

## **Fast Facts for Families and Community Partners about ... Parents as their Child's Certified Nursing Aide (CNA)**

### **What is a Certified Nursing Aide (CNA)?**

- CNA's are health care providers who know the fundamentals of taking care of the sick or handicapped in their home, a nursing facility or a hospital.
- They typically help clients with ordinary activities of daily living or ADL's such as feeding, dressing, and safely being able to go to the bathroom, bathe, or shower.
- CNA's are supervised by a registered nurse.

### **What are the advantages of parents being their child's CNA?**

- In places where there is a shortage of CNA's and CNA's with experience working with children who have complex disabilities, parents are a valuable workforce resource that can be tapped.
- For some families, it is a reliable way to have health care assistance in the home and provides an income to the family. By having reliable care for your child at home, other family members can go to their jobs or attend school with fewer disruptions.
- For some families, a CNA income can be the difference between being independent and having to depend too much on friends, family or public assistance.
- Becoming a CNA can be a career path or job opportunity for a parent or household member.

### **What should families keep in mind when looking into becoming a CNA?**

- To be a CNA it is necessary to complete a nurse aide training program and then become certified. You have to complete a nurse aide training program through a vocational school or agency that is approved by the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA). To receive the Certified Nursing Aide (CNA) credential, you must pass a written and clinical exam.
- Cost and length of time to complete nurse aide training differs from program to program. Most programs cost several hundred dollars. Program costs may not include the cost of taking the state-credentialing exam. In Colorado, the average program length is 125 hours. When comparing costs and length of programs, keep in mind the success rate of the program's graduates in passing the state certification test. Pass rate information is available on DORA's website. See below.
- Many home health agencies already hire parents as CNA's, but some do not. There are resources a home health care agency can call to get information about hiring parents or household members.
- Families need to be aware of any income restrictions that may apply to keeping their child's Medicaid or SSI benefits. Ask about and understand any income limits for your child's Medicaid and SSI eligibility.
- When you are a parent CNA and employed by a home health care agency, you have employee responsibilities just like any other employee of the agency. For instance, you need to go to required staff meetings and trainings, provide written documentation, and be accountable for your time doing CNA activities as directed in the plan of care developed by the agency. As a CNA you are supervised by a nurse and will have occasional supervisory and monitoring visits in the home.

- Parents should consult with the home care agency on how they define CNA duties.
- As a parent, you are needed to give input regarding the needs of your child and your child's plan of care. You are still the person that best knows your child. You are paid to be your child's CNA for several hours a day, but you are your son's/daughter's parent the rest of the time.
- It can be challenging to separate out your parent role from the role of being your child's CNA. For some parents it may be difficult and not the best option for their family situation.

### Where do families start?

- Have your child assessed and evaluated for home health care services if you haven't already done so. See [Fast Facts on Pediatric Home Health Services on the HCP website](#).
- Apply for SSI and Medicaid for your child if you haven't already done so.
  - Your income from being paid as your child's CNA does not count towards SSI family income if your child is eligible for SSI due to disability or receives Medicaid because of a Medicaid waiver.
  - Your CNA income does count towards income considered for your child's Medicaid eligibility if your child is receiving Medicaid because of the family's income level and not because of same child's disability.
- Check with home health care agencies in your area or with the home health care agency your family is already working with to see if they have experience with hiring parents as a CNA.

### How can I learn more about becoming a CNA for my child?

- Contact the Public Health program called "**HCP**" (Health Care Program for Children with Special Needs). HCP can answer your questions on this topic, connect you with resources to help pay for a nurse aide-training program, and link you to other valuable services and supports. To find the office close to you call **303-692-2370 or 1 800-886-7689** [www.hcpcolorado.org](http://www.hcpcolorado.org)
- Contact **Family Voices Colorado** to help find health care providers, locate possible financial aid or programs a child or youth with special needs might be eligible for, and link to other valuable resources. **1-800-881-8272** [www.familyvoicesco.org](http://www.familyvoicesco.org)
- For questions about a parent CNA income and Medicaid eligibility contact **Department of Health Care Policy and Financing**. They can also provide guidance to your home health agency if they have questions about hiring parents as a CNA. Call the Program Administrator for Home Health, Hospice, and Private Duty Nursing at **303-866-3674 or** [Elizabeth.svedek@state.co.us](mailto:Elizabeth.svedek@state.co.us)
- Agencies wanting more information about hiring parents as CNA's can also contact **HCP**.
- To find the list of approved Nurse Aide Training programs in Colorado, location, how it's graduates perform on the certification exam, and the program coordinator's contact information click on this link to the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) website: <http://www.dora.state.co.us/nursing/education/CNAprogramsCounty.pdf>

Children with Special Health Care Needs Unit  
Prevention Services Division ~ Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

