



# EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

## **Office Hours**

Monday through Friday from 7:30 am – 4:00 pm

506 Carthage Street, Sanford, NC 27330 | 1754 East Eleventh Street, Siler City, NC 27344  
919-775-3306 Sanford / 919-663-1188 Siler City

## **EMPLOYEES COVERED BY THIS HANDBOOK**

**This handbook covers all Field Staff**

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# Welcome

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Welcome to First Choice Home Care, Inc.

We are pleased to have you join First Choice Home Care, Inc.

We enjoy our role in providing high quality home care services to seniors, children and disabled clients. We are proud of our reputation and recognize that our employees have made us the success that we are today. We hope that your experience while working here will be a positive and rewarding one.

To help you become familiar with First Choice Home Care, Inc. we have prepared this handbook. We believe that it is important to communicate our policies and expectations and this Handbook will familiarize you with the privileges, benefits and responsibilities of being an employee.

We ask you to review this handbook and make sure that you address any questions or concerns to the Administrator. First Choice Home Care, Inc is proud of its employee relations programs. We feel it is in the best interest of both the employee and management to have direct open lines of communication. It is our hope that we will all grow and prosper together.

Once you have completed your review, sign the attached *Acknowledgment of Receipt of Employee Handbook*. This is an acknowledgement of the fact that you have seen and read the handbook and that you understand its terms and provisions.

Welcome aboard!

Sandra Bridges, RN  
President/Owner

# About this Handbook

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Due to government regulations and changing demands of our operations, from time to time we may modify, change or delete these policies. This handbook contains guidelines for the Company's use and summaries of current benefits provided. Neither the policies nor the benefits in this handbook should be regarded as a contract of employment. Both First Choice Home Care, Inc. and its Plan Administrators shall have the full legal discretion to administer, interpret, modify, discontinue or enhance any benefit, policy, plan or program. We will attempt to keep you up to date regarding changes that affect you.

State or local laws may cause the Company to modify or alter various policies or procedures.

Please ask your supervisor if you have any questions regarding any specific problem or situation.

# Purpose/Vision

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Our company's management goals are to continuously strive to provide the highest quality home health care services to our community and customers. Our purpose is to assist patients and caregivers to best meet their needs in their own home.

To meet these goals, leadership and management will develop an organizational culture that will foster and create a working environment that focuses on improving our standards of performance as it relates to patient and staff needs and expectations. This can be done through:

- A clearly defined and communicated mission
- Recruitment of highly professional personnel
- Providing opportunities for growth and development
- On-going education and training to develop skills and knowledge consistent with services provided
- Providing resources to implement and support equipment and services provided.

First Choice Home Care, Inc. will provide Private Duty Nursing and In-Home Care services to our community that reaches from pediatrics to geriatrics. The company does not discriminate against any person because of race, sex, relation, national origin or age. We hold in high regard our compliance with all applicable federal, state, county and local laws and regulations.

# Mission Statement

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To preserve dignity, protect independence, and provide peace of mind for our clients and their families by providing exceptional home care.

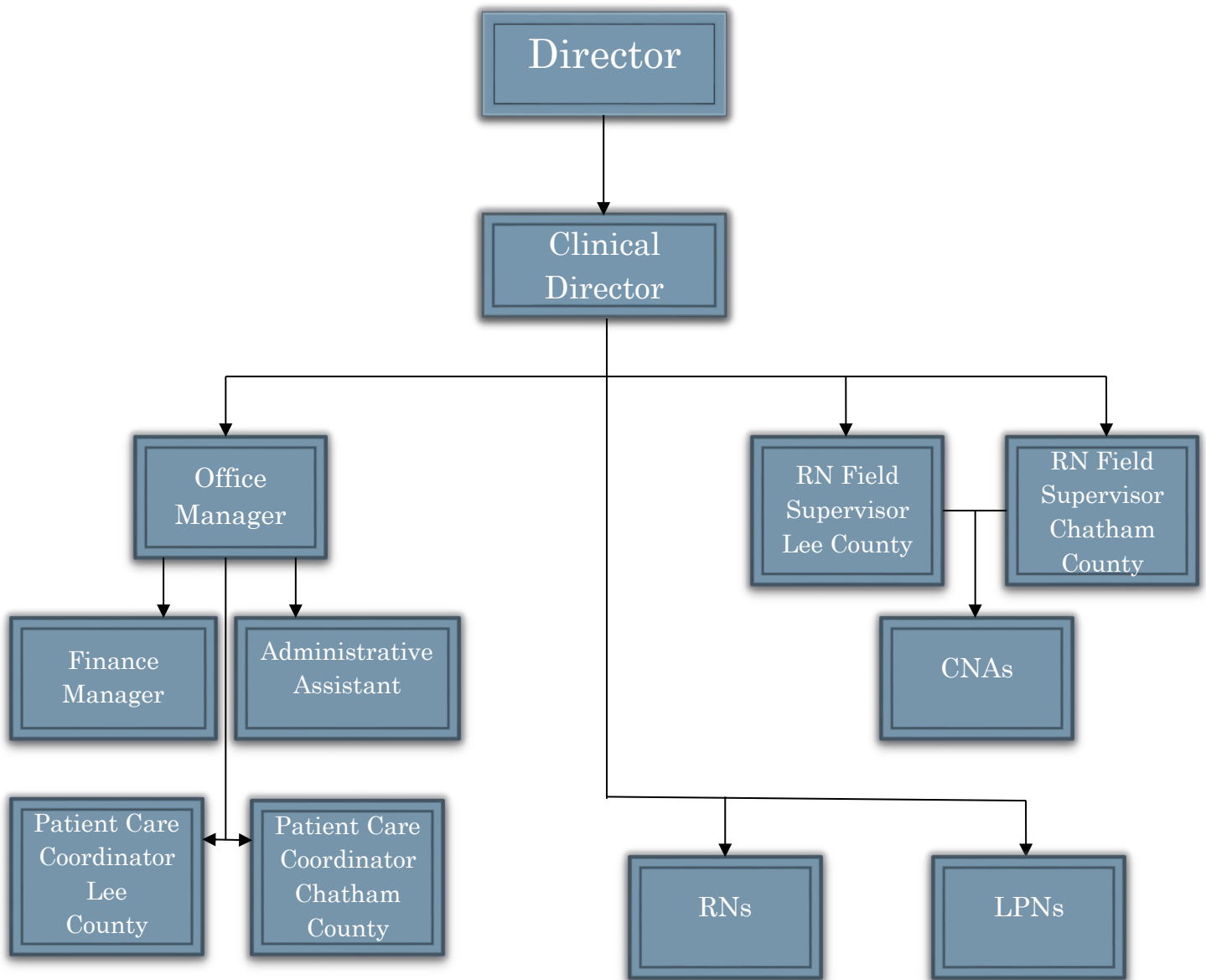
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# LEADERSHIP

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## Organizational Chart

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# Organizational Goals

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- Identify Patients Correctly
- Improve Effective Communication
- Improve the Safety of High Alert Medications
- Reduce the Risk of Patient Harm Resulting from Falls
- Ethics and Compliance

The goal of ethics and compliance is to ensure and reinforce ethical behavior and compliance with all applicable rules and regulations. It enhances our ability to achieve business and strategic objectives consistent with our mission and values. Through ethics and compliance, trust and confidence are encouraged on the part of patients, staff, other healthcare providers, payers, and the communities we serve.

## *Community Value*

The goal of community value at First Choice Home Care, Inc. is to plan, support, sponsor, and implement events, activities, or services that contribute, and give back to the communities we serve and that support our vision.

## *High Quality Healthcare*

The goal of high-quality healthcare addresses First Choice Home Care, Inc.'s success in delivering on its mission as a healthcare provider. All relevant data & information is utilized to establish our organization's performance in providing quality healthcare. The goal focuses on improving healthcare outcomes, service delivery results, and functional status. The goal also focuses on achieving superior results relative to other organization that deliver similar healthcare services.

# Corporate Compliance Plan

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## *Purpose*

First Choice Home Care, Inc. is a health care provider of health care services in all age groups primarily in the client's home setting, with a few contracted services in medical offices. As part of our commitment to deliver quality care, and to conduct business honestly, lawfully, and ethically, First Choice Home Care has established and maintains a comprehensive compliance plan in accordance with federal, state, and industry regulations and guidelines, representing our commitment to the highest standards of corporate conduct.

The program is designed to educate employees, ensure compliance, establish a mechanism to detect and identify violations or unethical behavior, publish disciplinary guidelines, audit the corporation's and employee's compliance, and establish corrective actions.

## *A. Standards*

All prospective employees must successfully pass a criminal background investigation, an Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigation, a licensure or certification verification, and satisfactory references from previous employers. In addition, all new employees must complete a mandatory orientation program to include policies and procedures, sign a statement certifying that they

understand all elements of the orientation, and demonstrate competency in the elements of their licensure/certification.

## *II. Corporate Structure*

First Choice Home Care, Inc. consists of a Director, a Clinical Director, an Office Manager, Finance Manager, an Administrative Assistant, two Patient Care Coordinators, two RN Field Supervisors, and RNs, LPNs, and In-Home Aides (certified and non-certified) providing direct care services.

The Director serves as the Corporate Compliance Officer.

## *III. Corporate Structure*

The position of Corporate Compliance Officer is established to ensure that all employees are made aware of and understand ethical conduct, and to administer the Corporate Compliance Program.

The Corporate Compliance Officer is responsible to:

- a. designates supervisory employees to assist in administering the program;
- b. ensure that all employees receive and acknowledge that they have received, understand, and will comply with the requirements;
- c. develops and facilitate periodic training as needed;
- d. maintains records of all training sessions;
- e. confidentially investigates suspected reports of violations;
- f. recommends disciplinary action following the investigation, if indicated;
- g. conduct periodic audits for compliance.

## *IV. Training and Education*

At the time of hire all employees are provided with information about ethical conduct and the elements of the Corporate Compliance Plan, and must sign that they received, reviewed, and understand the code of conduct, and will comply with the requirements. This includes information about false claims, fraud, abuse, and kick-backs. The code is reviewed yearly by employees at the time of annual performance evaluation and whenever there is an update to the policies.

## *V. Communication*

Any employee who has reason to believe that a potential problem or questionable practice is or may be in existence should report the circumstance to the Compliance Officer or designee. Such reports may be made verbally or in writing and may be made on an anonymous non-retaliatory basis. The locked after-hours mailbox may be utilized as a confidential method of conveying written concerns.

## *VI. Enforcing Standards*

The Corporate Compliance Officer shall investigate all reports of suspected Code violations. All reports shall be documented, reviewed, and evaluated. Upon concluding an investigation, the Compliance Officer shall submit the report with recommendations for appropriate disciplinary action. When disciplinary action is warranted it should be prompt and imposed according to disciplinary procedure. The supervisor will be responsible for taking appropriate disciplinary action. The Corporate Compliance Officer should never be involved in imposing discipline. Disciplinary actions may range from no discipline, to verbal warning, to written warning, to suspension, and finally to termination of employment.

### ***VII. Auditing and Monitoring***

Periodically the Corporate Compliance Officer shall audit the effectiveness and the compliance with the company's financial controls and policies and may make recommendations for corrections, modifications, or improvements.

### ***VIII. Responding to Detected Problems***

Violations of First Choice Home Care, Inc's Corporate Compliance Plan, and failure to comply with applicable state and federal law may threaten the Agency's status as a reliable, honest, and trustworthy provider. Detected but uncorrected misconduct may seriously endanger the mission, reputation and legal status of the Agency. Consequently, a timely investigation must be initiated and investigated to determine if a violation has occurred. The steps in the internal investigation must be documented and may include, interviews, review of documentation, description of the investigative process, a log of witnesses, findings of the investigation, results of the investigation, and corrective actions implemented. If necessary, a report will be generated to the involved governmental authority if the misconduct violated criminal, civil, or administrative law.

