lives of sick and elderly New Yorkers.

In every interaction you have with a client or their family member, you represent our organization, and you impact that person's well-being as well as how they feel about VNS Health Personal Care. With each visit, you should aim to provide ***reliable care that your client can count on.***

### **Who is Personal Care?**

#### **It's you.**

You are the reason Personal Care is the best private home care organization in the New York area. You make a difference. Every day. To every client and every family.

You help each client stay in their home.

You're by each client's side when they want to venture out.

You help each client keep their dignity.

You help clients live better. And provide comfort when they can't.

You bring peace of mind and security.

You are the reason our clients choose us.

You are what our clients remember.

#### **Thank you.**

## **ABOUT PERSONAL CARE**

Since 1983, VNS Health Personal Care has provided personal care and companionship, private-duty nursing (by RNs and LPNs), patient assessments and geriatric care to more than 10,000 clients every day. CHAP- accredited and New York State Department of Health (DOH)-licensed, all VNS Health Personal Care home health aides surpass New York State DOH training guidelines. As a part of the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, we also have the support of the largest not-for-profit home health care organization in the nation.

### **A Great Place to Work**

VNS Health Personal Care is consistently acknowledged as a top employer in New York City. We serve more New Yorkers who need home care and provide more hours of employment for home health aides than any other agency. In 2020, 90% of our Home Health Aides recommended VNS Health Personal Care as a good place to work.

### **Our Respected Name**

As a VNS Health Personal Care employee, we count on you to carry on our tradition of excellence and uphold the reputation we've worked hard to build. By listening, offering understanding and going the extra mile, you can help your clients live independently in their homes and deliver home care New Yorkers can count on.

## **OPEN DOOR POLICY AND PROBLEM SOLVING**

### **PROCEDURE**

VNS Health Personal Care encourages employees to bring their questions and concerns to the attention of management. All concerns will be handled in an open manner.

Differences of opinion occasionally arise between individuals in an organization regarding job-related issues. A problem-solving procedure has been established whereby complaints, differences of opinion or dissatisfaction can be resolved amicably, satisfactorily and quickly.

A problem can be considered to be any complaint or dissatisfaction arising from an application, interpretation or claimed violation of any provisions of the Company's policies, rules or procedures, as well as any dissatisfaction with a work situation an employee thinks is improper.

The purpose of the problem-solving procedure is to enable an employee to seek a solution to a problem or complaint with the application of Company rules or policies. The immediate Supervisor will be available to help employees understand and follow each step of the procedure. VNS Health Personal Care encourages staff to use this procedure.

The following is the problem-solving procedure:

1. **THE IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR:** If staff have a problem or complaint, staff are encouraged to discuss the situation with the immediate Supervisor as soon as possible. The immediate Supervisor, after listening and investigating the issue, will provide staff with an answer in a timely fashion. (Should the problem be of a personal nature which staff feel may be embarrassing to discuss with the immediate Supervisor or if for any reason staff do not wish to take the problem to the immediate Supervisor, staff should immediately go to the Unit Manager in the department).
2. **UNIT MANAGER:** If staff are not satisfied with the answer provided by the supervisor, the problem or complaint will be forwarded to the Unit Manager. The Unit Manager will discuss the issue with staff and, the Supervisor where, in the judgment of the Unit Manager, input is required. The Unit Manager will provide staff with a timely response.
3. **DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR:** If staff are not satisfied with the answer provided by the Unit Manager, the problem or complaint will be forwarded to the Department Director. The Department Director will discuss the issue with staff, the Supervisor, and/or Unit Manager, where, in the judgment of the Department Director, input is required. The Department Director will provide staff with a timely response.

4. **HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) BUSINESS PARTNER DIRECTOR:** If staff are not satisfied with the answer provided by the Department Director, the problem or complaint will be forward fed to the HR Business Partner Director. The HR Business Partner Director will discuss the issue with staff, the Supervisor, Unit Manager, and/or the Department Director where, in the judgment of the HR Business Partner Director, input is required. The HR Business Partner Director will provide staff with a timely response.
5. **SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT:** If staff are not satisfied with the answer provided by the Human Resources Business Partner Director, the problem or complaint will be forwarded to the Senior Vice President. The Senior Vice President will discuss the issue with staff, investigate it and give staff a timely answer.



## **EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICY**

VNS Health Personal Care is an Equal Opportunity Employer that does not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived race, creed, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, alienage or citizenship status, age, disability or handicap, sex, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, arrest record, genetic predisposition, carrier status, caregiver status, status with regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, State or local laws. VNS Health Personal Care management team is dedicated to insuring the fulfillment of this policy with respect to recruitment, hiring, placement, promotion, transfer, training, compensation, benefits, employee activities and general treatment during employment.

VNS Health Personal Care will endeavor to make a reasonable accommodation to the known physical or mental limitations of qualified employees and applicants with disabilities unless the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the operation of VNS Health Personal Care business.

## **NONHARASSMENT POLICY**

It is VNS Health Personal Care's policy to prohibit intentional and unintentional harassment of any individual by another person on the basis of any protected classification including, but not limited to, race, color, national origin, disability, religion or age. The purpose of this policy is not to regulate Personal Care employees' personal morality, but to ensure that in the workplace, no one harasses another individual.

All employees of management will be held accountable for the effective administration of this policy. Any employee who feels that he or she has been subjected to harassment in violation of this policy, or any employee, Manager or Supervisor who becomes aware of such possible harassment, should immediately report the matter to his or her Supervisor, Manager or Director, or to the HR Business Partner Director. No one will be retaliated against for making any report under this policy.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY**

It is the Company's policy to prohibit harassment of any employee by another supervisor, employee or visitor on the basis of sex or gender. The purpose of this policy is not to regulate personal morality within the Company. It is to ensure that, in the workplace, no supervisor, employee or visitor harasses another individual on the basis of sex or gender.

While it is not easy to define precisely what sexual harassment is, examples of prohibited behavior include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, such as uninvited touching of a sexual nature or sexually-related comments. Depending upon the circumstances, harassment can also include unwelcome joking, teasing or other conduct directed toward a person because of his or her gender, which is sufficiently severe or pervasive to create an unprofessional and hostile working environment.

Anyone who feels that he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment should immediately report the matter to his or her Supervisor, Manager, Director, or to the Director of Human Resources.

Every report of perceived harassment will be investigated and corrective action will be taken where appropriate. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. In addition, the Company will not allow any form of retaliation against individuals who report unwelcome conduct to management or who cooperate in the investigation of such reports in accordance with this policy.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY OF EMPLOYEE RECORDS**

Information regarding a staff member will not be released to outside parties without the employee's **WRITTEN** permission. If an employee permits, dates of employment, position, title and salary will be verified. No additional information will be offered. However, where the law requires an employer to submit information regarding employment, employee permission will not be obtained.

## **EMPLOYEE RELATIONS PHILOSOPHY**

VNS Health Personal Care's management is concerned about the personal development and happiness of each employee. Management believes that direct and open communication between staff and the Supervisor can best promote achievement of personal and corporate goals. VNS Health Personal Care's policy is to be responsive to each individual.

## **INTRODUCTORY PERIOD OF EMPLOYMENT**

The first three months of employment is an introductory period. The introductory period is just that -- an introduction. It is designed to give staff a chance to become familiar with VNS Health Personal Care and to learn the job. It also gives the Supervisor a chance to work more closely with staff who are learning about the job and to evaluate individual performance. Completion of the introductory period is not, nor should it be construed as, unqualified acceptance by Personal Care of individual performance, or as an assurance of continued employment.

## **PERSONNEL RECORDS**

It is very important for staff to keep the Supervisor up to date regarding changes to staff address, telephone number, marital status and additions to family. Unreported changes of this kind of information can affect withholding tax and proper health insurance benefit coverage. Please report any changes of this kind to the Supervisor as soon as possible.

## **OFFICE HOURS**

Personal Care's office hours vary according to departmental functions.

### **OPERATING HOURS ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

#### **A. Operational Departments**

- Certified Services Department
- Private Care Department

These office hours are:

Monday - Friday 7:00am – 6:00pm

Saturday, Sunday and Holidays 7:00am – 4:30pm

#### **B Non-Operational Departments**

- Human Resources
- Education
- Employee Health
- Benefits
- Payroll

These office hours are:

Monday - Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm

\* Please Note: As a service organization Personal Care is committed to the delivery of client care round the clock. Consequently, during non-office hours, there is an answering service to receive any and all emergency calls. The answering service can be reached by calling the following telephone number:

- For all VNS Health/MLTC cases (212) 609-7600
- For all Private Care cases (212) 609-7700
- On Call Staff will respond to any Emergency Calls.

