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YOUR HIRING HELP AT HOME KIT · NOVEMBER 8, 2026

Sample: Hiring help at home for Margaret

How to find, compare and choose help at home with confidence, step by step.

FOR YOUR SITUATION

From your answers, help with these may make the biggest difference for Margaret:

- Meals: shopping, cooking or meal delivery
- Household tasks: cleaning, laundry, yard work and snow
- Health routines: medication reminders and getting to appointments
- Company and check-ins: regular visits, outings and someone who'd notice a change

Margaret lives alone, so reliable backup when a worker is sick matters even more.

This kit is practical guidance, not legal, tax or employment advice. Check details with the agency, Ontario Health atHome or the Canada Revenue Agency. In an emergency, call 911.

Three ways to get help

Many families use a mix: publicly funded care where it's available, topped up with private help.

Publicly funded home care

Arranged through Ontario Health atHome (call 310-2222, no area code needed, seven days a week). A care coordinator assesses needs and, if eligible, arranges care at no cost.

- Anyone can make the referral: you, the person, or a doctor.
- Hours depend on the assessment, and there can be waits.
- Good for personal care, nursing and therapy.

A private home care agency

You pay by the hour.
The agency recruits, screens, trains, schedules and replaces workers.

- More choice of hours and tasks.
- The agency handles backup and supervision.
- Usually the most expensive per hour.

Hiring someone directly

You find, screen and manage the person yourselves.

- Often lower cost, and more say in who comes.
- You arrange backup, and check references and a police check yourselves.
- You may become an employer, with payroll duties (income tax, CPP and EI). The Canada Revenue Agency can confirm.

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Questions to ask every agency

- [ ] What services do you offer, and which don't you offer?
- [ ] How do you screen workers? Do you do police and reference checks?
- [ ] What training do workers have, and who supervises them?
- [ ] Are workers employees of the agency? Are you insured and bonded?
- [ ] Will Margaret usually see the same worker? How often does that change?
- [ ] What happens if a worker is sick or can't come? How quickly is someone sent?
- [ ] Is there a minimum number of hours per visit or per week?
- [ ] What are your hourly rates, including evenings, weekends and holidays?
- [ ] Are there extra fees, such as for travel, mileage or setting up?
- [ ] How much notice do you need to change or cancel a visit?
- [ ] How do you handle a concern or complaint?
- [ ] Can we have a trial period?

Compare up to three agencies

Type or write your notes in each box.

	Agency 1	Agency 2	Agency 3
Name and phone			
Hourly rate			
Minimum hours			
Services that fit			
Same worker each time?			
Backup if a worker is sick			
Screening and training			
Insured and bonded?			
Notice to cancel			
How they handle concerns			
Overall impression			

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Before you sign: the agreement

- [ ] The services and tasks, in writing.
- [ ] The schedule, hourly rate and every possible extra fee.
- [ ] How and when you're billed, and how to pay.
- [ ] Notice needed to change, pause or end the service.
- [ ] What happens if a worker is sick, late or doesn't come.
- [ ] Who to call with a concern, including after hours.
- [ ] How your information is kept private.

Red flags

- Pressure to sign a long contract, or to pay a lot up front.
- Vague answers about screening, insurance or backup.
- No written agreement, or fees that only come up later.
- Workers asked to do things they aren't trained for, like medical tasks.
- A worker asking for money, gifts or personal or banking information.

If you hire someone directly

- [ ] Interview with a list of questions, and include the person being supported.
- [ ] Check at least two references, and ask for a police check (a vulnerable sector check where available).
- [ ] Write a simple agreement: tasks, hours, pay, notice and confidentiality.
- [ ] Plan backup for sick days and holidays.
- [ ] Check with the Canada Revenue Agency whether you're an employer, and what payroll steps apply.

The first two weeks

- [ ] Be there for the first visit, to introduce the worker to Margaret and the home.
- [ ] Share a short list: routines, likes and dislikes, allergies, and who to call.
- [ ] Keep a notebook or shared note where the worker can leave updates.
- [ ] Ask Margaret after the first few visits how it's going, and listen.
- [ ] Raise any concern early, kindly and specifically.
- [ ] Review after two weeks: keep going, adjust, or try someone else.

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Don't have time to make the calls? Senestro's “We'll Make the Calls” (coming soon) contacts local providers for Margaret and sends you a side-by-side comparison. senestro.ca/pricing