### ***IX. Cooperation and Responsibility***

All employees are required to cooperate fully with the Corporate Compliance Plan. Should an employee become involved in an investigation he/she will cooperate fully providing truthful information to the best of their knowledge.

In the event of a special agent's visit for the purpose of investigating fraud and abuse allegations, the following will be the procedure by the Agency's Compliance Officer or designee:

- a. obtain a copy of the search warrant and the affidavit supporting it
- b. obtain the name of the agent and the agency they represent
- c. contact counsel
- d. accompany the agent during the search
- e. record beginning and ending times of the search, items taken, areas searched, photographs taken, questions asked, or comments made, and requests made by the agent.
- f. identify and request copies of items essential to daily operations
- g. if employees are interviewed, debrief them after the search.

## **Code of Ethics and Conduct**

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This Code has been prepared as a working guide and not as a technical, legal or all-inclusive document. Each employee should apply this Code with common sense. This Code is a general guide to acceptable and appropriate behavior and all employees are expected to comply with its contents.

There are several situations that could give rise to a conflict of interest. Employees may not offer a gift, payment or bribe, or anything of value to any referral source or potential referral source, nor accept any gifts or favors from clients, referral sources or business associates.

Employees may not use company time, materials, information or other assets in connection with outside employment or for personal gain.

Employees are not permitted to sleep while at work or on duty.

Employees may not disclose confidential business or financial information concerning the company to any competitor who could profit from such knowledge. Conversely FCHC must neither accept nor solicit confidential information from an employee who previously worked with a competitor.

All cash and bank accounts must be handled to avoid any question or suspicion of impropriety. All cash transactions must be promptly recorded and deposited in the company's bank account. No funds shall be maintained in the form of cash except as an authorized petty cash account.

Dishonest or illegal activities on company premises or while on company business can result in disciplinary action, including dismissal and criminal prosecution. The following are prohibited activities:

- Illegal betting
- Consumption and storage of alcohol
- Use of illegal or controlled substances
- Carrying weapons on client or company property

The company reserves the right to inspect any property used by employees. Any employee charged with a DWI or convicted of a misdemeanor or a felony is required to report that fact to the supervisor.

Employees are to be alert to possible violations of the code and are encouraged in good faith to report such violations promptly and without fear of reprisal.

Disciplinary action may be taken against supervisors or executives who condone, permit, or have knowledge of illegal or unethical conduct by those reporting to them and do not take corrective action.

We are committed to equal opportunity of employment and will not tolerate any discrimination or harassment based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin or any other protected class.

To help ensure compliance with this Code, the agency requires that all employees and officers review the Code of Ethics and Conduct and acknowledge their understanding and adherence in writing on an annual basis. Questions are to be directed to the immediate supervisor.

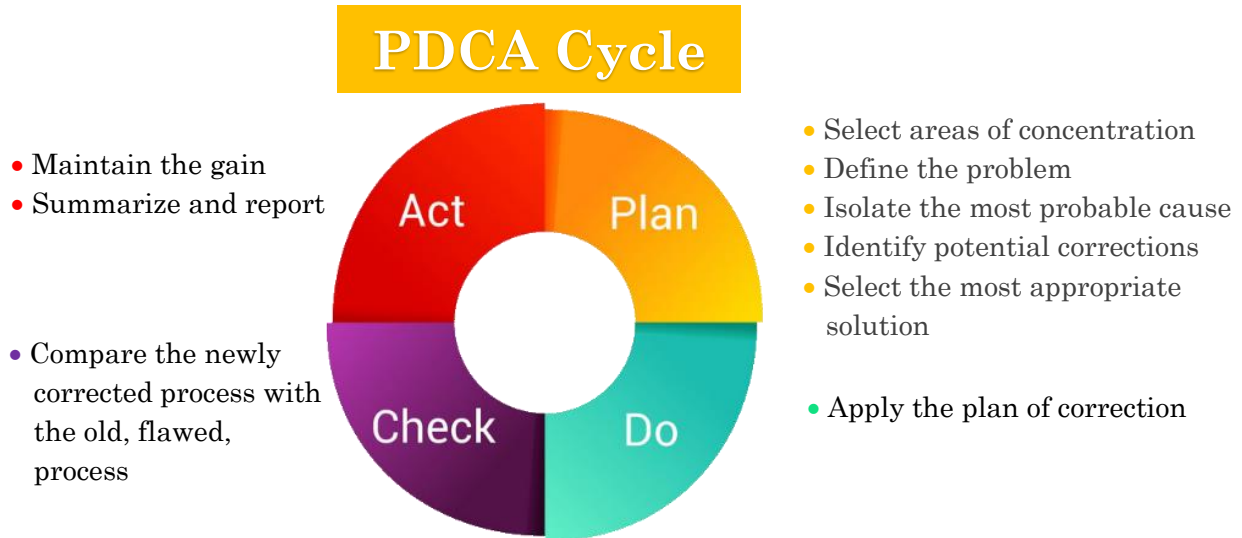
## Performance Improvement

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The performance improvement program at First Choice Home Care shall be an ongoing, systematic, and collaborative process. The plan strives for optimal outcomes in patient care that are achieved through design, measurement, assessment, and improvement of our care delivery processes. Included in the plan are the goals that increase the likelihood that management system and other non-clinical functions will also be improved systematically.

Any employee can initiate the process to solve problems within the workplace.

First Choice Home Care has adopted the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) problem solving process as our “cycle of improvement.” Listed below is a description of the steps involved:



## HIPAA

### Health Information Portability and Accountability Act

All employees are required to abide by the HIPAA regulations and to attend all required training. Failure to abide by the HIPAA guidelines will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

The HIPAA privacy rule was established for the protection of personal health information. This rule was established to ensure the security and confidentiality of information that is collected by a health care provider concerning their patients. First Choice Home Care is a Health Care provider.

HIPAA laws were established to ensure health insurance portability and privacy provisions for protected health information.

“Protected Health Information” is any health information maintained by First Choice Home Care that is individually identifiable.

The Intent of the HIPAA laws are to:

- Ensure Confidentiality of Patient Records
- Prevent unauthorized use and disclosure
- Require written authorization for certain uses and disclosures
- Establish Patients right to privacy protection, right to right to access their protected health information, the right to amend their protected health information, the right to receive an accounting of disclosures and the right to request certain restrictions of protected health information.

“Use” means, with respect to individually identifiable health information, the sharing, application, utilization, examination, or analysis of that information with First Choice Home Care.

A home care agency may use and disclose protected health information as follows:

1. The patient’s treatment
2. For Payment
3. For the treatment or payment activities of another health care provider (EG, referral to another agency)
4. Health Care operations (EG, Record Audits)
5. Health oversight activities (EG, Medicaid audits)

Uses and disclosures that require an authorization:

1. Uses and disclosures that require giving an opportunity to agree or object to the use or disclosure.
2. Uses or Disclosures for marketing or fund raising.
3. Uses or disclosures to business associates.

Exceptions – No Authorization:

1. Uses and disclosures for public health
2. Uses and disclosures about victims of abuse, neglect or domestic violence.
3. Disclosures for judicial and administrative proceedings.
4. Uses and Disclosures to avert a serious threat to the health/safety.
5. Uses and disclosures about health oversight activities.

Notice of Privacy Practices Never discuss patient information with your family members, your co-workers, your friends, your neighbors, other patients. Patient information is anything that identifies a patient: Name, Age, Diagnosis, Treatment, Address, Location or vicinity of home. Never leave patient information in view (such as in your car).

Safeguards to protect the privacy of protected health information:

1. Computers – position computer monitors and printers away from public areas. All computers must have screen savers that activate after ten minutes of inactivity. The screen saver must require the employee’s password to be de-activated.
2. Trash – All trash that contains protected health information must be placed in the designated receptacles to be shredded.
3. Files – during the work day files containing protected health information shall remain in the appropriate file drawers except when being used. At the end of the work day, all files shall be returned to the appropriate file drawers when the office is closed all file drawers shall be locked.
4. Faxes – The office manager/designee shall remove all faxes from the fax machine promptly and deliver them to the intended recipient. If delivery cannot be accomplished immediately the fax shall be maintain in the confidential file until delivery can be accomplished. All faxes must be sent with a completed First Choice Home Care cover sheet.

## *Sanctions*

Any member of First Choice Home Care's workforce who fails to comply with HIPAA privacy policies are subject to sanctions.

1. Written reprimand or termination of employment.
2. Civil sanctions up to \$25,000 and up to 10 years in prison.

## Equal Employment Opportunity

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First Choice Home Care, Inc. is an equal-opportunity employer and strives to comply with all applicable laws prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, creed, sex, age, national origin, ethnicity or ancestry, physical or mental disability, veteran status, marital status, medical condition, sexual orientation, as well as any other category protected by federal, state, or local laws. All such discrimination is unlawful, and all persons involved in the operations of the company are prohibited from engaging in this type of conduct.

If you believe that you are a subject of discriminatory conduct you should report every instance of unlawful discrimination to your supervisor, regardless of whether you are the subject of the discrimination. Detailed reports, including names, descriptions, and actual events or statements made, will greatly enhance the company's ability to investigate. Any documents supporting the allegations should also be submitted. Based on your report, the company will investigate. The company will keep all reports and complaints confidential and will act on any complaint as expeditiously and confidentially as possible. The company prohibits all retaliation for submitting a report of unlawful discrimination and for cooperating in any investigation. Any supervisor or employee who retaliates against the accuser or those involved in the investigation will be disciplined, up to and including discharge from employment.

If the investigation determines that prohibited discrimination or other conduct is a violation of the company policy, the company will take such remedial or disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment as is warranted under the situation. The company will also evaluate whether other employment practices should be added or modified to deter and prevent that conduct in the future. You will be informed of whatever action(s) the company takes to resolve and remedy the situation. You may discuss equal employment opportunity related questions with your supervisor or any other member of management.

## Cultural Diversity

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First Choice Home Care, Inc. is committed to encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination in both its role as an employer and as a provider of services. First Choice Home Care, Inc. aims to create a culture that respects and values each other's differences, that promotes dignity, equality and diversity, and that encourages individuals to develop and maximize their true potential. We are committed wherever practicable to achieving and maintaining a workforce that broadly reflects the local community in which we operate.

First Choice Home Care, Inc. provides equality and fairness for all in our care and employment and in the provision of services and not to discriminate on the grounds of gender, marital status,

race, ethnic origin, color, nationality, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age.

First Choice Home Care, Inc. opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.

All Patients, employees, trustees and volunteers, whether part-time, full-time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training, volunteering or any other benefit will be based on skills and ability.

First Choice Home Care, Inc. commitment to Equality and Diversity is:

- To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our patients, employees, trustees and volunteers are recognized and valued.
- To create a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
- To ensure training, development and progression opportunities are available to all.
- To regularly review services to ensure they are accessible and appropriate to all groups within society.
- To treat breaches of the equality policy seriously and to take disciplinary action when required.
- To ensure the policy is fully supported by the owner/owners of the company.
- To monitor and review the policy annually.

## Communication Barriers

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To uphold and respect the patient's right to and need for effective communication, including communication between the patient and First Choice Home Care, Inc, as well as between the patient and others outside the company.

Communication vulnerable patients include, but are not limited to: Individuals with pre-existing vision, hearing, speech, and cognitive disabilities, linguistic and cultural differences, limited health literacy, limited ability to read/write, recent communication difficulties occurring as a result of disease/illness/accident/event or that occur as a result of medical treatment (e.g. intubation, sedation).