## **EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**

### **PAID TIME OFF**

Employees accrue up to 180 hours of Paid Time Off (PTO) per year, earned at the rate of one hour for each 17 hours worked (up to 3.45 hours of PTO earned each week). Although the Company strives to approve PTO requests whenever possible, due to scheduling needs the Company reserves the right to deny any such request. Taking PTO without receiving proper authorization is grounds for discipline, up to and including discharge.

- **Planned PTO:** Requests for leave/vacation time using PTO must be made by the employee in writing at **least two (2) weeks** prior to the date of the requested leave. Requests for PTO (Paid Time Off) shall not be unreasonably denied.
- **PTO for Illness, Injury and Certain Other Reasons:** Up to 56 hours of PTO are protected for the Employee's use for the following reasons:

1. Employee's illness, injury or health condition; need for medical diagnosis, care or treatment of an illness, injury or health condition; or need for preventive medical care.
  2. Medical appointments during work hours for the Employee or for a family member.
    - Efforts should be made to schedule appointments at the beginning or end of the work day.
    - Where such appointments are foreseeable, the Employee must provide their Supervisor with seven (7) days' notice of the need to use sick time. Where the need is unforeseeable, notice should be provided as soon as practicable
  3. Care of Family Members or other individuals living in the same household as the Employee who have an illness, injury, or health condition; need for medical diagnosis, care or treatment of an illness, injury or health condition; or preventive medical care.
    - "Family member" means an Employee's spouse, domestic partner, parent (or parent of the Employee's spouse or domestic partner), child (or child of the Employee's spouse or domestic partner), sibling (including half-sibling, step-sibling or adopted sibling), grandchildren, and grandparents, a blood relative, and a person in a close relationship which is the equivalent of a family relationship. For purposes of this policy:
    - "Child" means a biological, adopted or foster child, a legal ward, or a child of an Employee standing in loco parentis.
    - "Parent" means biological, foster, step- or adoptive parent, or a legal guardian of an employee, or a person who stood in loco parentis when the employee was a minor child.
  4. Employee is a domestic violence victim and needs to attend to issues pertaining to domestic violence (for example, consulting with police or prosecutors, making court appearances, or obtaining an order of protection).
  5. Closure of an Employee's place of business by order of a public official due to a public health emergency, or for the Employee's need to care for a child whose school or childcare provider has been closed by order of a public official due to a public health emergency.
- In the event of an absence due to sickness or injury, the employee must call in and report such illness or injury to the employer **at least two (2) hours** prior to the start of the shift. If the absence extends **beyond three (3) days**, the employee may be required to submit to the Company (i) a health care provider's statement verifying that the Employee used sick time for the purposes described in this Handbook, indicating the need for the amount of sick time utilized, and verifying the Employee's fitness to return to work or (ii) an attestation confirming the Employee's eligibility for the time.

if.

- PTO carryover: A maximum of **56 hours** may be carried forward from one calendar year to another. PTO in excess of 56 hours at the end of the calendar year will be paid out no later than January 31 of each following year at the rate in effect when the hours were earned.
- PTO payout at separation: At the end of their employment, Employees will be entitled to receive a payment for accrued and unused PTO, calculated at the rate in effect when the hours were earned.

## **BEREAVEMENT**

All employees will be eligible to receive up to 3 paid bereavement days of eight hours per day, per calendar year. Employees must submit in writing, a request for up to three (3) days off with pay in the event of the death of an immediate family member (father, mother, sibling, child, legal spouse or domestic partner). At the discretion of VNS Health Personal Care, the Employee must provide a death certificate or evidence acceptable to VNS Health Personal Care, of the death and the relationship. It is the employee's responsibility to timely notify VNS Health Personal Care of the Employee's intent to take bereavement leave.

## **HOLIDAYS**

Employees **must** elect to work four (4) out of the eight (8) holidays listed below. If employees work on a holiday, they will be paid double time of the regular hourly rate for all hours worked.

If an employee does not work on the holiday, the employee will **not** be paid for any time.

New Year's Day	Independence Day
Martin Luther King's Birthday	Labor Day
Washington's Birthday	Thanksgiving Day
Memorial Day	Christmas Day

## **LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

Employees may be eligible for the following leaves of absence:

**DISABILITY LEAVE OF ABSENCE:** Employees are eligible to take an unpaid disability leave of absence (i.e., personal illness, pregnancy or non-work related injury) up to a maximum of twenty-six (26) weeks in any twelve (12) month rolling period. Leave taken under this policy will also count towards the employee's FMLA policy entitlement (see Family and Medical Leave, below).

**FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE:** An employee may be eligible to take up to twelve (12) weeks (or for certain circumstances twenty-six (26) weeks) of **unpaid** Family and Medical Leave within a rolling twelve (12) month period of time. An employee may take Family and Medical Leave for reasons such as his/her own serious health condition which renders the employee unable to perform the essential functions of the position; to care for a spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition; for the birth, adoption,

## **HANDBOOK FOR HOME HEALTH AIDES**

## **PERSONAL CARE**

or foster placement of a child; because of a qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, child or parent is on active duty or call to active duty status in support of a contingency operation as a member of the National Guard or Reserves; or because you are the spouse, child, parent or next of kin of a covered service member with a serious injury or illness. Family and Medical Leave can be taken continuously or on an intermittent basis. If possible, an employee must give his/her Supervisor thirty (30) days prior notice of his/her request for Family and Medical Leave.

**NEW YORK PAID FAMILY LEAVE:** An employee is eligible for Paid Family Leave (PFL) after they have worked for 175 days for VNS Health Personal Care. The employee's period of employment prior to January 1, 2018 (PFL's effective date) counts towards the eligibility requirements.

Qualified reasons for PFL include:

- To provide care, including physical or psychological care, to a family member (spouse, domestic partner, child, parent, parent-in-law, grand-parent or grandchild) with a serious health condition.
- To bond with the employee's child after birth or placement for adoption or foster care within the first 12 months after the birth or placement.
- To assist an immediate family member (spouse, domestic partner, child or parent) with necessary actions and exigent circumstances due to the family member being on active duty, or notified of an impending call or order to active duty, in the armed forces of the United States.

**Employees cannot use Paid Family Leave for their own disability or serious health condition.**

PFL can be taken continuously or on an intermittent basis. The maximum length of paid leave is 12 weeks (60 days for intermittent leave) in a consecutive 52-week period, and the weekly benefit amount is 67% of the Average Weekly Wage as defined by New York law. If possible, employees must give their Supervisor thirty (30) days prior notice of their request for PFL.

**JURY DUTY LEAVE:** VNS Health Personal Care realizes that it is the obligation of all U.S. citizens to serve on a jury when summoned to do so. Employees will be allowed time off to perform such service without any reprisal. Staff are expected, however, to notify the Supervisor of availability for work for the major portion of the day should an excuse by the court occur. If the required absence presents a serious conflict for the Supervisor, staff may be asked to try to postpone jury duty. Employees on jury duty leave will be paid in accordance with applicable federal, New York state or local law which entitles staff up to, but not to exceed, the maximum three-day state regulated jury duty service pay.

**MILITARY LEAVE:** If staff enter the military service, staff will be eligible to receive an unpaid military leave of absence. To request a military leave, staff must present the Supervisor with a copy of service papers as soon as received. Provided the absence does not exceed applicable statutory limitations, staff will retain reemployment rights and accrue seniority and benefits in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. If staff are required to attend yearly Reserve or National Guard duty, staff can apply for an unpaid temporary military leave of absence. Staff should give the Supervisor as much advance notice as possible to enable the supervisor to make arrangements for proper coverage during this period.

**PERSONAL LEAVE:** After employees have satisfied three (3) months of employment and under certain circumstances, VNS Health Personal Care may grant employees a personal leave of absence without pay. A written request for a personal leave should be presented to the Supervisor at least two (2) weeks before the anticipated start of the leave. The request will be considered on the basis of staffing requirements and the reasons for the requested leave, as well as performance and attendance records.

Normally, a leave of absence will be granted for a period of up to eight (8) weeks. Under unusual circumstances a personal leave may be extended if staff submit a written request for an extension to the Supervisor prior to the expiration of the leave and the request is granted. Staff will not accrue Company benefits during a leave of absence.

When employees anticipate returning to work, they are expected to notify the Supervisor of the projected return date. This notification should be made at least one (1) week before the expiration of the leave.

