

# **COMMUNICATION:**

## **The Key to Successful IHSS Employment Relationships**

The following tips are for your consideration in establishing and maintaining a positive working relationship between you and your IHSS providers.

### **Getting What You Need - Ways to Communicate:**

- From the start, be specific about your needs and expectations.
- Never assume that your provider knows what you need – you are the expert.
- Set clear ground rules and schedules – keep it simple.
- Always be a professional employer and avoid being abrasive.
- Be aware of possible cultural/language differences.

### **Training - How to Communicate Your Needs:**

- Explain why things need to be done a certain way so the provider connects a reason to the task. *Example* - “To prevent pressure sores, it is important that my clothes are not wrinkled.”
- While training, ask for feedback on how the provider feels it is going.
- Discuss any hesitations the provider might have. *Example* - If someone has a fear that he/she will drop you, address that fear and reassure him or her that if they concentrate on the specific directions you give, things will be fine.
- Give encouraging feedback. Say things such as “You are doing a good job” or “In the beginning it takes more time, but things will soon get easier and faster”.

## Ways Not to Communicate:

- ***Being Indirect*** → Making statements that are not actually related to what you need. *Example* - “It’s too cold in here” vs. “I’m cold, would you please bring me my sweater.”
- ***Passive/Aggressive*** → Using negative undertones. *Example* - “Humph, there’s no salt on the table.”
- ***Mind Reader*** → Expecting/assuming that the provider should know what you need without having to ask.
- ***Ordering/Demanding*** → Conducting yourself as a drill sergeant. *Example* - “I want this now,” which creates tension, or, “You will be here at 8 o’clock!” This is where agreed upon schedules and tasks lists become very important.

## Miscellaneous Thoughts about Communication Skills

- Treat providers the way you want to be treated.
- Ask for suggestions, with the understanding that you are the employer.
- Do not take out emotions related to other issues on your provider. (Learn how to get it out elsewhere).
- Remember, directing and receiving services from someone else takes effort, patience and hard work.
- Don’t be afraid to trust people, but also recognize that there are limits to how much you can expect. (Learn to be flexible, but know what you need and set your own boundaries).

*The bottom-line:*

**Self-determination through  
Interdependence**