First Choice Home Care, Inc may arrange for members speaking the same foreign language or an interpreter to work with non-English speaking patients, as appropriate.

Communication considerations for all patients shall be respected and observed. Where such considerations impede the provision of prescribed care, treatment or services, personnel shall notify the Administrator and/or the physician in an effort to accommodate the patient's limitations.

First Choice Home Care, Inc shall accept persons for care regardless of limitations, race, religion or national origin.

First Choice Home Care, Inc promotes effective communication between the patient and others outside the company.

Clients are encouraged by employees to use assistive devices to improve communication (e.g. glasses, hearing aids)

When non-English speaking patients are accepted for services and it is deemed that an interpreter will be required, the following procedures shall be observed:

- Assign, when available, employees speaking the same foreign language to work with non-English speaking patients
- Written information shall be provided that is appropriate to the age, understanding and, as appropriate to the population served, the language of the patient, i.e. when a significant number of patients are non-English speaking (25% or more).
- Specialized instructional activities involving communication barriers are documented in the patient's record.
- Other healthcare providers, i.e., physicians, acute care hospitals, home care agencies, are apprised as necessary of the patient's communication needs and of the provisions made by First Choice Home Care, Inc to promote effective communication with the patient.

## Immigration Reform and Control Act

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In compliance with the federal Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), as amended, and any state law requirements, if applicable, our company is committed to employing only individuals who are authorized to work in the United States.

Once you accept an offer of employment and complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9 and present documentation establishing identity and employment eligibility, the employer takes the information from your Form I-9 and enters it into E-Verify. E-Verify compares your information against records available to DHS and provides the employer with a case result within 3 to 5 seconds.

If an employee is authorized to work in this country for a limited time, the individual will be required to submit proof of renewed employment eligibility prior to expiration of that period to remain employed by the company.

### *What is E-Verify*

E-Verify is an Internet-based system that compares information from your Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification, to U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Social Security Administration (SSA) records to confirm that you are authorized to work in the United States. Though participation in E-Verify is required of some employers, most employers participate voluntarily.

An employer that participates in E-Verify must post the Notice of E-Verify Participation poster provided by DHS and the Right to Work poster issued by Department of Justice, Immigrant and Employee Rights Section, shown below in English and Spanish, at the company's hiring location. If the posters cannot be displayed at the hiring location, they should be provided to you with your job application materials.

It's important that you understand how E-Verify works. We encourage you to learn more about the E-Verify process, including your rights and responsibilities as an employee and how to correct your records if a mismatch is found during the verification process.

## Americans with Disabilities Act

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Our company is committed to providing equal employment opportunities to qualified individuals with disabilities. This may include providing reasonable accommodation where appropriate for an otherwise qualified individual to perform the essential functions of the job. It is your responsibility to notify your supervisor of the need for accommodation. Upon doing so, your supervisor may ask you for your input or the type of accommodation you believe may be necessary or the functional limitations caused by your disability. Also, when appropriate, we may need your permission to obtain additional information from your physician or other medical or rehabilitation professionals. All medical information received by the company in connection with a request for accommodation will be treated as confidential.

## Social Media

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The company has in place policies that govern use of its own electronic communication systems, equipment, and resources, which employees must follow. The company may also have an interest in your electronic communications with co-workers, clients, vendors, suppliers, competitors, and the general public. Inappropriate communications, even if made on your own time using your own resources, may be grounds for discipline up to and including immediate termination. We encourage you to use good judgment when communicating via blogs, online chat rooms, networking internet sites, social internet sites, and other electronic and non-electronic forums (collectively "social media"). The following is a general and non-exhaustive list of guidelines you should keep in mind:

- Make it clear that the views expressed in social media are yours alone. Do not purport to represent the views of the company in any fashion.
- Do not disclose confidential or proprietary information regarding the company, your co-workers or the company's vendors and suppliers. Use of copyrighted or trademarked company information, trade secrets, or other sensitive information may subject you to legal action. If you have any doubt about whether it is proper to disclose information, please discuss it with the Director/Administrator.
- Do not use company logos, trademarks, web addresses, email addresses or other symbols in social media. You may not use the company name or other identifying information to endorse, promote, denigrate or otherwise comment on any product, opinion, cause or person.
- Be respectful of the privacy and dignity of your co-workers. Do not use or post photos of co-workers without their express consent.
- Harassing, obscene, defamatory, threatening, or other offensive content must be avoided. Harassing or discriminatory comments, particularly if made based on gender, race, religion, age, national origin, or other protected characteristic, may be deemed inappropriate even if the company name is not mentioned. If social media communications in any way may adversely affect your relationships at work or violate company policy, you

may be subject to discipline up to and including immediate termination under various company policies.

- Ensure that engaging in social media does not interfere with your work commitments.
- Social media and similar communications have the potential to reflect on both you and the company. We hope that you will show respect for our employees, clients, affiliates and competitors.

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# HUMAN RESOURCES

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## Personnel Records

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You are required to complete all forms that the Company requests with regard to your employment with First Choice Home Care, Inc. These forms are part of your personnel record and are the property of the Company. Since the personnel file is the property of the Company and contains confidential information, access to these files is restricted to authorized personnel only. You must not knowingly furnish the Company with false information. False or misleading information on your employment application or any other Company document, can lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination at the Company's discretion.

Employees are responsible for keeping the information in their personnel file up to date. You must immediately notify your supervisor of any changes in name, address, phone number, email, personal and dependent status and individuals to notify in case of emergency. This information is very important, not only for you, but also for tax purposes. The Company will not be responsible for any errors that may occur from your failure to update this information. You are responsible for your CPR, TB screening, license, education, and driver's license. We schedule CPR classes in January, April, July and October as a convenience for our employees. We will remind you when you need to attend. Pre-payment is required.

If your position requires a license, you are responsible for submitting proof to office personnel whenever your license is renewed. Failure to do this may result in reassignment, suspension or termination.

## Compensation

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Compensation increases will not be given solely based on length of service or other non-performance-based criteria. Pay raises and/or adjustments are not automatic. They are based on merit, business conditions, market standards, company guidelines and related criteria. The company reserves the right to adjust your salary appropriate to the position you hold. This review is designed to assist in your career development and to establish goals for your future growth. Completion of the performance review process does not automatically entitle you to a salary adjustment.

### *Overtime*

First Choice Home Care provides compensation for all overtime hours worked by nonexempt employees in accordance with state and federal law. **Prior verbal authorization from the Administrator must be obtained before working any overtime.** Time off in lieu of overtime is not permitted.

## Criminal Background Investigations

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First Choice Home Care, Inc. reserves the right to complete criminal background investigations prior to and during employment at any time, and for any reason it feels necessary. This includes but is not limited to a current arrest, DUI or other moving violations or any citations. Any criminal investigations are solely at the discretion of the company.

## Employment At-Will/Casual Position/ Resignation/Termination

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**All employment relationships with First Choice Home Care, Inc. are At-will.** You are hired in a Casual position (as needed) with no guarantee of work hours. Just as the company has the right to terminate your employment at any time with or without notice, cause or reason, so are you free to resign your employment.

You should notify your supervisor in writing of your intended date of termination. Non-management staff should provide at least two weeks' notice; management personnel should provide four weeks' notice. You should also notify the Director/Administrator to schedule an exit interview, if you so desire.

## Introductory Probation Period

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The first ninety (90) days of employment are an adjustment and assessment period during which time your immediate supervisor or manager initially will evaluate your abilities and skills to perform in the position for which you were hired. Marginal attendance and tardiness will have an adverse impact on your continued employment.

The first ninety (90) days following a re-hire or transfer also are considered an introductory, probationary period.

## Annual Performance Evaluation

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This document is completed on the employee's anniversary date for all employees who have successfully completed their first year of employment. This is a comprehensive evaluation and shall be used by the department manager/supervisor and the employee to evaluate each area of the job, suggest improvements, set goals and objectives for the future and measure job performance for the time stated. This performance evaluation is criteria based.

## Holiday Closings

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First Choice Home Care Offices are closed for the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Easter (Good Friday or Monday is determined by Director)
- Memorial Day

- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the following day
- Christmas Day (other Christmas closing determined by Director)

**Unless notified by supervisor it is the expectation that you will work holidays.** A deadline will be posted for time off request. If time off request is submitted after the deadline approval will be considered by supervisor if accommodations can be made for coverage. If no accommodations for patient's coverage can be found, expectations are to work as schedule and time off request would not be honored.

## Communication

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Communication is the key to quality care. The telephone is vital to efficient and comprehensive daily operations. During working hours, the telephone however is our main link between our patients, our employees, and our business associates.

Good communication always helps employees become more involve in their work and helps them to develop a better understanding of their jobs. Clear, precise and timely communication of information also prevents the occurrence of organizational problems.

Without feedback that the message is received and understood, communication is incomplete. When cell phone voicemail is not set up, or no response to text and/or email, it is virtually impossible for contact to be made concerning new potential clients or change in status with existing clients.

It is the employee's responsibility to give current phone numbers and respond in a reasonable timeframe when contacted by supervisor or office staff.

## After-Hours Service

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When the office is closed you still have access to both scheduling and nursing support. Calling the regular office number will instruct you on how to contact the on-call team member. Keep in mind an on-call emergency is any situation that cannot wait until the next business day (i.e. calling off for a shift, client condition changes such as hospitalization or an event which requires administrative acknowledgement). When calling the office to leave a message, please be specific by providing your first and last name, phone number with area code, location/client home/name. If you have called the on-call person and not received a return call within 15 minutes, call back.

Agency staff will be available to answer calls after normal office hours and on weekends for our patients and employees.

- **Normal Business Hours:** In general, this means 7:30am to 4:00pm Monday – Friday. Managers may reach alternative agreements with individual employees.
- **After-Hours:** Defined as 4:00pm – 7:30am Monday-Friday. Weekends beginning Friday 4:00pm to Monday 7:30am.

- **Do not call the on-call cell phone in the middle of the night unless it is an emergency where the on-call person must take action.**

## Attendance/Time Off

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Timely and regular attendance is an expectation of performance for all First Choice Home Care employees. To ensure adequate staffing, positive employee morale, and to meet expected standards throughout the company, employees will be held accountable for adhering to their schedule. In the event an employee is unable to meet this expectation, he/she must obtain approval from their supervisor in advance of any requested schedule changes. This approval requests includes late arrivals or early departures. Supervisors have discretion to evaluate extraordinary circumstances of a tardy, absence and determine whether or not to count the incident as an occurrence.

All requests for time off are to be put in writing on the appropriate “Request for Time Off” form. **We do not accept requests by phone for time off.** Please be advised that we will do our best to accommodate your need for time off, however, *if we are unable to find replacement coverage for your shift you will be required to cover the shift as this is your scheduled shift to work. Furthermore, if you have requested time off and for any kind of reason(s) you do not need the time off you will not be eligible to receive that shift(s) back.*

Your schedule is put into place based on the needs of your client. You have a set schedule, stick to the schedule that is in place for that client. Do not vary from that schedule without prior approval from the office. Any tardiness requires the office to be notified.

**Be on time and leave on time.**

### Call Out/Sick Days/Days Off Requests Policy

First Choice Home Care is dedicated to making sure that our client’s care is our main concern. We are aware that there will be occasions in which a caregiver/employee will be unable to meet their scheduled obligation to the client. Please follow our call-out policy closely. Failure to follow the company call-out policy and procedure could result in written warnings and/or termination.