Failure to advise the Supervisor of the availability to return to work, failure to return to work when notified, or continued absence from work beyond the time approved by the Company, Will be considered a voluntary resignation of employment with Personal Care.

For more detailed information regarding Leaves of Absences, please contact the VNS Health Personal Care HRDepartment at 212-609-4442.

## **UNIFORM ALLOWANCE**

Upon the completion of 300 hours of work, all eligible staff are entitled to a Uniform in addition to the one received at hire. To receive the Uniform, staff must go to the Facilities Department of Personal Care at 245 East 41st Street, New York, NY 10017. Additional uniforms will be received on the completion of every 1400 hours worked.

**(For additional information please refer to Uniform Regulations provision in this Handbook)**

## **RETIREMENT BENEFITS**

All VNS Health Personal Care' Home Health Aides may be eligible for the 403(b) Tax Sheltered Annuity Plan and may be eligible for other retirement benefits. For more information, please contact the VNS Health Personal Care HR Department at 212-609-4442.

## **HEALTH INSURANCE**

Home Health Aides who meet certain work requirements may be eligible for health insurance benefits. For more information on health insurance benefits, please contact the VNS Health Personal Care



HR Department at 212-609-4442 for a benefits guide. Benefit guides are also available on the VNS Health Intranet under Personal Care HHA Resources.

## **STATUTORY BENEFITS**

All employees are covered under, and subject to, the provisions of the New York State Disability Insurance, Workers' Compensation, and Unemployment Laws. For more information on disability and workers' compensation coverage, please contact the VNS Health Personal Care HR Department at 212-609-4442 for a benefits guide.

**DISABILITY INSURANCE** - Employees who have completed 25 days of active employment and are unable to work due to illness or injury that is not related to one's job may be eligible to receive disability benefits through New York State Disability for up to twenty-six (26) weeks.

**WORKERS' COMPENSATION** - Employees are protected by the Workers' Compensation law for any injury or illness that arises out of and is in the normal course of employment with VNS Health Personal Care. Employees must **IMMEDIATELY** report injuries or illnesses to their Supervisor, who will complete the necessary forms. When medical attention is sought, employees **must** report that the injury is work related to the physician, clinic, and/or hospital at the time of service.

If the illness or injury is determined to be work related, physician, clinic, and/or hospital visits are paid by Workers' Compensation, and the employee is eligible to receive lost wages. The health care provider will directly bill PMA, the workers compensation claims administrator. If the employee pays the bill, he/she will **NOT** be reimbursed. Employees should forward all providers' bills to:

**PMA Customer Service Center  
P.O. Box 5231  
Janesville, WI 53547-231  
Phone: 888-476-2669  
Fax: 800-432-9762**

For prompt processing, these bills should contain the VNS Health ID #W565253 and the employee's claim number.

In addition, if the injury or illness is determined to be work related, a Workers' Compensation leave of absence may be taken for up to a maximum of one (1) year.

Leave taken under this policy will count towards the Family and Medical Leave entitlement. (See the section of this handbook pertaining to Family and Medical Leave for additional details or contact the Benefits Administrator in the Human Resources Department.)

**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE** - Eligible claimants who meet the conditions set forth by New York State unemployment law may receive unemployment benefits as determined by the New York State Department of Labor.

## **HOME HEALTH AWARDS**

### **JAMES R. WITHROW JR. HHA OF THE YEAR AWARD:**

In memory of a VNS Health Personal Care founding Board Member, **James R. Withrow, Jr.**, a resolution was passed in 1988 that a Home Health Aide Award would be presented annually “to the VNS Health Personal Care HHA who best personifies the ideal of providing service to homebound clients”.

Each year, HHAs are evaluated and nominated by their Supervisors for the HHA of the Year Award. The criteria for selection of the HHA of the Year Award include, but are not limited to:

- Attendance Record
- Initiative
- Punctuality
- Concern for Clients
- Relationship with—Supervisor
  - Clients
  - Peers
- Willingness to Service --- Short hour Cases
  - Temporary Cases
  - Holidays
  - Clients, regardless of Diagnosis
  - Weekends
- Personal Appearance
- Number of:
  - Weekends worked
  - Hours worked
  - Holidays worked
- No history of disciplinary action

### **The Richard Flender Grace Award:**

This award will be presented annually to the Home Health Aide who best practices the unending grace in all situations that Mr. Flender exhibited and practiced throughout his life.

In Mr. Flender’s memory, the criteria that this Award Winner will be judged on are:

- Grace under pressure in all endeavors
- Honesty
- Sincerity
- Integrity
- Customer Service with distinction and polish.

This award will be presented annually to the Home Health Aide who best practices the generosity of spirit that Mr. Goodhue practiced each and every day.

The criteria that the Stephen V. R. Goodhue Award winner will be judged on are:

- A caring heart and demeanor
- Uplifting sense of humor
- Attention to detail
- Integrity
- Unending loyalty to Personal Care and VNS Health.

## **PAYMENT POLICIES**

VNS Health Personal Care no longer issues paychecks by mail. All staff are paid through Direct Deposit into a staff's bank account. Staff will be paid only for scheduled hours worked. Staff will receive overtime pay, one and a half times (1.5x) of their regularly hourly rate for all hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours during the week. A payroll week begins on **Saturday** and ends the following **Friday**. The payroll stub itemizes all deductions made from the gross earnings.

Expenses claimed through the electronic telephone system or Mobile Visit Verification will be included in the paycheck. Expense reimbursements are added to the net pay and are not taxed.

VNS Health Personal Care also offers additional payment options through PayPro Card Payment Services or to an account with the Municipal Credit Union.

Besides regular compensation, VNS Health Personal Care also offers daytime and nighttime on-call and live-in compensation. On-call or Live-in HHAs should refer to the "Types of Employment" provision also found in the Appendix of this handbook for additional information.

If staff have any questions regarding payment policies, other types of employment, payment options, or believe that a check was not received, please refer to the Appendix contained at the back of this Handbook which provides explanations and detailed answers for the questions most frequently asked about VNS Health Personal Care's compensation program. This Appendix also contains sample paycheck stubs with various deductions and special additions.

VNS Health Personal Care utilizes an electronic telephone system for reporting attendance and completion of tasks on the Plan of Care. (Refer to the Appendix for detailed instructions).

### **Mobile Visit Verification**

What is Mobile Visit Verification (MVV)?

- Free smartphone app that allows you to clock in and out of your shifts in your clients' homes
- Compatible with Android and iPhones; can be downloaded from Google Play Store (Android) or the App Store (iPhone)

- Uses GPS on your phone to verify that you are in the client's home

What are the benefits?

- Access to client information, schedule, and sometimes Plan of Care
- Ability to record a note
- No longer use paper task code sheets when a client doesn't have phone or won't let you use their phone
- Report critical information to the office/nurse  
(Refer to the Appendix for detailed instructions).

## **ROLE OF THE SUPERVISOR**

The Supervisor at VNS Health Personal Care serves a very important role. Supervisors provide employees with information from management in order to ensure that staff are informed of new developments or changes. The Supervisor also represents staff to management by listening to staff ideas, concerns or problems and assisting staff by ensuring that management hears staff's viewpoint.

Finally, the Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that quality service is provided to VNS Health Personal Care clients. Each Supervisor is responsible for keeping staff working, managing client's services and monitoring the quality of the service provided.

There are numerous reasons to contact the Supervisor. When in doubt take the time to call. It is always wiser to check things out and get an official go-ahead than to proceed with uncertainty. The Supervisor is interested in staff and will make every effort to understand, respect and resolve concerns.

## **ROLE OF THE HOME HEALTH AIDE**

**Teamwork:** A team is a group of people working together to promote the client's well-being. Each team member has a specific job to do based upon what they can do best. This is generally decided based upon the kind of training each team member has had or the role s/he plays in the client's life. Examples of team members include:

Family	Clergy	PT	OT
Friends	HHA	RN/LPN	Speech Therapist
Social Workers	HHA Supervisor		

The HHA has a very special role. The HHA gets to spend the most time with the client, gets to know the roles of all other team members, and serves as the eyes and ears for the nurse in charge.

### **HHA Duties**

HHAs provide hands-on care as well as nutritional and housekeeping assistance to clients in their homes in accordance with a Plan of Care [See examples in the Appendix of this Handbook] prepared by the nurse responsible for the client's care. The HHAs role requires special skills in basic nursing care, ability to work

with adaptive equipment, housekeeping/household management and grocery shopping. HHAs escort clients to/from clinics/doctors offices and outdoors when so assigned.

