Sample personal care attendant certification course

Use this sample description as a starting point when initiating conversations about establishing a personal care attendant certification course at your local college.

Course requirement: 32 hours

This course is for adults who are interested in providing in-home, non-skilled care and companionship to clients who are chronically ill and who may be elderly, mentally and/or physically disabled. Students will be taught basic elements of body function and changes in body function that must be reported to the aide’s supervisor, taking of vitals, maintaining a safe environment, recognition of emergencies and knowledge of emergency procedures. This will be done with a combination of classroom lectures and hands-on demonstrations in the classroom and simulated clinical setting.

Students will gain an understanding of the Personal Care Attendant’s responsibilities and boundaries and demonstrate appropriate communication skills (supervisor, nurse, client, family members). Upon completion of this program, students will have the ability to work with clients with physical, emotional and developmental challenges while demonstrating respect for privacy and property.

*Students will cover and discuss the following topic areas:*

**Patient care plan:** Perform duties within the scope of practice on client’s plan of care; recognize and prevent status change, pressure ulcers, elder abuse and neglect; ethical and legal behavior; client bill of rights; HIPAA; and observe, report, document.

**Communication skills:** Engage in respectful social interaction with client, friendly conversation and empathic support. Respect privacy of patient, family and property. Define and discuss reportable incidents.

**Infection control:** OSHA and bloodborne pathogens; identify basic infection control procedures including the spread of germs, proper hand washing, protective barriers, cleaning, disposal of body waste, and signs and symptoms of infection.

**Safety in the home:** Maintain a clean, safe and healthy environment for clients.
- Personal safety, is it safe where you park? Are there guns in the home? Dogs? Family members? Recognize hazards and emergencies and understand procedures.
- Safety tips – proper lighting in and around the house, wipe up wet floors, spills and fall hazards immediately.
- Report safety hazards, frayed electrical cords, unsecured handrails, smoke and CO2 detectors that don’t work, trip hazards such as scatter rugs and clutter on floor.
- Is there an alarm system in the home?
- Emergency numbers and procedures.
- Fire safety, exit plans, use of a fire extinguisher.
- Techniques to evacuate a disabled person.
- Note nearest exit and make sure path is clear.
- Safe oxygen use.
- Winter – does the heat work? Is walkway cleared and sanded?
- Summer – adequate cooling and ventilation?

**Proper body mechanics for the caretaker and patient:** Fall prevention – walkers, canes and wheelchairs can contribute to falls; move and position someone in bed; safe lifting and transfer techniques, proper use of wheelchair and gait belt; and range of motion exercises

**Personal care:** Demonstrate safe techniques in personal hygiene and grooming that include bathing (sponge, bed, tub or shower), shampoo (sink, tub or bed), nail and skin care, oral hygiene, toileting and elimination. Ensure there are adequate supplies for client to shower or bathe.

**Vital signs:** Temperature, blood pressure, respiration and oxygen therapy

**CPR certification:** 5 hours

**Nutrition:** Is there fresh food in the house? Record adequate nutrition and fluid intake and output and change as applicable to supervisor.

**Medication:** This can contribute to falls, drowsiness, dizziness. Monitor safety and compliance. Conduct pain assessment.

**Diseases and difficult behaviors:** Conditions you are likely to encounter include Alzheimer’s (early, mid- and late-stage); sun downing; arthritis; diabetes; stroke; Parkinson’s; ALS; and MS.

*Source:* Mary Ann Dunbar, executive director with A Caring Hand in Vernon, Conn.