- If for any reason you cannot make it to your scheduled shift you must call the office two (2) hours or more ahead of time so that we have adequate time to cover your shift and inform the client. **Do NOT wait until the last minute!**
- You may inform the client yourself, but it is your first duty as the caregiver to inform the office or the after-hour’s line of your intent not to be at work.
- It is your responsibility to call-out for your shift. Do not have another individual call-out for you. This is not acceptable and can result in a written warning for improper procedure.
- Absences of three (3) days and longer due to illness require a note from a physician.
- Be considerate of your client and supervisor when you are not going to be at work. **Do not miss work without calling-out, this is not acceptable.** It will be documented as a no call/no show. This could result in Termination.
- In cases where five (5) days or more time off is needed, a minimum of two (2) weeks’ notice is required.

- Pre-arranged absences (i.e. doctors appointment, etc.) must be scheduled with at least a twelve (12) hours' notice, best practice would be to call supervisor as soon as the doctor's appointment or other engagement is made.

Failure to show up for your scheduled shift without following the call-out procedure above can result in immediate termination. Frequent absences and tardies are not acceptable and may be cause for disciplinary action, including termination.

- Three (3) unscheduled absences or tardies within 30 days may result in an oral warning
- Four (4) unscheduled absences or tardies within 60 days may result in written warning
- Five (5) unscheduled absences or tardies within 90 days may result in termination
- Two (2) no call/no shows may result in the termination of employment

Exceptions of the above may only occur with the express approval of the Agency Director.

## Inclement Weather Policy

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Occasionally, First Choice Home Care business hours may be altered, or operations may be reduced or temporarily closed down due to inclement weather or emergency conditions. If threatening weather is forecast or occurs, and conditions are unsafe for travel you are responsible for contacting your client. Unless it is an emergency please do not call the After-Hours service as the phones are for true emergencies.

First Choice Home Care employees directly involved with caring for clients, must always ensure the safety and security of their respective clients, when they are scheduled to deliver care. Inclement weather is not a reason to abandon a client in need of care. The safety of our employees is paramount in any emergency situation; therefore, employees are asked to use common sense and make their best assessment of the safety and practicality of the situation.

## Time Documentation

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All timesheets correspond with the client's Care Plan, which you will find in your client's homes.

Employees must complete and submit a timesheet for each client. All timesheets must be signed by the client or responsible party before submitting. Timesheets are available at our office. **Completed timesheets must be sent in weekly.** They must be dropped off in person or in our drop box and must be received by **Monday at 9 o'clock am**, to ensure receipt of a paycheck for that pay period. Late timesheets will be paid the following payday.

Timesheets which are incomplete and/or incorrect may be returned to the employee for completion/correction. As a result, these timesheets may not be processed until the next pay period.

The following information should be on every timesheet to ensure that it will be acceptable and processed for that pay period.

- BOTH the client and employee names
- Be sure that shifts worked correspond to the total hours worked for that day. For example, a timesheet that an employee submits for a shift as worked from 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. and then writes 6 hours for the total worked, may be returned to the employee for correction
- AM and PM must be included when recording your times
- The employee and client/responsible party must sign the timesheet

Any variation in scheduled hours must be approved. **First Choice Home Care must be notified for approval before the care is provided.** Employees will not be paid for care that has not been scheduled in advance through the office. Do not ask clients to change scheduled work hours for your convenience.

Falsifying your time or tampering with another employee's time documentation is cause for disciplinary action up to and including termination of all employees involved.

## Electronic Visit Verification (EVV)

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As required by Section 12006 of the CURES Act, the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) will implement an Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) system for Personal Care Services (PCS).

### *What is EVV?*

Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) is a method used to verify visit activity for services delivered as part of home and community-based service programs. EVV offers a measure of accountability to help ensure that individuals who are authorized to receive services in fact receive them.

### *Electronically Located Visit Information System - ELVIS*

An employee's schedule is made available via the smartphone ELVIS application. The employee records their arrival/departure times (GPS verified) and the completion status of each task performed as prescribed by the patient's care plan. Employees must have a smart phone to be able to install the ELVIS app.

The ELVIS app can be downloaded from Google Play Store or Apple App Store. Your supervisor will assist you with the download and input the required IP address. You will be provided with a username and password. ELVIS consists of:

- Logging into ELVIS
- Your Scheduled Visits
- Arriving at a Visit
- Performing the Visit
- Signature Required
- Leaving a Visit
- Take Vital Signs (if POC required)

Training will be provided on how to successfully use ELVIS. The freedom to use your mobile device to remotely check in & out, take notes and log data relieves the pressure of cumbersome paperwork.

# Payroll Deductions

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The Company is required by law to make certain deductions from your paycheck. Currently, these include Federal and state taxes and contributions to Social Security. These deductions will be itemized on your paycheck earnings stub. The amount of the deductions depends on your earnings and the information you furnished on the W-4 form.

# Wage Assignments-Garnishments

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When the company receives court-ordered garnishments, we are required to honor them in accordance with the applicable law. In these cases, deductions to satisfy the court order will be made from your earnings. The company will notify you and the information will be noted on your pay stub.

# Social Security

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As an employee, you are covered by and required by Federal law to belong to the Federal Social Security Program. These benefits are available for retirement, survivor's benefits and medical costs under qualifying conditions determined by the Federal Government. Social Security costs are paid by both you and the company and are automatically deducted from your paycheck.

# Leave of Absence-Full Time Personnel Only

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Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is a Federal law that became effective on August 5, 1993. The law requires companies that employ **50 or more people** to give eligible employees the right to take paid/unpaid leave if it has been earned and is available, for a period of up to 12 weeks.

Since First Choice Home Care, Inc. does not fit into this category you will need to see a member of the Management Team, should you have an issue which might require leave. Each request will be carefully considered if the following conditions are met:

- Your leave will not negatively impact company operations.
- If leave is granted, the company will not guarantee the same or similar position upon your return.

# Dress Code

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The First Choice Home Care Identification Badge with the employee's name and credentials will be worn at all times while on duty and be clearly visible. The Identification Badge will be provided to you during orientation.

All employees with direct client care are expected to wear scrubs unless otherwise approved by an administrator. The First Choice Home Care t-shirt and sweat shirt are considered part of the uniform.

- Clean and neat scrubs are to be worn when providing patient care.
- Tennis shoes or appropriate nursing shoes must provide safe and secure footing and offer protection against hazards. No open back shoes, open toe shoes, flip-flops, or sandals are allowed for staff providing direct patient care.
- Direct care staff will maintain finger nails at a length that does not interfere with patient care or present a safety issue
- Jewelry should be conservative and worn in a manner that will not interfere with job performance. No dangly jewelry.
- If fragrances and/or make-up are worn, it should not be distracting or disturbing to patient(s). Make-up should be professional in appearance. Fragrances or odors (perfume, after shave, cigarette smoke) that are overpowering, or offensive are not acceptable.

Employees may be subject to disciplinary action for failure to follow the dress code policy.

## Complaints and Grievances

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At First Choice Home Care, Inc. every member of our management team is committed to the company's philosophy of fair treatment of our employees. You are always free to speak to your supervisor or any member of the management team, raise questions and get answers to anything that may be on your mind. Every employee is treated as an individual and as an important participant in the operation of our company. We hope to maintain this open relationship.

We strongly believe that individual consideration in employee-supervisory relationships provides the best climate for our maximum development, team work and the attainment of our goals. We have enthusiastically accepted our responsibility to provide you with good working conditions, competitive wages, fair treatment and personal respect. We do not believe union representation of our employees would be in the best interest of either the employees or the company. It is our objective to provide you with the opportunity to express your concerns, suggestions and comments to us directly, so we can understand each other better. We will continue to listen and to do our best to give you responsible replies.

The following is our problem resolution procedure:

### *Your Supervisor*

If you have work-related concerns, you are encouraged to discuss your problem with your immediate supervisor as soon as possible. The supervisor, after listening and investigating the problem will provide you with an answer in a timely fashion. (Should yours, or if for any reason you do not wish to take your problem to your immediate supervisor; you should go directly to the Director or Administrator).

### *Management Team*

If your problem/issue/dispute has not been satisfactorily resolved by your Supervisor, you may request to speak directly to your Director/Administrator. Your Director/Administrator will discuss the problem with you and will provide you with a timely response.

# Conduct

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To protect everyone's rights and safety, it is the company's policy to implement certain rules and regulations regarding your behavior as an employee of First Choice Home Care, Inc. It is important that you become familiar with and accept these standards and rules. The Company will enforce them on a fair, consistent, and non-discriminatory basis. Harmonious workplace relationships are not entirely a matter of rules but result from daily cooperation among employees and between employees and their supervisors. However, in our organization, certain rules of conduct and work behavior are necessary to ensure a productive working environment in which the rights of both the company and you are protected.

As a representative of First Choice Home Care you will treat all clients, family members and co-workers with dignity and respect. Managers/Supervisors are responsible for acting to correct inappropriate work behavior and/or performance issues when appropriate. The company will document all actions taken to assist the employee to correct inappropriate behavior and/or poor performance issues. Employment is considered "at will" and therefore, the company reserves the terminate employment with or without cause.

# Harassment

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First Choice Home Care will not tolerate any form of harassment based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, veteran status, disability, or any other protected group, by or against any of its employees. This policy applies equally to all company employees as well as vendors, patients and independent contractors.

Some examples of Harassment include:

- Verbal Harassment: Making jokes or comments that refer to a certain ethnic group, race, sex, nationality, age, disability, sexual preference, religion or belief, epithets, derogatory comments, vulgar or profane words and expressions or slurs.
- Visual Forms: derogatory e-mails, posters, cartoons or drawings.
- Physical Harassment: unwelcome touching, assaulting, blocking, or otherwise physically interfering with an individual's normal movement.

## *Sexual Harassment*

Any type of sexual harassment is against company policy and may be unlawful. We firmly prohibit sexual harassment of any employee by another employee, supervisor or third party. Harassment of third parties by our employees is also prohibited. The purpose of this policy is not to regulate the morality of employees. It is to ensure that in the workplace, no employee is subject to sexual harassment. While it is not easy to define precisely what sexual harassment is, it may include: unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature including, but not limited to, sexually-related drawings, pictures, jokes, teasing, e-mails, text messages, uninvited touching or other sexually-related comments. The conduct prohibited by this policy includes conduct in any form including but not limited to e-mail, voicemail, chat rooms, Internet use or history, text messages, pictures, images, writings, words or gestures.

Sexual harassment of an employee will not be tolerated. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

### *Procedures*

If you believe that the actions or words of any individual(s) constitute harassment, we urge you to report that behavior to your supervisor. If you are unwilling to discuss this matter with your supervisor, for any reason, you should take the complaint directly to Administration. All complaints of harassment, whether verbal or written, will be promptly investigated. All investigative data will remain confidential. Any employee or supervisor, who, after investigation, is found to have engaged in any form of unlawful harassment will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

There will be no adverse action taken against employees who report violations of this policy in good faith or participate in the investigation of such violations.

- Any employee who believes that she/he is a victim of sexual harassment should immediately report such actions in accordance with the following procedure. All complaints will be promptly and thoroughly investigated as confidentially as possible.
- Any employee, who believes that she/he is a victim of sexual harassment or has been retaliated against for complaining of sexual harassment, should report the situation immediately to a member of the company management.
- The company will investigate every reported incident immediately. Any employee, supervisor or agent of the company who has been found to have violated this policy may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including immediate discharge.
- The company will conduct all investigations in a discreet manner. The company recognizes that every investigation requires a determination based on all the facts in the matter. We also recognize the serious impact a false accusation can have. We trust that all employees will continue to act responsibly.
- The reporting employee and any employee participating in any investigation under this policy have the company's assurance that no reprisals will be taken as a result of a sexual harassment complaint. It is our policy to encourage discussion of the matter, to help protect others from being subjected to similar inappropriate behavior.