The HHA works with clients of all ages and interacts with their family members and the agency staff as part of the HHA role and function. The HHA may not assume duties or responsibilities other than those assigned by the nurse or the Plan of Care and is expected to seek clarification immediately when uncertain about tasks or assignments.

**Observation, Reporting and Recording**

Observation, reporting and recording are some of the HHA's most important responsibilities. Through training, the HHA will be able to identify functional and psychological changes in clients, regardless of the client's ability to communicate verbally. Some of the changes the HHA may be able to detect are:

- changes in skin surface
- changes in emotional status
- changes in respiratory status
- changes in activity level
- changes in bowel and bladder function
- changes in nutritional status
- changes in physical well-being
- changes in ambulatory status
- changes in mental status

This information has been taught as part of the HHA Training Program and will be reemphasized during in-service education classes.

**CONFIDENTIALITY AND ETHICS**

The HHA must follow the code of ethics that the agency has adopted for all members of the health care team. Ethics have to do with moral responsibility or behavior. Confidentiality in the context of the HHA practice means that personal information generated in the working relationship with the client is to be shared only with team members who are directly participating in the care of the client.

Good judgment must be used regarding what is relevant to the client's health care and which information violates the client's right to privacy. Confidentiality denotes loyalty to the client, the nurse and the agency. The HHA must give the best possible care to each client regardless of actual or perceived race, creed, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, alienage or citizenship status, age, disability or handicap, sex, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, arrest record, genetic predisposition, carrier status, status with regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, State or local law.

- Proselytize                      The HHA must respect clients' religious beliefs and not impose one's own beliefs on clients.
- Honesty                         Accept only the monetary compensation which is provided to the HHA in the form of salary from Personal Care, and do not solicit

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
|                   | or accept gifts or payment from a client.  |
| • Confidentiality | Respect the basic dignity, privacy, and rights of the individual.  |
| • Reliability     | Notify Personal Care immediately when unable to be on duty   |
| • Dependability   | Faithfully carry out duties as per the Plan of Care. Report those Which are not able to be performed.  |
| • Punctuality     | Report to work on time and do not leave early.   |
| • Initiative      | Participate in and share the responsibility of meeting the health needs of clients. Immediately report observations and situations that infringe on client's health. |

## **WHAT A HOME HEALTH AIDE SHOULD KNOW**

When beginning to care for a client on a field assignment, it is important that the HHA know:

- To review the Plan of Care upon arrival at the client's home
- confidentiality laws regarding HIV
- signs and symptoms to expect
- the client's diet
- the client's medication:
- Name(s) of medicine(s)  
What they are used for  
What side effects to look out for

If all of the above information is not known, the HHA should contact their Supervisor.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

All client emergencies must be reported to VNS Health Personal Care. Twenty-four (24) hour emergency telephone numbers which have been distributed must be noted by all HHAs. All employees are required to immediately report any employee or client-related on-the-job accident or injury to their Supervisors.

When a problem occurs, it is important to remember to:

- Remain calm
- Evaluate the problem
- Take appropriate action
- Report it immediately

\* A client may ask that you don't report a problem to VNS Health Personal Care – but note, it is your duty to report.

Always know:

- When to report to the Supervisor

- When to call 911
- When to call the nurse

Temperature, Pulse and Respiration:

- Know how to take it
- Normal Range
- Abnormal Range
- What causes a high or low temperature or an irregular pulse or respiration.

If client has a clinical problem and the HHA must contact their supervisor immediately.

## **REPORTING INCIDENTS AND ACCIDENTS**

The HHA must immediately report all incidents and accidents to VNS Health Personal Care. Be thorough, yet brief, and to the point in the report. If the HHA cannot speak directly with the HHA Supervisor of the client she should speak with the Unit Manager. If the incident or accident occurs outside of normal office hours, messages can be left with the Answering Service at (212) 609-7600 for VNS Health/MLTC cases and (212) 609-7700 for Private Care Cases.

### **SAMPLE MESSAGE:**

"This is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a HHA taking care of \_\_\_\_\_. My client's  
(name) (name of client)

Id # is \_\_\_\_\_ and his/her telephone # is \_\_\_\_\_.

*On (date) at (time), (briefly describe the incident and also explain the action taken, for example, called 911, called the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, put the client back in bed, etc.) My Supervisor's name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I work in (Borough). Call me back at (phone #) today."*

Following is a list of possible incidents. If a situation occurs which is not listed and the HHA is not sure if it should be reported or not, **CALL!**

### **Helpful Hints for Safety:**

Staff safety is very important to VNS Health Personal Care. The HHA will often be traveling alone to unfamiliar neighborhoods. For staff convenience, safety guidelines for the HHA to follow to ensure staff continued well-being have been prepared. Please follow these guidelines whenever possible. When in doubt, please err on the side of caution [See Safety Guidelines within the Appendix of this Handbook].

## **PERSONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE SYSTEM (PERS)**

PERS units are often utilized by clients who require the ability to summon help during times when they may be alone within their homes. (See detailed instructions in the Exhibit Packet)

## **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

### **The Certification Process:**

(For Trainee HHAs only)

Trainees participate in a three (3) week training program. At the conclusion of training, an evaluation form is completed by the instructor (See Evaluation Form included in the Exhibit Packet).

Upon the successful completion of the classroom portion of the HHA Training Program, the Trainees are assigned for their eight hours of supervised clinical experience. An RN Instructor is assigned to the HHA Trainee in a Supervised Clinical Setting.

The supervised instruction /supervision visits are done to:

- a) assist Trainees in role transition from student to paraprofessional.
- b) provide additional one –to- one instruction in necessary skills as needed.
- c) assure Trainees' competencies in all required skills.

Eight (8) hours of instruction /supervision are the required minimum. Based on demonstrated abilities. Trainees may become certified. This is determined by the RN Instructor and the Manager of the Education Department.

Upon the successful completion of the Clinical Supervision experience, the HHA Trainee is now Certified and may be hired and receive an orientation to VNS Health Personal Care. When cleared to work the Certified Home Health Aide is assigned to care for a client in his /her home.

Certificates are printed within 10 business days of the certification date. The HHA should call to see if the certificate is ready to be picked up at 245 East 41st Street, in the Education Department.

Certificates may also be picked up at the first In-service Education Class for which each Trainee will receive an invitation.

### **In-service Education**

All Personal Care' Home Health Aides are required to attend twelve (12) hours of on-site in-



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service education classes annually. Those scheduled to attend will be paid their regular hourly rate of pay for the hours of class they attend. Scheduling will be determined by the Education Department.

Once scheduled, **attendance is mandatory**.

### Specialty Training

Personal Care is committed to providing employees with the best possible training to enable the HHA to most efficiently and expertly provide care to clients. Personal Care Education Department offers paid specialty training for HHAs interested in providing care to clients with specific disorders and needs.

Some of the specialty in-service training programs currently offered are as follows:

Adult Homes	Alzheimer Disease
Baby/Child Care	Cultural Diversity
Diabetes	Difficult to Service Clients
Hospice	Mental Health
Neurological Disorders	Physical Therapy
Substance Abuse	Household Management
Elder Abuse	CPR (after 1 year of employment)
Bed Bug Infestation	Emergency Disaster Preparedness
Kosher Diet	Code of Conduct/Ethics

If the HHA is interested in receiving specialty in-service training, please contact the Education Department.

## **EMERGENCY AND DISASTER PLAN**

VNS Health Personal Care is committed to the delivery of uninterrupted, essential client care during a designated Emergency or Disaster.

In situations such as transportation and/or power failure due to storms, strikes or other causes and extreme weather conditions, the decision regarding emergency status will be made by the President or a designee. The expectation of all staff in an emergency is as follows:

1. All staff are expected to report to their assigned clients.
2. Staff who are unable to report to their assigned clients are to advise their Supervisor by calling the office. If the emergency occurs outside of normal office hours, staff are to follow existing after-hours procedures for contacting their Supervisor (call the answering service at (212) 609-7600 for VNS Health cases and (212) 609-7700 for VNS Health Private Care cases).
3. The Supervisor will determine whether the client is identified as being in essential need of service. If the client has been so identified, alternative arrangements will be explored with the staff assigned to provide the essential service.
4. If it is necessary to assign a replacement, the Supervisor will proceed to do so and will advise the client of the situation.
5. If the client is not identified as in essential need of service, the client will be advised of the inability to provide regularly scheduled service.
6. Staff who are unable to report to their regularly assigned clients, but who are available to work at an alternate site will be directed to remain in telephone contact for assignment.
7. Staff who are unable to report to any work site will be directed to remain in daily contact with their Supervisor for the duration of the emergency.

