Sample travel time policy checklist

Use the sample checklist below to help develop a travel time policy for compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

☐ Explain that commuting time is not working time. For example, travel from home to work before the employee's regular workday and from work to home at the end of the regular workday is not working time. (This provision assumes employees are not working from home at the beginning or end of their workdays.)

☐ Explain how caregivers must record travel time for client services, which is working time. State the pay rate for this travel time (i.e., you will be paid at your usual client service pay rate for performing client errands, etc.).

☐ Explain how caregivers must record travel time between client visits in the same workday, which is working time. State the pay rate for this travel time if it is different than the pay rate for client services. This pay rate cannot be less than minimum wage.

☐ If the agency uses internet mapping programs to estimate travel times between client visits instead of having caregivers record actual drive times, explain how caregivers can confirm or correct these estimated travel times. (This provision is important, because it offers a possible defense against a caregiver arguing that the agency's travel time estimates are less than what he or she actually drives. The agency could say that the caregiver never reported his or her corrections pursuant to this policy.)

☐ Explain that caregivers must use the shortest or fastest routes when driving between client visits. (In other words, if the agency is estimating travel times with a mapping program, it should require the caregivers to drive the type of routes that its estimates use. Agencies should also perform and document occasional due-diligence tests to ensure that they are using reliable internet mapping programs.)

☐ If a caregiver has a break between client visits long enough for the caregiver to pursue personal activities, explain that the caregiver is completely relieved of all work duty during this break time and that this break time will be unpaid. Further explain that only the estimated travel time it would have taken the caregiver to drive directly between clients' residences is paid working time in these circumstances.

☐ Explain that caregivers should not commence work until the scheduled time to begin work at the next visit.

These are just some helpful provisions to consider including in a travel time policy intended to comply with FLSA requirements and US Department of Labor's typical enforcement positions. Keep in mind that state law may have stricter wage and hour requirements with respect to work travel.

Source: Eileen Maguire with Gilliland, Maguire & Harper, P.C. in Indianapolis, Ind.
Sample home care aide test questions when hiring

Below are sample questions and answers used for testing the competency and knowledge of potential home care aides during the hiring process.

Kenyon HomeCare question 1:
Your client has terminal cancer. She wants to talk about how she feels about the diagnosis. What should you do?
A. Let her talk about it and then reassure her that there is always hope for a cure.
B. Tell her it will just make her feel worse to talk about it.
C. Tell her she should really talk it over with her doctor.
D. Listen to her and let her talk about what it means to her without interruption or comment.
Correct answer: D

Kenyon HomeCare question 2:
Individuals with Alzheimer’s or Dementia sometimes become paranoid and are suspicious of others. The most effective way to deal with this is:
A. Tell them there is no reason to be so suspicious, and assure them they don’t have anything to worry about.
B. Change the subject and redirect the conversation to a neutral or non-threatening subject.
C. Ignore the comments and they will forget all about it.
D. Tell the family they need more medication to control the paranoia.
Correct answer: B

Kenyon HomeCare question 3:
You are caring for Mr. Jacobs. He is 88-years-old and very conscious about the cost of things. You find some food in the refrigerator that smells bad. You feel it needs to be thrown out, but Mr. Jacobs says it’s fine. What will you do?
A. Tell him it’s bad and you are going to throw it out.
B. Tell him that you understand about not wasting food, but it really smells quite bad and you're very concerned that he will get food poisoning from it and ask his permission to please let you throw it out.
C. Tell him you are going to call his daughter and tell her that he won’t let you throw out the rotten food.
D. Wait until he is out of the room and dispose of the food in the garbage.
Correct answer: B

Kenyon HomeCare question 4:
You have just given your client a bath and you notice that the skin on her buttock is red and slightly swollen. You should do all EXCEPT:
A. Have her lie on her side, off the reddened area.
B. Put a foam pad in the chair where she sits.
C. Massage the area to increase circulation.
D. Change incontinence pads frequently to keep the area dry.
Correct answer: C

Source: Kenyon HomeCare in Seattle, Wash.