## Workplace Violence

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To make our commitment to safety clear and to recognize that each of us has a responsibility to our co-worker's safety, the company has adopted a policy, which states that each of us has an absolute duty to report threats of violence, intimidation, or vandalism. The company will not tolerate threats and will discipline anyone engaging in such conduct. When you hear anything that seems to be a threat, report it immediately to a member of management and let them investigate it. There will be no retribution against you or any employee who in good faith reports what appears to be a threat. It is not an option to report a threat, it is your duty.

Violence by an employee or anyone else against an employee, supervisor or member of management will not be tolerated. The purpose of this policy is to minimize the potential risk of personal injuries to employees at work and to reduce the possibility of damage to company property in the event someone, for whatever reason, may be unhappy with a company decision or action by an employee or member of management. If you receive or overhear any threatening communications from an employee or outside third party, report it to your supervisor at once.

Do not engage in either physical or verbal confrontation with a potentially violent individual. If you encounter an individual who is threatening immediate harm to an employee or visitor to our premises, contact an emergency agency (such as 911) immediately.

All reports of work-related threats will be kept confidential to the extent possible, investigated and documented. Employees are expected to report and participate in an investigation of any suspected or actual cases of workplace violence and will not be subjected to disciplinary consequences for such reports or cooperation. Violations of this policy, including your failure to report or fully cooperate in the company's investigation, may result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge

### *Workplace Violence Prevention*

Prevention is the best protection. Workplace violence can happen in any area. This includes offices, parking lots, vehicles, elevators, stairways, and in the patient's home. It can happen day or, night.

Anyone may become violent. It depends on the situation. However, certain factors can increase the likelihood of violence. They include: A history of violence, Alcohol or drug abuse, Head injury, Certain brain disorders/illnesses.

Before violence strikes, there are usually warning signs. This includes but, is not limited to: making threats, talking about or carrying weapons, cursing, and screaming, restlessness, pacing, violent gestures.

You can prevent violence:

- Treat everyone with respect
- Refrain from using abusive language, intimidation, threats, assaults, or fighting
- Watch for warning signs. Try to spot and head off trouble before it turns into violence
- Stay calm
- Don't let your escape path become blocked
- Follow proper procedures for how to handle the situation
- Report the incident immediately to your supervisor.

Any employee, supervisor or agent of the company who has been found to have violated this policy may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including immediate discharge.

# Workplace Searches

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First Choice Home Care will work to maintain an environment that is free of illegal drugs, alcohol, firearms, explosives, or other improper materials and prohibits the possession, transfer, sale, or use of any such materials on its premises. To protect the property and to ensure the safety of all employees, clients and the company, the company reserves the right to conduct personal searches consistent with state law, and to inspect any packages, parcels, purses, handbags, brief cases, lunch boxes or any other possessions or articles carried to and from the company's property. In addition, the company reserves the right to search any employee's office, desk, files, locker, equipment or any other area or article on our premises. In this regard, it should be noted that all offices, desks, files, lockers, equipment, etc. are the property of the company, and are issued for the use of employees only during their employment. Inspection may be conducted at any time at the discretion of the company. Persons entering the premises who refuse to cooperate in an inspection conducted pursuant to this policy may not be permitted to enter the premises. Employees entering or leaving the premises who refuse to cooperate in an inspection, as well as employees who after the inspection are believed to be in possession of stolen property or illegal substances, will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge, if upon investigation they are found to be in violation of the company's security procedures or any other company rules and regulations.

## No Smoking

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**We are a smoke-free agency.** The adverse health effects of smoking to both smokers and non-smokers make it imperative that we set a public example of dedication to a clean, safe, healthy working environment. In compliance with N.C. Gen. Stat. 131E-1143, and Agency policy, all employees are prohibited from smoking in or around company offices or at a patient's home while providing home care services on behalf of First Choice Home Care. Clients are informed of this policy as required by NC state law. If any fine is imposed upon First Choice Home Care for an employee violating this policy and law, the employee will be responsible for payment of the fine.

## Substance Abuse

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### **FIRST CHOICE HOME CARE IS A DRUG FREE WORK PLACE!**

#### *Key Points*

- First Choice Home Care is committed to providing a safe work environment that is free from the effects of substance abuse.
- The organization's goals are to protect employees and patients from accidents and other damaging acts caused by an employee whose job performance is impaired by drugs and/or alcohol.
- Substance abuse while at work or, otherwise, seriously endangers the safety of employees and, patients, as well as the public. It creates a variety of work place problems, including increase in injuries on the job, absenteeism, health care and benefit costs, theft, decreased morale, decreased productivity and a decline in the quality of products and services provided by the organization.

- It is the policy of First Choice Home Care to eliminate the use and/or presence of alcohol and illegal drugs in the work place and, to assist employees in overcoming any dependence on drugs and/or alcohol.
- Legal drugs may also affect the safety of the employee, other employees, patients, and/or members of the public. Therefore, any employee taking any “legal” drug which might impair safety, performance or, any motor functions, must advise his or her supervisor before reporting to work. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action. Improper use of “legal drugs” is prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.
- The Administer and/or Office Manager has the authority to request a drug and/or alcohol screen on any employee believed to be impaired. In addition, disciplinary actions will be initiated for any employee who tests positive for drugs and/or alcohol.
- Refusal to submit to efforts to tamper with or failure to pass a drug and/or alcohol test will result in disciplinary action up to and including discharge.

### *Reasons for Drug Testing*

- Pre-employment applicant testing.
- For cause testing (reasonable suspicion of drug or alcohol use).
- Random testing.
- Post-accident testing.
- Follow-up testing for all employees previously determined to have used legal or illegal drugs and/or alcohol.

Each employee shall notify First Choice Home Care’s Director of Employee Health and Safety of any criminal drug offense convictions. Any employee using, selling, purchasing, possessing, distributing, or dispensing drugs or, alcohol on duty or, on organizational property, is subject to disciplinary action, up to, and including discharge.

Note: For testing procedures and further information, please refer to the Administrative Policy and Procedure Manual, Substance Abuse Policy.

## Supervision

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Unscheduled supervisory visits are made every 60 to 90 days by our RN Field Supervisor. He or she will review the care you are providing, your documentation, and the client’s care plan for any needed changes. Your input is valued and very helpful. Annual evaluations are MANDATORY and conducted in the office. Nurses are required to keep regular contact with the Clinical Director and are supervised every 60 days.

## Media/Reporter Inquiries

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All inquiries from the media of any nature are to be referred to your immediate Supervisor/Manager. No employee is authorized to represent the company to the media without prior approval.

# Workers' Compensation

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First Choice Home Care, Inc. is committed to minimizing the risk of work-related injury and illness.

When work-related injury and illness do occur, the Agency has a legal and moral obligation to provide compensation and assistance to staff members who have suffered an injury or illness arising out of or during their employment.

Any employee bloodborne pathogen exposure will be handled in a confidential manner. Employees who contract HIV are covered by Workers' Compensation if it is determined that they were infected at work.

## Reporting Procedures

### *First Aid Cases*

Those injuries requiring minor medical attention or only first aid, generally are not "recordable" under OSHA. However, a location record of all injuries must be kept.

### *Physician's Cases*

If the employee sees a physician and the injury is considered reportable, an Employee Claim Form for Workers' Compensation Injury must be prepared, and copies forwarded immediately to the designated office staff. This report must be SUBMITTED immediately. Benefits cannot be paid until paperwork has been completed.

### *Serious Medical Claims*

In serious injuries or fatalities, the Administrator shall be notified immediately. OSHA notification shall be the responsibility of the Administrator/Director in conjunction with the Safety Officer.

### *Investigations and Questionable Claims*

Every claim involving lost time shall be investigated immediately, and will include interviewing witnesses, the injured employee (as soon as health permits), examination of the injury scene and photographs, if appropriate. Any physical evidence (broken machine parts) shall be retained. Should there be any information uncovered that would cause a question as to the validity of the claim, this information shall be communicated immediately and fully to the Administrator. This shall be by phone call initially, and then followed by a letter, either attached to the Injury Report, or sent later.

### *Medical Care*

For any injury, the employee is to receive prompt and appropriate medical treatment. If referred to a physician, the employee shall take with him/her a "physician's referral slip" which authorizes the physician to treat the person as a work-related injury.

### *Treatment of Pre-Existing Conditions*

The Administrator shall direct accordingly, and consideration given when assigning a prospective or current employee, with a known pre-existing injury which could be aggravated while doing the work assigned.

Documentation of prior injuries shall be placed in employee medical files. Documentation may be in the form of group insurance information, pre-employment physical or as a result of a claim examination or prior Workers' Compensation claim.

### *Contact with Injured Employees*

It is very important to maintain close contact and open communications with an injured employee, but particularly if he/she is away from work more than a week. This shall include phone calls and home visits by the employee's immediate supervisor and other members of management, as deemed necessary.

### *Rehabilitative Work*

It is recommended that every effort be made to accommodate an employee who may return to work on a restricted activity basis. This may be accomplished by discussion with the department manager, the treating physician and the employee. Rehabilitation is most effective when initiated as soon as medical conditions stabilize, usually within six (6) weeks.

### *Return to Work*

Authorization for the employee to return to work must be in writing by the attending physician and presented to the immediate supervisor or department manager.

Even though the physician returns the employee to "full work" status, caution shall be exercised for all employees returning after a prolonged disability period.

If an employee does not report to work on the day he/she is designated, the supervisor shall attempt to reach the employee to see if the disability period was extended. If the disability period has not been extended, disciplinary action shall be taken in accordance with standard procedures for not reporting to work.

If there are any restrictions noted by the physician on the return to work authorization, advise the supervisor of such and determine if the employee can return to work with the restrictions noted.

### *OSHA Reporting Responsibilities*

Reports of fatalities or hospitalization of three (3) or more employees from a single cause must be made to the local OSHA offices within eight (8) hours of the injury; contact Administration for specific instructions.

Maintenance of the OSHA Log and supplemental report is the responsibility of the Safety Officer.

Quarterly reports of employee injuries and Workers' Compensation claims are submitted to the Performance Improvement Committee for review and possible modification of existing processes and/or functions.

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# COMMUNICATION

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## Documentation

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Report any changes about your client to the office. This includes condition, behavior, environment or family dynamics. Any accident/incident to you or your patient during your scheduled work hours must be report immediately to the agency and a report filled out within 24 hours (see Accidents and Methods of Reporting). We provide a monthly newsletter in which important information is communicated to you. We will post it on our website or you may pick up a copy.

- Always use **BLACK INK**.
- Absolutely **NO** “White Out”
- Nurses must initial and sign **ALL** areas requiring signature on paperwork.
- **NO** scribble
- **NO** Employee personal information written in patient comment section. This is for the client comments only.
- Make sure documentation is legible and ready to be filed in the patient’s chart.
- If an error is made draw a single line through the error, correct it above and initial. Do not write on top of the error.
- Date to be documented daily
- Time In/Out including **AM** and **PM** to be documented daily.
- Please note if you are reliving staff, there cannot be any overlaps in time. When one arrives the other must leave at that same time.
- For non-ELVIS users’ timesheets are available for every patient. It is your responsibly to make sure timesheets are in the home.
- All care on timesheets or ELVIS app is directed by our staff RN. Care should be done as directed on the timesheet. Any patient changes should be directed to the RN’s in either office. We can change the care plan in the office and print new timesheets to reflect the changes. ELVIS users have changes immediately.
- If duties are listed for a certain day, the duty must be done, or an explanation given under the comment section in ELVIS or turned over on the back with written explanation as to why duty not performed.
- Any time changes must be reported to the office immediately. If you are an ELVIS user, time can be changed in the office and it will be reflected immediately. This is very important so that the time is verified, and office staff will not have to call you to see why you did not report to work as scheduled.
- Nurses orders are in a notebook in the Patients home.