## **EMPLOYEE ATTENDANCE POLICIES**

All HHAs are hired to perform an important function at VNS Health Personal Care. As with any group effort, operating effectively takes cooperation and commitment from everyone. Therefore, attendance and punctuality are very important. Unnecessary absences and lateness place the clients at risk are expensive, disruptive and place an unfair burden on fellow employees and the Supervisors. VNS Health Personal Care expects excellent attendance from each HHA. Excessive absenteeism or tardiness will result in coaching supervision sessions for improvement. Failure to

improve following the coaching may result in termination. The HHA is expected, as a team member, to avoid attendance problems whenever possible.

VNS Health Personal Care does recognize, however, that there are times when absences and tardiness cannot be avoided. In such cases, the HHA is expected to notify the Supervisor according to the policy which follows. Asking another employee, friend or relative to give this notice is improper and may result in coaching supervision sessions for improvement. Please call, stating the nature of the illness, tardiness, or expected absenteeism and its expected duration. For an illness, the HHA may be required to provide the Supervisor with a doctor's note on the day the HHA returns to work.

## 1. ABSENTEEISM

### A. Case Call-Off

- a) The HHA is required to give the Supervisor five **(5) days** notice when the HHA needs to be replaced on any assignment for a non-emergency reason.
- b) If the HHA gives the Supervisor **less than five (5) days but twenty four (24) hours or more** notice to be replaced for a non-emergency reason, the HHA may be coached as follows:
  - 1) First occurrence – Verbal Counseling
  - 2) Second occurrence - Written Counseling
  - 3) Third occurrence - Warning
  - 4) Fourth occurrence - Termination
- c) If the HHA gives the Supervisor **less than twenty four (24) hours but twelve (12) hours or more** notice to be replaced on his/her assignment for a non-emergency reason, the HHA may be coached as follows:
  - 1) First occurrence - Written Counseling
  - 2) Second occurrence - Warning
  - 3) Third occurrence – Termination
- d) If the HHA gives the Supervisor **less than twelve (12) hours** notice to be replaced on the assignment for a non-emergency reason, the HHA may be coached as follows:
  - 1) First occurrence - Warning
  - 2) Second occurrence – Termination
- e) If the HHA has a Documented Emergency and gives the Supervisor:
  - 1) **between twelve (12) and twenty four (24) hours** notice to be replaced on

the assignment, there will be no action taken against the HHA.

- 2) **less than twelve (12) hours** notice to be replaced on the assignment, the HHA **may** be coached as follows:
  - 1) First occurrence - Verbal Counseling
  - 2) Second occurrence - Written Counseling
  - 3) Third occurrence – Warning
  - 4) Fourth occurrence – Termination.

#### **B. Late Communication**

The HHA is required to call the office and speak with a Supervisor within **twenty (20) minutes of the official start time** of an assignment to report inability to deliver service to the client. For example:

- a) Client won't let the HHA in.
- b) Client is not at home.
- c) There is no answer at the client's door.
- d) Client is hospitalized.
- e) The HHA is at the hospital to pick-up the client, but the client is not discharged.

If the HHA fails to communicate with a Supervisor within **twenty (20) minutes**, the HHA may be coached as follows:

- 1) First occurrence - Written Counseling
- 2) Second occurrence - Warning
- 3) Third occurrence - Termination

**NOTE: If the HHA is calling the office before 7:00 am or on a holiday, the HHA must call the answering service at (212) 609-7600 for VNS Health/MLTC clients and (212) 609- 7700 for Private Care clients to report the absence or emergency.**

- B. Tardiness** - If the HHA is not at the assigned patient location by the scheduled time, regardless of the reason, the HHA will be considered to be late and may be coached as follows:

- 1) First occurrence – Verbal Counseling
- 2) Second occurrence - Written Counseling
- 3) Third occurrence - Warning
- 4) Fourth occurrence - Termination

- D. **No Show/No Call** - If the HHA does not show or call or abandons the assignment the HHA will be immediately terminated. If the HHA produces documentation evidencing an emergency, the HHA may be coached as follows:

- 1) First Occurrence - Written Counseling
- 2) Second Occurrence - Warning
- 3) Third Occurrence - Termination

## **HOLIDAY AND SPECIAL OCCASION WORK REQUIREMENTS**

These policies and procedures relate to the eight (8) Statutory Holidays and the following Special Occasions:

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. New Year's Eve Night | 3. Mother's Day        |
| 2. Easter Sunday        | 4. Christmas Eve Night |

- a) The HHA must work four (4) of the eight (8) holidays of which two (2) must be either Thanksgiving, Christmas, or New Year's Day.

- b) The HHA will not be permitted to take Christmas Day off for any two (2) consecutive years.

- c) Patient call-off for Holidays and Special Occasions:

- d) The HHA is required to give the Supervisor four (4) weeks' notice when needing to be replaced on an assignment on the following Holidays and/or Special Occasions:

1. New Year's Eve Night
- II. New Year's Day
- III. Mother's Day
- IV. Christmas Eve Night
- V. Thanksgiving Day
- VI. Christmas Day

- e) The HHA is required to give the Supervisor two (2) weeks' notice when needing to be replaced on an assignment on the following Holidays and/or Special Occasions:

- I. Easter Sunday
- II. Memorial Day
- III. Independence Day
- IV. Labor Day
- V. Washington's Birthday

## VI. Martin Luther King Day

- f) A Holiday Selection Form (See Exhibit Packet) must be completed upon hire and each calendar year thereafter. The HHA must select the four (4) Holidays on which the HHA will work that year. The selection must be based on the

foregoing policy. Please refer to the employee Benefits Section of this Handbook for additional information regarding payment for Holiday work.

### **AVAILABILITY POLICY**

Employees who are currently not assigned to a patient are required to **call their supervisor on a daily basis to obtain work**. Three (3) or more days without calling is considered non-compliance. Two (2) weeks without work will require the employee to be reactivated before resuming work.

### **MUTUAL CASES**

All Home Health Aides who work with two or more clients in the same residence at the same time shall be paid an additional \$.50 cents per hour for the hours worked.

### **WEEKEND WORK POLICY**

The HHA is expected to be available to work weekends, at least two (2) per month. If staff work on the weekend, staff will be paid a \$1.10/hr differential for all weekend hours worked. If the HHA is scheduled to work a weekend case and will not be available, the HHA must give the Supervisor five (5) days notice to allow time to be replaced.

### **SUBSTITUTE SERVICE POLICY**

The HHA is **NOT** permitted to independently change the work schedule, swap clients, or arrange any substitute service for clients under care. All changes must be made by the Supervisor at Personal Care in advance.

### **MEAL POLICY**

While working a full day at the client's home, there is no time for the HHA to leave the home to get lunch. Therefore, the HHA should bring lunch and eat during a quiet time. The HHA is only permitted to leave the client's home if required by the Plan of Care (i.e., to shop, do laundry)

**RULES OF CONDUCT**

All companies, no matter what their business, have certain rules of behavior which must be observed to ensure a safe and productive operation. VNS Health Personal Care is no exception. In most cases, staff's own good judgment will direct what behavior is appropriate at work. The following are examples of conduct that are unacceptable. This list is not all-inclusive and action up to and including discharge may be taken by the Company with or without notice or cause whenever it believes it is appropriate.

1. Refusal to service a client for reasons of age, religion, marital status, disability or handicap, arrest record, national origin, ancestry race, creed, status with regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, veteran status, alienage or citizenship status, color, sex, sexual orientation, carrier status or diagnosis.
2. Endangering the life of a client.
3. Alleged abuse of a client.
4. Failure to perform assigned duties.
5. Proven or repeated alleged theft.
6. Failure to return from approved leave of absence.
7. Insubordination resulting from three (3) refusals to accept cases and/or two (2) requests to transfer off cases which the Supervisor has determined are suitable with regards to accessibility and schedule.
8. Repeated neglect to enter service information into the electronic telephone system.
9. Abandoning a client by leaving before the end of a shift or arrival of replacement or relief aide on a 24-hour case
10. Providing a client with one's own personal phone, cell phone or pager numbers.
11. Positive test results on a drug-screening test.
12. Violations of any laws, regulations, or ordinances.
13. Commission of a crime.
14. Bringing children/friends/relatives to work.