## Continuing Education

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First Choice Home Care requires that all Aides have a minimum of three hours of continuing education per quarter. We prepare the handout on a monthly basis. It is **YOUR** responsibility to pick up the handouts at the office and return the test portion or go online to view the handout

and take the test at [www.firstchoicehomecare.com/education](http://www.firstchoicehomecare.com/education). Until the test is returned to us or taken online, you are not given credit for the hours.

Nurses are required to complete fifteen (15) hours of continuing education annually. Please provide copies for your employee file.

## Accidents and Methods of Reporting

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### *Employee Accident Report (EAR)*

Any employee injury that occurs while on the job, regardless of the need for medical follow-up, requires that an EAR be completed and, forwarded to your supervisor.

### *Patient Incident Reporting Form*

This form should be completed whenever there is an unusual or unexpected occurrence that is not consistent with the routine operation of the agency or the routine care of the patient. The occurrence may either be witnessed or unwitnessed by a First Choice Home Care employee. Any staff member who discovers or is involved in an occurrence should complete the form within 24-hours and forward it to their supervisor.

Risk Management is everyone's business. Show your concern for patients and other staff members by doing your job the best you know how to watch out for anything that may be hazardous and by reporting problems promptly.

## Patient's Rights

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### *You have the right to:*

1. Considerate, respectful, and competent care with full recognition of your individuality and right to privacy
2. Medically appropriate care without discrimination based upon your race, religion, gender, age, disability, sexual preference, national origin, or source of payment.
3. Be informed and participate in the development and periodic review of a Plan of Care that is designed to address your individual needs.
4. Be free of mental and physical abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
5. Be advised of any change in the plan of care before the change is made.
6. Refuse treatment to the extent permitted by law and to be informed of medical consequences of your action.
7. Care and services that follow relevant federal and state laws, rules, and regulations.
8. Patient/caregiver has the right to choose a health-care provider, including choosing an attending physician, if applicable.
9. Expect that qualified persons supervise all providers of care. Supervisors can be contacted by calling the listed telephone numbers during regular working hours. 919-775-3306 or 1-877-223-3662.
10. Expect that all personnel who provide care in the home will provide proper identification.
11. Have all records pertaining to your medical care treated as confidential, and not be disclosed without appropriate written consent.
12. Have your property treated with respect.
13. You have the right, upon written request, unless prohibited by law, to have access to all information contained in your medical record.
14. An explanation of any rules and regulations of First Choice Home Care, Inc. pertaining to your care. This includes the right to be fully informed in advance about the care, treatment,

items, and availability of services, and continuance of care to be provided by First Choice Home Care, Inc.

15. Be informed both orally and in writing before care is initiated regarding your liability for payment of services and be informed of any financial benefits available to the patient.
16. Be advised of First Choice Home Care's procedures for discharge and assistance in planning for follow-up care at discharge.
17. Bring to First Choice Home Care, Inc. administration your concerns regarding the quality of care or to express grievances regarding treatment or care that is (or fails to be) furnished, or regarding the lack of respect for the patient's property by anyone furnishing services on behalf of First Choice Home Care, Inc. without discrimination or reprisal for so doing. Contact the Executive Director at 506 Carthage Street, Sanford, NC 27330, telephone 919-775-3306.
18. Be informed of First Choice Home Care, Inc. availability to you 24 hours a day to answer questions and concerns at 919-775-3306. The office is open 7:30am – 4:30pm, Monday through Friday. After hours call 919-775-3306, listen to the recorded prompts, to either leave a message for the following day or to reach the on-call person immediately.
19. Know that First Choice Home Care, Inc. provides prompt, considerate response to all complaints from patients and families. All complaints from patients or the patient's family will be addressed within a 72-hour period of time. The patient/family will be contacted by telephone or a meeting will be scheduled, if necessary, to resolve the problem. If a problem remains unresolved at this level, it will be reviewed with the Executive Director for recommendations and resolution.
20. Be advised of the agency's policies regarding patient responsibilities.
21. Be informed that the Acute Care, Home Care and CLIA Branch with the Licensure and Certification Section at the Division of Health Service Regulation (DHSR) is responsible for enforcing state statutes for home care agencies. The phone number is 1-919-855-4620. The address is Acute Care, Home care and CLIA Branch, Licensure and certification Section, Division of Health service. Be informed that The Complaint Unit with the DHSR receives complaints for all agencies licensed by DHSR, including home care agencies. The telephone number of The Complaint Intake Unit is 1-800-624-3004 or 919-855-4500. The mailing address is Complaint Intake Unit, Division of Health Service Regulation, 2711 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699.
22. First Choice Home Care is an Accredited Agency. Accredited by Accreditation Commission for HealthCare. They can be contacted at 1-855-937-2224, for any complaints/grievances.
23. Be notified within 10 days when the agency's license has been revoked, suspended, canceled, annulled, withdrawn, recalled or amended.

## Patient's Responsibilities

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### *You have the responsibility to:*

1. Treat all staff members of First Choice Home Care with dignity and respect.
2. Provide a safe environment for First Choice Home Care employees in which to work.
3. Keep appointments or telephone First Choice Home Care, Inc. when you will not be home to receive scheduled care.
4. You have the responsibility to notify the agency of changes in your address, health status, medications, physician, insurance, or admission to a health care facility.
5. Inform Agency personnel if you do not understand any instructions and express concerns pertaining to your health care.
6. Sign a release when refusing medications, treatments, the recommended plan of care, or when refusing home care services.
7. Inform the agency's nurse of any Advance Directives that you have prepared and provide the Agency with a copy.

# Protection of Medical Records

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Medical Records are extremely confidential. Measures are taken in each agency to protect the medical record and to assure confidentiality. Active patient records are maintained in a designated room in locked file cabinets. Access to these records is restricted to authorized staff. Staff who are directly involved in patient care are authorized to copy portions of the medical record necessary for carrying out the patient's plan of treatment. Copied records are to be shredded as soon as possible after use. The entire medical record is not allowed to be taken from the agency office except, for a court subpoena or, at the request of authorized external surveyors when Xerox copies are not permitted. Original clinical patient records are kept locked in a file cabinet for a period as written in policy.

## Patient Care

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Confidentiality is an essential component of patient care. First Choice Home Care has developed specific policies and procedures that are to be followed to help protect patient confidentiality. They cover sensitive areas such as:

- Releasing information to healthcare workers, the patient's family members, friends and others.
- Releasing information to insurance companies.
- Releasing information to law offices.
- Keeping computerized information confidential.
- Faxing medical information.
- Disclosing information in special situations.

It is the job of the employee to become familiar with the guidelines stated in these policies and procedures and to follow these guidelines. The care giver relationship cannot be truly effective unless it is based on genuine trust to fully meet the physical, emotional, and psychological needs of the patients that we care for protecting their confidentiality must be a key priority.

## Professional Boundaries

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*Professional - Means having to do with work or a job*

*Boundary - The ability to know where you end and where another person begins*

Boundaries can be a difficult concept to grasp because they are not something that we can see and sometimes they are questionable. Just because we cannot see them it does not mean that they are not there or that they are not important. Boundaries define the limits and responsibilities of the people with whom you interact.

These guidelines outline the more common issues and will help you maintain your professional boundaries:

- Maintain a professional relationship
- Do not give your phone number to your client.
- Never give or accept gifts, loans, money or other valuables

- Avoid caring for family, friends or people with whom you do business
- Doing only the assigned tasks you are trained to do and that are listed in the care plan
- Always explain the care you will provide before providing it
- Follow practices, such as hand washing to protect yourself and the client
- Do not visit or spend extra time with your client
- Keep all clients' information confidential
- Always be on time
- Do not discuss your personal or financial information
- Do not use offensive language
- Listen to the client
- Call the client "Mr., Mrs., Ms., or Miss" or by the name he or she prefers
- Always talk to your supervisor if you sense a boundary sign, crossing, or violation

## Child/Adult Abuse and Neglect

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In all states there is a requirement that any health care worker report cases of child and/or adult abuse or neglect to either the police, or child/adult protective services located in the Department of Social Services in each county.

Health care workers must be knowledgeable regarding their responsibilities according to the law to identify clients who may be at risk of abuse and/or neglect and to follow procedures to communicate information appropriately to obtain intervention. While the words abuse, and neglect are often used interchangeably each type of maltreatment is distinct.

1. Abuse of a child or adult is ***intentional*** maltreatment which can be physical, sexual, or emotional in nature.
2. Neglect is the failure to provide necessary care.

Child Abuse is defined as "a child under the age of 18 who is subjected to serious non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, or serious physical or emotional neglect caused by the acts or omissions of the child's parents or other persons responsible for the child's care or welfare."

If an employee suspects child/adult abuse, he/she must report findings to their Supervisor or Administrator immediately. ***Action is not to be taken independently by the employee.*** A visit to the home for an assessment will be made by supervisory staff. It is important to remember that issues related solely to poverty are not considered child maltreatment issues. Based on information gathered and observed a referral may be made by First Choice Home Care supervisory personnel to the County's Department of Social Services and to police, if indicated.

### ***Recognizing Abuse***

Clusters of two or more of the following possible indicators of physical abuse should raise a red flag:

- Unexplained and/or frequent occurrences of:  
bruises or welts in non-prominent fleshy areas of the body, burns, fractures, cuts or scrapes, black eyes, visual or hearing defects, human bite mark
- Fear of adults, family members, or parents

- Overly aggressive or withdrawn
- Reluctance to go home
- School problems (ex. poor achievement)
- Exhibits sexual knowledge inconsistent with age

The abuser may exhibit the following:

- Shows little concern for the individual
- Demands perfection
- Describes the individual as evil
- Abuses alcohol or drugs
- Utilizes harsh physical discipline
- Has history of abuse as a child
- Offers conflicting or no explanation for the person's injuries

### *Recognizing Neglect*

Possible exhibited behaviors of an individual who is neglected:

- Lacks appropriate clothing
- States there is no one at home
- Reports excessive alcohol or illegal drug use of caregivers
- Steals food or money
- Lacks medical or dental care
- Reports family violence

The individual who neglects may exhibit the following:

- Appears indifferent
- Is depressed
- Is in an abusive domestic situation
- Abuses alcohol or drugs

First Choice Home Care employees will report identified abuse or neglect of a child or adult to the immediate supervisor.

Employees **NEVER** sleep while on duty-this is considered **NEGLECT** and is grounds for reporting to North Carolina Healthcare Personnel Registry or Board of Nursing and termination.

### *Sources for help*

For parents who need help or may ask for help there are several resources:

- Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina at 1-800-CHILDREN
- Family Physician
- Mental Health Center
- Health Department
- 1-800-4-A-CHILD - is a National Child Abuse Hotline

The primary goal is to keep people safe and to keep families together whenever possible through education, counseling, and behavioral changes.

# Advanced Directives

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## *What are Advance Medical Directives?*

They are legal documents that help protect the patient's rights to make health care choices *in advance*. A simple document such as a living will or, a health care power of attorney can order a physician to withhold life support, artificial nutrition or, both. In addition, there are other documents that express advance directives but, to be considered legal, all advance directive documents must be witnessed by two persons and, notarized.

## *What is a Living Will?*

A living will is written instructions explaining a person's wishes for health care if they become unable to communicate their choices.

## *What is a Health Care Power of Attorney?*

This is a document that lets the patient name a person (their proxy) to make health care decisions for them if they are unable to do so themselves.

## *Can a patient's health care provider witness their signature on an Advance Directive document?*

No. In addition, the following persons cannot be a witness to advance directives:

- Persons that are related to the patient or, their spouse to the third degree.
- Anyone that is entitled to a portion of the estate.
- An employee of the patient's physician.
- An employee of a health care facility, nursing home, or group-care home in which the patient resides or, receives care from.
- Any person that may have a claim against the patient.

## *Why are Advance Medical Directives important?*

A patient's wishes can be expressed even if he or she becomes unable to communicate. Some of the possible scenarios would include: terminal illness; brain damage; and, coma with no chance of recovery (a persistent vegetative state). Other possible benefits of advance medical directives are as follows:

- Helps to ease the burden on the family when difficult decisions must be made.
- Relieves some of the guilt that the family may feel regarding whether they made the correct decisions.
- Pain and suffering is minimized as much as possible.
- Loved ones can be present at the time of death.
- Religious beliefs will be honored.
- The patient can make their own decisions.
- Others will honor those decisions.

## *When do Advance Medical Directives go into effect?*

It is important to remember that these advance directives only take effect when a person can no longer make their own health care decisions.

## *What does the term "informed consent" mean?*

Every patient has the right to be informed of the nature, extent, and probable consequences of proposed medical treatments. In addition, the patient must give permission for such care. The patient has the right to refuse any treatment.

*What are some examples of Advance Medical Directives?*

Advance medical directives can be used to request or, to refuse treatments and, to express feelings about other healthcare issues such as:

- Restoring stopped breathing and heartbeat with cardiopulmonary resuscitation, CPR. This can also be spelled out in a “Do Not Resuscitate Order,” or, DNR order.
- Providing food, water, and/or medication through a tube in a vein. This is referred to as Intravenous or, IV therapy.
- Feeding tubes that are inserted through the nose, throat, etc.
- Machines that are used to keep patients breathing such as ventilators or, respirators.
- Dialysis, which is a method of cleaning patient’s blood by machine when their kidneys are no longer working properly.
- Stating wishes to donate specific organs or, their entire body.

*What if the patient changes his or her mind after establishing Advance Directives?*

Advance directives can always be changed or canceled. The most recent copy is the valid document. However, it is a good idea to have older copies that were given out updated or destroyed. In every case, the patient’s current wishes always take precedence over advance directives.

**Summary of Advance Directive Procedures**

If a patient wants to make changes to an existing advance directive, the following steps should be taken:

- Specific information regarding the changes to be made are to be documented and then attached to the Plan of Care.
- A copy of the new advance directive is to be included in the patient’s chart.
- All field staff and on-call staff that provide care to the patient are to be notified of the change

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# INFECTION CONTROL

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## Infection Control and Bloodborne Pathogens

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### *What is infection control?*

It is doing everything possible to prevent hospital or agency-acquired illnesses such as:

- Urinary Tract Infections
- Postoperative Infections
- Respiratory Infections
- Food-borne illnesses
- Hepatitis B
- AIDS

Infection Control is very important, and it is everyone's responsibility. You should know about and take special precautions to prevent infections. This is true even if your job doesn't involve direct contact with patients.

### *How does an infection spread?*

For an infection to spread, these elements are required:

- A source of infectious microorganisms or germs such as people or, contaminated objects.
- A susceptible host such as: elderly patients; newborns; persons with cancer; persons with multiple health problems; persons with weak or undeveloped immune systems; patients with surgical incisions; catheters; breathing tubes; or, IVs.
- A means of transmission for the microorganism - such as inhalation. Or, through the mouth, eyes, nose, and other openings in the body. Transmission can also occur through cuts, nicks, skin abrasions or dermatitis.

### *Infection Control Methods*

Standard precautions is a system of safeguards to help protect yourself from infections while also, protecting your patients. You must use standard precautions every time you anticipate contact with blood or body fluids. Standard precautions cover all health care workers, whether they give direct patient care or, work in support areas such as maintenance or housekeeping.

First Choice Home Care, Inc. is committed to ensure that employees are aware of and practice Standard precautions.

### *Protective Work Practice*

The spread of infection can be minimized by using common sense and by practicing good hygiene.

- Wash your hands. Hand washing is the single most important precaution for preventing the spread of infection. Always wash your hands: Before and after any physical contact with a patient; immediately after removing gloves; before eating; drinking; handling contact lenses; using the restroom; after you eat; smoke; cough; or, sneeze.

### *Practice Good Hygiene*

Handle sharps with care.

- Never bend, recap or break needles after use.
- Dispose of sharps in appropriate puncture resistant containers.
- Replace sharps disposable containers as needed.
- Use self-sheathing needles whenever possible.

### ***Personal Protective Equipment***

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) protects you from infectious hazards when worn properly. PE must be appropriate for the task you are doing. You must wear as much, or, as little PPE as needed to keep blood and other potentially infectious materials from getting on your clothing, skin, or mucous membranes. Examples of PPE are:

- ***Gloves***  
Change gloves and wash hands between patients. Also, change gloves after any invasive procedures such as labs, Foley catheter insertions, etc. and when handling soiled items.
- ***Gowns***  
Wear gowns when splashing or, soiling of skin and clothing is likely.
- ***Masks, goggles, or face shields***  
Wear these during procedures that are likely to generate splashes into the mouth, nose, or eyes such as: pouring urine into a toilet or, emptying a Foley catheter bag into a toilet or container.

### ***General Rules for Using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)***

- Inspect your PPE before, during, and after each use.
- Clean and maintain PPE properly.
- Replace PPE as soon as possible if it becomes contaminated.
- Always remove PPE before leaving your work area.
- Remove PPE carefully to avoid contamination of clothing and skin.

### ***Protective Housekeeping***

Good housekeeping protects everyone and is everyone's responsibility. Follow these general rules:

- Handle used patient care equipment with care.
- Clean reusable equipment properly.
- Dispose of single use items appropriately.
- Do not overfill sharps containers.
- Handle soiled linens as little as possible.
- Transport all specimens in closed containers.
- Double bag all soiled dressing materials.
- Clean all spills promptly according to the Infection Control Policy.

# Hepatitis B

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Hepatitis B is the **most** infectious work-related disease in the health care industry.

## *Hepatitis B*

- May be asymptomatic, or, may produce symptoms such as: loss of appetite; nausea; vomiting; liver damage; and, cancer of the liver.
- More than 12,000 health care workers acquire Hepatitis B each year; a portion of these will die.
- The disease is preventable by vaccination. The current vaccine is 85% to 97% effective in preventing the disease for nine years or longer.

Don't risk infection. Protect yourself with a safe and effective vaccine, which is provided at no cost to you, as a First Choice Home Care employee.

# Exposure Reporting

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All employees should know what to do if an accidental exposure to blood or body fluids should occur. This information is outlined in the Infection Control Policy Manual in your office. To be prepared, in the event of an exposure, review the required steps to follow after an occupational exposure to blood or body fluids: These include time limits post needle stick exposure that you need to be aware of.

Immediate steps that should be taken are:

- Wash the exposed area with soap and water for three to five minutes.
- Use the eyewash station or, running water for eye exposures.
- Notify your supervisor immediately.

# Airborne Pathogens (TB)

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## *Protecting Yourself from Tuberculosis and Other Respiratory Infections*

- Some infections are spread through the respiratory route.
- These may include such diseases as: Tuberculosis; Measles; Mumps; Chicken Pox;
- Pertussis; Resistant Strain of Virus; German Measles; and, Meningitis.
- Additional precautions are required for those patients suspected or diagnosed with TB.
- Since 1985, there has been a resurgence of TB. New strains, which are more difficult to treat, are emerging.
- Because health care workers may care for these infectious patients, it is important to understand TB, its symptoms, how it is spread, and how it is treated.

<b>TB Disease</b>	<b>TB Infection</b>
This person carries the TB germs.	“Active” TB.
This person does not look or feel sick.	Signs of illness are usually present.
A skin test will reveal evidence of TB germs in their system	This person may cough (> 3 weeks), feel weak, have a fever, experience weight loss, night sweats, and a loss of their appetite.
Sometimes preventive treatment is recommended.	TB germs are spread through the air while talking, coughing, sneezing, singing, or yelling.
This person can infect others.	This person can infect others.

### *Prevention of TB Transmission*

- Quick identification: Unidentified TB may pose a risk to you, other patients and other staff members.
- Prompt treatment: After completing one to three weeks of treatment, most patients do not spread TB germs; however, this does NOT mean they are cured. The only way to cure TB is to complete a full course of drug therapy.
- First Choice Home Care employees are required to have a PPD skin test for TB, placed upon hire and read per protocol. Employees are also required to complete annual TB screening questionnaires

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# RISK MANAGEMENT

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## Safety

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Each employee has the basic responsibility to help keep the agency safe. The ways this can be accomplished are:

- Learning about safety and security programs.
- Knowing the safety rules that apply to your job.
- Memorizing fire safety plans for your office.
- Being alert for anything that could harm a patient or an employee.
- Reporting any hazard, you find to your supervisor or safety officer.

Reporting is the first step to correcting hazards. If you see an accident:

- Use your head. Take immediate action to keep the situation from getting worse.
- Get help if needed, as soon as possible.
- Report the accident to your supervisor using the appropriate forms.

To provide a safe and healthful work environment for employees, customers, and visitors, the company has established a workplace safety program. Its success depends on the alertness and personal commitment of all employees.

It is particularly important for us to foster safe habits and procedures and to deal with any threats to safety. It is mandatory that you comply with all rules of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSHA) that apply to your duties and workplace. The company provides information to employees about workplace safety and health issues through internal communication channels such as employee meetings, bulletin board postings, memos, or other communication. Any questions regarding safety may be directed to your Director/Administrator.

Each employee is expected to obey safety rules and to exercise caution in all work activities. Employees must immediately report any unsafe condition to the appropriate Manager/Supervisor. Employees who violate safety standards, who cause hazardous or dangerous situations, or who fail to report or, where appropriate, remedy such situations, may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Abusive or violent behavior will not be tolerated. In the event of an incident, the company will respond in a timely manner and will investigate the incident to resolve the issues and to prevent future incidents. The company prohibits the carrying of weapons or firearms on its premises, in a vehicle, or in a patient's or client's home or while on company business. Any violation of these procedures will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### *When to report?*

Immediately tell your supervisor about any unsafe or potentially unsafe working condition.

### *Incident Reports*

Should be completed by nurses and CNA's anytime a client reports an incident, whether they are present or not. This may include: allergic reaction, cardiac/respiratory arrest, medication error, injury to self or others, fall, behavioral problem w/client or family, equipment malfunction or skin problem, etc. They require a brief description of the incident, whether the physician was notified and any necessary follow-up. The form is designed to help prevent incidents from reoccurring and not to place blame.

## Hazardous Materials

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The Hazardous Chemical Information Act, more commonly known as “The Right to Know Law” was enacted in the mid-1980s. The law is intended to provide employees with access to information regarding hazardous chemicals to which they may be exposed in the work place. In addition, this law requires employers to tell employees about the effects of exposure to hazardous chemicals in the workplace. “The Right to Know Law” makes good sense. An illness or a disability caused by over-exposure or improper handling of hazardous chemicals can be expensive for all concerned, in both human terms and, financial aspects.

### *What makes materials hazardous?*

The word “hazardous” means involving or, exposing one to risk. Common place materials such as soap or detergent can be hazardous, as well as gasoline fumes or infectious waste. Materials not handled properly can expose one to risk of physical or health hazards. Listed below our several types of hazardous materials:

### *Toxic*

Most chemicals are toxic at some level of exposure. If allowed to enter the body through the nose, mouth, or skin they can make you sick.

### *Corrosive*

Materials like strong acids can eat through other substances including clothing. Serious burns can be caused if they are splashed on the skin or eyes.