15. No Show and No Call for an assigned client.
16. Sleeping while on duty at a client's home except while on a 24-hour live-in case.
17. Independently/Private working for a VNS Health Personal Care' client.
18. Theft or attempted theft of property belonging to the Company, any fellow employee, client, or client's family member.
19. Failure to cooperate fully in any Company search, inspection or security investigation.
20. Insubordination, including but not limited to, refusal to carry out job assignments, belligerent, defiant, abusive or threatening conduct or speech toward any member of management, fellow employee, client , or client's family member.
21. Rudeness or other offensive conduct in dealing with students, fellow employees, members of the public or business guests.
22. Falsifying or intentionally omitting pertinent information from any reports or records, including but not limited to, employment applications, claims for benefits or the electronic telephone system.
23. Signing in or out for another employee or having another employee sign in or out on behalf of the HHA.
24. Possession, use, distribution or sale of illegal drugs or alcohol during working hours or being under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol at any time during working hours or at any time while on Company property or business.
25. Smoking in prohibited areas including clients' homes.
26. Unsatisfactory job performance.
27. Excessive lateness or absenteeism or failure to give sufficient notice (or a satisfactory explanation) when the HHA will be late or absent from work.
28. Violation of the Company's no-solicitation or no-distribution rules.
29. Removing or defacing notices on Company bulletin boards or abusing Company property.
30. Engaging in horseplay, disorderly conduct, malicious mischief or violation of common sense safety rules.



31. Bringing explosives or weapons onto Company premises or into the residence of a client.
32. Refusal to give relevant information or testimony when the Company is conducting any type of investigation or defending itself against any claims, charges or lawsuits.
33. Publicly disparaging the Company or fellow employees.
34. Revealing confidential information about the Company, its business or its policies to others.
35. Gambling on Company property or while on Company business.
36. Careless waste of materials or abuse of Company equipment.
37. Deliberate destruction of, or damage to, Company property.
38. Violation of the Company's safety and good housekeeping rules.
39. Acceptance of gifts or gratuities from clients.
40. Visiting clients after working hours or when no longer assigned.
41. Distribution of clients' telephone numbers.
42. Unauthorized acceptance of money from clients.
43. Acceptance of clients' keys in absence of a signed authorization by the Visiting Nurse or Private Care Field Supervisor.
44. Violation of any other rule or regulation promulgated by the Company from time to time.
45. Engaging in a personal or sexual relationship with a coworker in the client's home
46. Engaging in a personal or sexual relationship with a client or client's family members
47. Violation of privacy by photographing client – through cell phone or other devices
48. Use of all types of electronic equipment while at work. (Cell phones, iPod etc.)
49. Failure to maintain strict adherence to the HIPPA regulations, especially as it pertains to Patient Confidentiality.

## **PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS**

Administrative Evaluations are important in the assessment of work performance and are a way for the HHA and the Supervisor to discuss mutual concerns and progress. All evaluation report are completed annually or whenever needed. Evaluations are discussed with the HHA by the Supervisor before being placed in the personnel file. A copy of the evaluation will be given to the HHA if requested. [Please see sample evaluation in the Exhibit Packet]

## **TWENTY FOUR (24) HOUR CASE POLICY**

- A. **Sleeping:** The HHA is not permitted to sleep any time while at a client's home. The **ONLY** exception to this is on a twenty four (24) hour live-in case.
- B. **Relief:** In cases where 24-hour service is being provided, the HHA is expected to remain with the client until the relief aide arrives. If the relief aide fails to arrive as scheduled, the HHA must contact the Supervisor through the answering service if necessary. **Clients are never to be left alone by the HHA.**

## **SOLICITATION AND DISTRIBUTION POLICY**

VNS Health Personal Care believes that employees should not be disturbed or disrupted in the performance of their job duties. For this reason, solicitation of any kind by anyone is prohibited during working time. Solicitation of any kind by non-employees is prohibited at all times. Distribution of advertising material, handbills, or printed or written literature of any kind in working areas is prohibited at all times. Distribution of literature by non-employees on Company premises is also prohibited at all times.

## **ASSISTANCE TO CLIENTS**

- A. **Escort Policy** - With the Visiting Nurse's authorization, the HHA may be asked to escort the client. This must be done via public transportation or in specific instances, via ambulate or ambulance. **Under no circumstances is the HHA to transport a client in staff's own car.** However, with approval from the nurse, the HHA can escort a client in the client's car or family member's car providing **the HHA does not drive the car.**
- B. **Spending Policy** - The HHA is not permitted to handle more than \$50.00 of the client's money at a time unless the HHA has **PRIOR** permission from the Visiting Nurse or for Private Care cases, the Supervisor. Be sure to obtain receipts any time the client's money is handled. For any money belonging to a client above \$50.00 that is lost or stolen for which the HHA has not obtained **PRIOR** permission to carry, the HHA will be responsible for

reimbursing the client.

- C. **Banking** - The HHA is not permitted to handle the banking transactions for a client unless it is specifically listed on the Plan of Care **and the HHA has received prior approval from the Supervisor**. The HHA may never use a client's ATM card for banking purposes.

## **NOTICE OF RESIGNATION**

The HHA is required to submit a letter at least two (2) weeks prior to the last day to be worked.

## **UNIFORM REGULATIONS**

The uniform, which is required to be worn at **ALL** times when servicing any client consists of (for women) - a white or navy uniform dress, or white on navy tunic or shirt and pants and (for men) - a white or navy orderly uniform. All uniforms must be clean and tidy at all times.

- **Stockings** - **ONLY** white or flesh-tone stockings are permissible.
- **Shoes** - White. No heels or sandals are permitted for safety reasons. It is permissible to wear clean sneakers. However, please be advised that they provide no protection for toes should something drop on them.
- **Jewelry** - Only a wedding band, post earrings and a watch are permissible. For safety reasons, please do not wear expensive or excessive jewelry.
- **Identification Card** - Clip the ID card to the uniform collar. This is part of the required uniform dress code and **MUST** be worn at all times when on any case. **The ID card is the property of Personal Care and MUST be returned upon separation from the Company.** If the HHA loses the card, a replacement identification card will need to be issued for a charge of \$3.00. The HHA must call the Human Resources Department for an appointment to have a photo taken.
- **Grooming & Hygiene** - Long hair must be tied back. Fingernails must be trimmed short. Appropriate hygiene is expected **AT ALL TIMES**. Please refer to the Uniform Allowance provision in the Handbook for additional information.

## **SMOKING POLICY**

Consistent with VNS Health Personal Care responsibilities under the New York City Smoke-Free Air Act and New York State Public Health Law Article 13-E, smoking is **prohibited** at all times in all areas of the facilities generally accessible to the public, and in common work and other areas in the facilities generally accessible to employees, including employee lounges,

employee cafeterias and/or lunchrooms, meeting and conference rooms, auditoriums,

classrooms, elevators, stairway, hallways, restrooms, employee medical facilities, photocopying areas, word processing areas, file rooms, mail rooms, storage rooms, the reception area and all other areas containing other types of office equipment used in common

by employees. **Smoking is also prohibited in client's homes.** Ashtrays are prohibited in all smoke-free areas.

Violation of this policy may result in discipline, up to and including discharge. Any individual can voice objections to smoke that gathers in any smoke-free area, without fear of retaliation, to the HR Business Partner Director.

Copies of this policy will be provided to employees and applicants for employment upon request. It is requested and expected that all staff assist in complying with Personal Care legal responsibilities under the City and State public health laws.

## **HEALTH PROGRAM**

**Pre-employment Physical Examination** - The New York State Department of Health and Personal Care require that all HHAs undergo a pre-employment physical which includes a Rubella (German Measles) Antibody Titer test prior to their appointment to staff. Personal Care will pay for this examination.

**Mantoux & Chest X-Ray Tuberculin Testing** - The New York State Department of Health requires that all personnel who have direct client contact receive tubercular screening and evaluation prior to client contact and, thereafter, annually.

Personal Care will skin test all prospective employees for TB. The only exception will be people who present signed documentation from their physician that they have had a positive reaction and the skin test is not recommended. These people will have an initial chest x-ray and subsequent chest x-rays annually if signs or symptoms of tuberculosis are present or develop. Negative reactions will be skin tested annually.

**Hepatitis B Vaccine** - All Personal Care personnel are in serviced regarding the availability of this vaccine, and it is offered to those staff who have reasonable risk of exposure free of charge.

**Rubeola (Measles) Antibody Titer Test** - Employees born on or after 1/1/57 will be requested to provide documentation of rubeola immunity at the time of their physical. If documentation cannot be provided, the HHA will be given a test.

If test results indicate that the employee has no immunity, a vaccination against rubeola will be administered at Personal Care contracted health facility free of charge.

**Annual Health Report** - All VNS Health Personal Care HHAs are required to complete an Annual Health Assessment in compliance with Company policy and New York State

Department of Health regulations. Included with the annual health assessment is a TB questionnaire. The Employee's Annual Health Assessment including the annual TB questionnaire is a self-completed check-off form with areas for comment.

The employee health counselor or designee will distribute, collect and review the form. Follow-up documentation from a physician may be requested. Any employee who fails to submit these forms will not be permitted to work pending completion.

**Release of Health Information** - Any employee requesting that their medical records be released to them or another agency must submit the request in writing and pay applicable fees. VNS Health Personal Care will make every effort to respond to a request within five (5) working days following the day the written request is received.

**Clearance To Return To Work** - Any employee who has not worked for eight (5) days or more due to medical reasons will be required to have a physician provide a written clearance indicating the employee may return to work. This ensures that all workers are in compliance with Company and Department of Health regulations prior to assignment.

## **DRUG AND ALCOHOL FREE WORKPLACE POLICY**

### **I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

VNS Health Personal Care provides care for the elderly, infirmed or seriously ill client which requires a total commitment to the client's well-being. Therefore, VNS Health Personal Care has avital interest in ensuring a safe, healthy and secure working environment for employees and clients. The unlawful or improper presence or use of controlled substances or alcohol in the workplace conflicts with these vital interests and can jeopardize not only the employee's health and safety, but the health and safety of VNS Health Personal Care clients and VNS Health Personal Care ability to provide quality care. For these reasons, a drug and alcohol free workplace policy has been established. This policy represents management guidelines only and should not be interpreted as a contract of employment. In addition, the Company has a substance abuse program. Drug and/or alcohol testing is an integral part of VNS Health Personal Care substance abuse program. All applicants and employees will receive a copy of the substance abuse policy.

### **II. PROHIBITED CONDUCT**

Employees are prohibited from reporting for duty or remaining on duty with an alcohol concentration of 0.02 or greater. Additionally, employees are prohibited from consuming alcohol during working hours, including meal and break periods. This does not include the authorized use of alcohol at

Company-sponsored functions or activities. Employees may not refuse to submit to any drug and/or alcohol test required under the Company's substance abuse policy. In addition, employees are prohibited from engaging in the unlawful or unauthorized distribution, dispensation, solicitation, sale, transfer or possession of alcohol at Company-sponsored functions or activities. Employees also are prohibited from continuing to work if they have tested positive for drugs and/or alcohol. Employees are prohibited from reporting for duty, or remaining on duty when the employee uses any controlled substances, except when the use is pursuant to the instructions of a licensed medical practitioner.

### **III. REQUIRED DRUG AND/OR ALCOHOL TESTS**

The Company will require all applicants to whom the Company has made a conditional offer of employment to undergo a drug test to determine the presence of illegal drugs. The individual must receive a negative result as a condition of employment. In addition, all current employees may be required to submit to reasonable suspicion, random, return-to-duty and follow-up from rehabilitation drug and/or alcohol tests. (See the substance abuse policy for the specific details). The Company will adhere to the Federal Procedures For Transportation Workplace Drug and Alcohol Testing Programs, 49 CFR Part 40, as amended and/or state law for all drug and alcohol tests conducted pursuant to this policy. These procedures at a minimum ensure the integrity, confidentiality and reliability of the testing processes, safeguard the validity of the

test results and ensure that these results are attributed to the correct individual. Further, these procedures minimize the impact upon the privacy and dignity of persons undergoing such tests to every extent feasible.

Urine samples will be used to conduct drug tests. All drug tests shall be performed by laboratories certified by the U.S. Department Health and Human Services. Saliva and/or breath samples will be used to conduct alcohol tests.

#### **IV. CONSEQUENCES FOR POLICY VIOLATIONS**

Any applicant who refuses to submit to a pre-employment drug test or receives a confirmed positive drug test result will be ineligible for employment with the Company. Also, any applicant who alters or attempts to alter or substitute a urine specimen will be ineligible for employment. Any employee who refuses to submit to a required drug and/or alcohol test or who alters or attempts to alter or substitute urine specimen will be terminated. Any employee who receives a confirmed positive drug and/or alcohol test will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination. Any employee who violates this policy and the Company's substance abuse policy in any other way will be immediately removed from his or her job duties and will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

#### **V. INSPECTION OF PROPERTY**

In addition to testing, the Company reserves the right to take other appropriate and lawful actions to enforce this policy, including but not limited to, the right to inspect Company issued lockers, desks,

Company vehicles or other Company property. The Company reserves the right to inspect employee property when there is reasonable suspicion to believe that the employee may have or has violated the drug and/or alcohol prohibitions contained in this policy.

#### **VI. COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY AS CONDITION OF EMPLOYMENT**

Staff employment with the Company is conditioned upon full compliance with the foregoing drug and alcohol free workplace policy. Any violation of this policy may result in discipline, up to and including termination. Furthermore, any employee who violates this policy or who voluntarily seeks assistance may be required, in connection with or in lieu of disciplinary actions, to participate in and successfully complete drug and/or alcohol counseling, assistance or rehabilitation program as a condition of continued employment. The Company assures that any information concerning an individual's drug and/or alcohol use will remain confidential.

Consistent with its fair employment policy, the Company maintains a policy of non-discrimination and will endeavor to make reasonable accommodations to assist recovering addicts or alcoholics, and those having a medical history reflecting treatment for substance abuse conditions. We encourage employees to seek assistance before their drug abuse and

alcohol misuse renders them unable to perform their essential job functions or jeopardizes the health and safety of themselves or others. The Company will attempt to assist the HHA through referrals to assistance or rehabilitation programs, appropriate leaves of absence and other measures to the extent these measures do not impose an undue hardship upon the Company, and/or jeopardize the employee's health and safety or the health and safety of co-workers, clients or the public.

## **CLIENT BILL OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

VNS Health Personal Care protects and promotes the rights of each client. These rights may be exercised by either the client, the client's representative or both. All staff are expected to observe and respect the clients' rights as consumers of home care services.

## **UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS AND SUPPLIES**

Universal precaution guidelines are designed to ensure the best client care. They require the caregiver to use aprons and gloves when bathing **ALL** clients or handling body fluids such as urine, blood or any body wastes.

Clients usually have supplies (gloves and aprons) in the home. Another set of supplies is given to the HHA in the orientation packet. These gloves and aprons should be carried by the HHA at all times to each client's home and used when clients do not have supplies available. The HHA should notify the Visiting Nurse when the clients' supplies need to be reordered. A HHA Supply Order Form is always enclosed with the supplies provided by VNS Health Personal Care and should be completed by the HHA ten (10) days before additional supplies are needed. Mail the Supply Order Form when additional supplies are needed. If the supplies do not arrive in time as requested, the HHA may ask the Supervisor for assistance in getting the supplies needed for the client.

Universal Precautions are taught as part of the HHA training and will be repeated for certified HHAs during in-service classes. They include:

### **1. Handwashing**

- A. Wash hands before and after taking care of any client. This includes **before** putting on gloves and **after** taking gloves off.
- B. Wash hands before and after preparation of food.
- C. Wash hands before and after using the restroom.

### **2. Gloves** should be worn when:

- A. Working with an incontinent client.
- B. Providing mouth care.
- C. Providing catheter care.
- D. Changing chux, diapers, unsterile dressing or sanitary pads.
- E. When there is any chance of exposure to blood or other body fluids.



3. **Aprons** are provided to assist the HHA in maintaining a clean uniform and should be worn when:
  - A. Bathing a client
  - B. During any other procedure that may cause splashing of body fluids.
4. **Masks and goggles** should be worn if a procedure may cause splashing. The nurse will tell the HHA if masks and goggles are necessary.

**NOTE:** If the HHA does become exposed to blood or body fluids while working, the HHA should:

1. Wash the area with water as soon as possible after exposure. If exposure is due to a razor cut or needle stick, the site of the injury should be pressed not squeezed to cause bleeding prior to washing the area.
2. Any exposure of client blood or fluid to any open or chapped areas on the body should be washed with soap and water immediately.
3. If the HHA is exposed to blood or body fluids, **the HHA must contact the Supervisor immediately**. S/he will refer the HHA to the Employee Health Counselor or an on-call Clinical Manager for appropriate follow-up.

**Waste Disposal** - It is important to practice Universal Precautions when disposing of items that have been contaminated by body fluids or blood. Gloves should always be worn when handling items that have become contaminated [See additional information in the Exhibit Packet].

## **HIV-CLIENT RELATED INFORMATION**

Confidentiality means that clients have a right to privacy regarding health information. A health care worker cannot discuss anything about the client's condition with a third party without the client's consent. VNS Health Personal Care is committed to preventing inappropriate and/or unauthorized disclosure of any client-related information that includes but not limited to; client's name, address, telephone number, ss#, diagnosis, medical record number.

Chapter 584 of the Public Health Law of the State of New York requires special handling of HIV-related information. HIV-related client information can **only** be disclosed (made known to others) if this information is necessary for appropriate care or treatment of the client. (Remember, the HIV virus causes AIDS). When HIV-related information is given to the HHA

about a client, remember the disclosure of this information is protected by State Law. State Law prohibits the HHA from making any further disclosure of this information without specific written consent of the person to whom it concerns. ***ANY UNAUTHORIZED FURTHER DISCLOSURE IN VIOLATION OF STATE LAW MAY RESULT IN A FINE OR JAIL SENTENCE OR BOTH.***

## **EXPOSURE CONTROL PLAN – BLOOD BOURNE PATHOGENS**

VNS Health Personal Care has defined a policy and related procedures regarding possible employee exposures to blood borne pathogens. Training, preventive measures, emergency procedures, reporting steps and subsequent follow-ups have been outlined as well.

### **Policy**

VNS Health Personal Care is committed to the delivery of quality client care in a manner that safely protects employees from the transmission of blood borne pathogens. Accordingly, VNS Health Personal Care shall comply with applicable federal, state and city regulations. An employee who may have experienced an occupational exposure to blood borne pathogens as a result of percutaneous (i.e., skin) or mucotaneous (nose, mouth, rectum, etc.) splash exposure to blood or other body fluids shall be immediately evaluated by an Employee Health Services Nurse to:

1. Confirm that an exposure has occurred.
2. Identify organisms that may have been transmitted and the risk of infection.
3. Initiate appropriate wound post-exposure care and treatment.
4. Receive education and counseling regarding the risk of infection.
5. Ensure appropriate medical and psychological follow-up.

### **Employees at Risk of Occupational Exposure**

Employees whose job responsibilities bring them into physical contact with clients or clients' body fluids are considered to be at reasonable risk for occupational exposure.

1. Home Health Aide
2. Licensed Practical Nurses
3. Manager, Clinical Services
4. Physical Therapists
5. Registered Nurses
6. RN Field Supervisor

1. **Preventive Practice:** Reasons for Barrier Safeguards
  - a. *Used consistently* to prevent contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials (i.e., body fluids).
  - b. *Universally required* because medical history cannot reliably identify all clients infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B virus (HBV), and other blood borne viruses (HTLV-1, HTLV-11, HIV-2, NANB hepatitis)

**2. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

- a. Usage - Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) used in all instances with potential for occupational exposure
- b. Availability - Available and readily accessible at each office in the appropriate sizes at no cost to the employee.

Hypoallergenic gloves readily accessible to employees allergic to gloves normally provided.

Powderless gloves readily accessible to employees allergic to gloves with powder

Examples of PPE:

Gloves, Aprons, Face Shields, Masks, Goggles

- c. Description

Under normal circumstances, PPE does not permit blood or other potentially infectious materials to pass through to or reach an employee's clothes, undergarments, skin, eyes, mouth, or other mucous membranes during the time they are used. PPE protects an employee's clothes, undergarments, skin, eyes, mouth and other membranes from being contaminated with blood or other potentially infectious materials.
- d. If PPE is Unavailable
  - Employee reports that PPE is not available immediately to his/her Supervisor who will acquire necessary equipment.
  - Supervisor advises Director or Manager

## **HEPATITUS B PREVENTION**

### **VACCINE**

#### **1. Candidates**

Personal Care shall offer the Hepatitis B vaccination series to employees who are at reasonable risk of occupational exposure. Employees who have physical contact with clients or clients' bodily fluids are at reasonable risk.

#### **2. Procedure**

- a. Free of charge.
- b. Scheduling:
  - 1. Amounts and times as prescribed by medical practice.
  - 2. Appointments scheduled by Employee Health Service during regular work time with approval of Supervisor subject to operational needs.
  - 3. Offered upon completion of the training session and available anytime upon request (given that VNS Health Personal Care' employee is still at reasonable risk of occupational exposure).
  - 4. VNS Health Personal Care will offer the employee(s) upon completion of the vaccine series, routine booster dose(s) of Hepatitis B vaccine based on medical determination of non-immunity to the vaccine. This offer will be made free of charge to the employee. In accordance with the recommendations of the U.S. Public Health Service.
  - 5. Participation in pre-screening program not prerequisite to vaccine

#### **3. Declination of Hepatitis B Vaccination**

Employee must sign Hepatitis B vaccine Declination Statement

*Vaccine will not be offered if:*

- a. *employee previously received complete Hepatitis B vaccination series and*
- b. *antibody testing reveals immunity, or*
- c. *vaccine is contradicted for medical reasons*

#### **4. Training**

Initial and annual training programs are provided to all employees with reasonable risk or high risk of occupational exposure. The training includes:

1. Policy distributed to new employees
2. Copy of policy given during orientation
3. Training programs provided at no cost to employee
4. Training programs given during working hours
5. Employee records of training and copies of policy are maintained in employee's personnel file.
6. VNS Health Personal Care shall provide additional training for changes in tasks and procedures or new tasks or procedures which affect the employee's occupational exposure. The additional training may be limited to addressing the new exposures created.

**5. Exposure to Blood or Body Fluids- Immediate Procedures for Employee Initial Treatment**

- a. Wash exposed area thoroughly with soap and water (only water for eyes)
- b. Rinse exposed area with water
- c. If sharp exposure, site of injury should also be pressed to facilitate bleeding then washed with soap and water.

***Notification to Supervisor***

- a. Notify Supervisor immediately of incident prior to completing any additional client visits.
- b. Employee or Supervisor gets information on source client
- c. Employee must remain available, by telephone, for medical care direction from Employee Health Services

**6. Medical Management of Follow-up Care**

- a. Scheduled: At any time of initial treatment by medical facility with employee
- b. Monitored: By Employee Health Counselor to ensure appropriate follow-up medical care (i.e., testing at 6 weeks, 6 months and 12 months after the incident)
- c. Evaluated: Copy of evaluating health care provider's written opinion obtained by Personal Care' Employee Health Services within 15 days of completion of evaluation of an exposure accident. All other findings or diagnosis shall remain confidential and shall not be included in written opinion.
- d. Exposure: If an employee was exposed to HIV, HBV or other blood borne viruses, employee should immediately report any acute illnesses, especially illnesses that include fever, rash, muscle aches, fatigue, malaise or swollen lymph glands to an Employee Health Services Nurse.

**7. Record Keeping**

For cases of exposure, Employee Health Services establishes and maintains an accurate record for each employee including:

- a. Employee's *name* and *social security number*
- b. Copy of *Hepatitis B vaccination status*
  - i. Dates of Hepatitis B vaccines
  - ii. Medical records relating to ability to receive vaccination
- c. Copy of all *results* of examination, medical testing and follow-up procedures required under post-exposure follow-up
- d. Copy of health care *professional's written opinion*
- e. Copy of *information provided to health care professional* (description of exposed employee's duties given an exposure incident, documentation of route of exposure and source of individual's blood testing).

Personal Care shall ensure that these employees' medical records are:

- a. kept confidential
- b. not disclosed or reported without the employee's written consent to any person within or outside the workplace except as required by this section or as may be required by law in accordance with departmental procedures.
- c. maintained for at least duration of employment plus thirty (30) years.

**8. Payment for Expenses Associated with Exposures to Blood or Body Fluids**

- a. All authorized medical laboratory and medical expenses incurred by an employee as a result of an occupational-related exposure are paid by Personal Care.
- b. All bills and invoices should be directed to Employee Health Services.

**9. Periodic Review**

VNS Health Personal Care shall periodically review the Exposure Control Plan to ensure its accuracy and evaluate its effectiveness. Modifications shall be made, as appropriate.

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## **CLOSING WORDS**

This handbook is intended to give the HHA a broad summary of information regarding VNS Health Personal Care. The information in this handbook is general in nature and, should questions arise, the Supervisor should be consulted for complete details. While there is every intention to continue the policies, rules and benefits described in this handbook, VNS Health Personal Care management may always modify the matters set forth in this handbook at management's sole discretion. Please do not hesitate to speak to the Supervisor or to the HR Business Partner Director regarding any questions about the Company or the personnel policies and practices.