### *Explosive*

Some materials can explode when they are exposed to heat or flame. Compressed gases and flammable liquids can explode under certain conditions.

### *Flammable*

Materials that catch fire easily, burn rapidly, spread quickly, and give off intense heat.

### *Reactive*

Materials that can burn spontaneously. These materials are kept isolated because some of them can burn when exposed to air or water or, when mixed with other substances

# Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)

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OSHA developed the MSDS as part of the Hazard Communication Standard. They wanted to ensure that employees had an easy reference of hazardous substances. The MSDS provides detailed information about each hazardous material. It lists the necessary precautions for protecting yourself and co-workers from exposure and, the measures to take in the event you are exposed. MSDS notebooks are in agency office.

The following information offers a brief explanation of the general material found on a MSDS. All the sheets are not exactly the same so, the sections may differ slightly in title.

**Section 1, Identification** includes product identifier; manufacturer or distributor name, address, phone number; emergency phone number; recommended use; restrictions on use.

**Section 2, Hazard(s) identification** includes all hazards regarding the chemical; required label elements.

**Section 3, Composition/information on ingredients** includes information on chemical ingredients; trade secret claims.

**Section 4, First-aid measures** includes important symptoms/effects, acute, delayed; required treatment.

**Section 5, Fire-fighting measures** lists suitable extinguishing techniques, equipment; chemical hazards from fire.

**Section 6, Accidental release measures** lists emergency procedures; protective equipment; proper methods of containment and cleanup.

**Section 7, Handling and storage** lists precautions for safe handling and storage, including incompatibilities.

**Section 8, Exposure controls/personal protection** lists OSHA's Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs); ACGIH Threshold Limit Values (TLVs); and any other exposure limit used or recommended by the chemical manufacturer, importer, or employer preparing the SDS where available as well as appropriate engineering controls; personal protective equipment (PPE).

**Section 9, Physical and chemical properties** lists the chemical's characteristics.

**Section 10, Stability and reactivity** lists chemical stability and possibility of hazardous reactions.

**Section 11, Toxicological information** includes routes of exposure; related symptoms, acute and chronic effects; numerical measures of toxicity.

Section 12, Ecological information\*

Section 13, Disposal considerations\*

Section 14, Transport information\*

Section 15, Regulatory information\*

**Section 16, Other information**, includes the date of preparation or last revision.

\*Note: Since other Agencies regulate this information, OSHA will not be enforcing Sections 12 through 15 (29 CFR 1910.1200(g)(2)).

# Emergency Preparedness

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**Emergencies can happen anytime!** They are a threat to everyone. Fires, storms, earthquakes, and other emergencies don't just happen to other people: They can strike anyone.

*Emergencies can be especially challenging for people who:*

- Can't move around quickly.
- Rely on medical equipment.
- Have other special needs.

**Being prepared is important!** It can save your life. Careful planning helps to ensure that you'll have what you need to get through an emergency. In an emergency, family, friends, care givers, and emergency crews may be delayed. The more prepared you are the safer and more comfortable you'll be until help arrives.

*How prepared are you?*

- Find and fix hazards.
- Have a battery powered radio and extra batteries.
- Get enough emergency supplies to last at least three days. Water, food, medications, first-aid kit and blankets are examples of items that you will need.
- Utility companies or, your emergency management office, can help you to plan ways to get help.
- Be ready to evacuate by packing essentials, labeling medical equipment, arranging for transportation, and making arrangements for your pets.

Stay safe in storms. Remember these general tips:

*Thunderstorms*

- Stay inside away from windows.
- Stay away from water and faucets.
- Use the phone only for emergencies.
- If caught outside, go to a low spot away from trees, water, or metal objects.

*Tornadoes*

- Go to a basement or to the lowest floor possible.
- Stay in a hallway or closet.
- If you live in a manufactured home, go to a sturdy building nearby.
- If you are outside, lie flat in a ditch or low area.

*Floods*

- Learn safe routes to higher ground ahead of time.
- Move to high ground immediately if there is a flash flood warning.

*Hurricanes*

- If a hurricane is coming, tape or board up all of the windows.
- Tie down items that are outside such as trash cans.
- Stay inside, away from windows.
- If you live in a manufactured home, go to the nearest sturdy building.

### *Winter Storms*

- Winterize your home ahead of time.
- Don't let your supply of heating fuel get too low.
- Have extra blankets on hand.
- Stay indoors during storms.

Always follow evacuation instructions local radio & TV stations will tell you where to go.

### *Heat Waves and Cold Snaps Can Be Deadly*

#### *Hot weather*

- Stay cool.
- Lie down
- Drink plenty of water.
- Don't drink alcohol.
- Wear cool, light-colored clothes even if you don't feel hot.
- Sponge off with a cool, wet cloth

Heatstroke and heat exhaustion are illnesses caused by exposure to extreme heat. If left untreated, heat exhaustion can progress into heatstroke, which may be life-threatening.

#### *Heat Exhaustion*

Heat exhaustion can lead to:

- Muscle cramping
- A rapid weak pulse
- A general sense of weakness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Excessive sweating
- Cold, clammy skin
- Dizziness and sometimes fainting
- Dark-colored urine
- Headaches

#### *Heat Stroke*

Heatstroke may begin with symptoms of heat exhaustion. It can be life-threatening, and symptoms may rapidly worsen, to include:

- A temperature of 104°F or higher
- Hot, dry skin
- A racing heartbeat
- Confusion
- Agitation
- Slurred speech
- Seizures
- Loss of consciousness
- Coma

### *Cold weather*

- Stay warm by dressing warmly even if you don't feel cold.
- Keep your home well heated.
- Avoid drinking alcohol. It will make you lose heat faster.
- Watch for a drop-in body temperature. A temperature below 96°F is dangerous.

Other danger signs include:

- Confusion or sleepiness
- Slurred speech
- Stiffness in arms or legs
- Severe shivering.

Rewarm the body by wrapping it. Avoid rubbing the skin and, do not drink caffeine or alcohol.

In the event of an emergency, the following patient considerations should be made:

- Shelter
- Medical Supplies
- Medications
- Patient Records

### *After an emergency*

- Check for injuries.
- Don't move if you're seriously injured (unless you're in danger of further injury).
- Signal and wait for medical help.

### *Beware of hidden damage*

- Use a flashlight, not a candle or other flame to check for damage.
- Check electric wires and gas, water, and sewage lines. Don't use them if you suspect damage.
- Follow advisories for boiling tap water before using it.
- Don't go into a building if it might be damaged.
- Use the phone only for emergencies.
- Keep listening for instructions.

## Body Mechanics

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Using good posture whether you are sifting, standing, lifting, bending, pushing or pulling is one of the first principles of good body mechanics. Body mechanics, the way you move your body and back, can help to prevent back injury.

Many times, back pain can be directly traced to the ergonomics hazards of your job as a home health care worker. These hazards may include frequent bending, twisting, lifting, pushing, pulling and other forceful or repetitive movements. Over time, these hazards can cause injuries known as Cumulative Trauma Disorders (CTDs). CTDs are caused by repetitive wear and tear on tendons, muscles, and related nerves and bones. They may show up as pain or injury in the back, neck, shoulder, elbows, wrists, or hands. You can prevent CTDs by applying ergonomic principles to the tasks you perform every day. Ergonomics involves arranging the work environment to fit the employee. Ergonomics helps you to design your job to fit your body thus,

putting as little strain on your body as possible.

All health care workers who lift and transfer patients are at a great risk for back injuries. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, nurses and personal care workers (including home health care workers) have a higher incidence of injury on the job than do miners and construction workers. In fact, the incidence of injury is more than twice that of miners and almost 1.5 times higher than construction workers.

Due to unpredictable movements and the awkwardness of the load, a patient is riskier to lift and transfer than a box of equal weight. Crowded spaces and cluttered rooms also make it more difficult to lift and transfer patients: This increases your risk for back injury. The repeated lifting and transferring of patients can result in injury along the length of the spine, in the neck, the shoulders and the lower back.

### **Anatomy of the Back**

#### ***Bones***

The back is made up of 33 bones called vertebrae which are stacked one on top of the other. The spine is not straight, it has four natural curves: two kyphotic curves and two lordotic curves. The purpose of these curves is to absorb shock and stress delivered to the spine during activities (walking, bending, etc.).

#### ***Disc***

Between each vertebra is a structure called a disc. The discs permit movement between the vertebrae and also, assist with reducing shock and stress to the spine.

#### ***Muscles***

Back muscles are the structures, which move the vertebrae allowing movement to occur at the spine. These muscles also maintain either good or bad posture.

#### ***Nerves***

Nerves pass down from the brain, through the spinal canal, and out to every part of the body. To leave the spinal canal, the nerves pass through small holes. Swelling or inflammation in the area of the hole can put unwanted pressure on the nerve and, lead to pain.

### **Recognized Causes of Back Pain**

#### ***Poor Posture***

- Slouching, twisting and bending places strain on back structures.
- Strain weakens tissue (disc, muscles, etc.), and weakened tissue may tear, leading to pain.
- Usually we are unaware of how much stress is placed on these tissues until they need attention.

#### ***Wrong Lifting Techniques***

- Twisting while lifting.
- It is not how much we lift but how we lift a load.
- Wrong techniques place unnecessary strain on our back structures.

### *Driving or Riding*

- Long periods of time in vehicles.

### *Smoking*

- Increases the incidence and severity of back pain.
- Decreases the oxygen supply in the bloodstream which affects the ability of tissue to heal and fight the effects of fatigue.

### *Immediate Causes*

- Slipping, falling, twisting.
- Trauma may cause damage or pain.
- Damage occurring from a traumatic incident will most likely be to tissue that is already weakened by strain and abuse.

### *Prevention of Back Injury*

Our bodies are like machines. They must be maintained to work their best. To reduce your risk of injury you should:

- Exercise regularly.
- Eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Take stretch breaks at work.

You can protect your back by following some simple safety principles and by using common sense. If you use your body safely, it is built to sustain big workloads. Remember to:

- Maintain good body posture.
- Use safe body mechanics.
- Use protective lifting devices.
- Act safely during lifts and transfers.
- Keep physically fit.

### *Posture*

Maintaining proper posture puts the vertebrae and the surrounding muscles in the best position to do work safely. Your vertebrae are naturally aligned with a gentle curve inward at the neck (cervical area), a curve outward at the chest (thoracic area), and another curve inward at the lower back (lumbar area).

To align your posture, take this stance: head up, shoulders back, chest out, stomach in, buttocks tucked. Now, tense your body muscles and then relax them with some shaking motions. Finally, let your body adjust to a neutral position. The neutral position is the safest position for your body during work.

Most positions of the spine are harmless provided they are not maintained for too long or, assumed too frequently. Changing positions frequently is helpful.

### *Sitting*

- Sitting is an activity, not a form of rest.
- Sitting is more demanding than standing.

- Firmly support your back including the normal hollow in your back.
- Your feet should touch the floor.
- Change your posture often.
- Get up and move around frequently.

### *Bending/Leaning*

- This places constant strain on back muscles causing these muscles to fatigue without relief.
- Change position often.
- Stand with your feet apart and knees bent.
- Move around whenever possible.

### *Lifting/Stooping*

- Bending knees and keeping the back in its neutral position is the best lift, however, it is not always practiced.

### *Other Lifting Options Include*

- For light loads, stand with your feet apart and, bend mostly at the knees and hip.
- For heavy loads, bend down on one knee.
- Pull the object to be lifted close to you.
- First, straighten your knees then straighten your back.
- Always move your feet to turn, do not twist.

### *Putting the Weight Down*

- This is often the most neglected part of lifting.
- If possible, place the load on a surface that is waist high.
- If the object must be placed below waist level, bend your knees.

Patients can fall unexpectedly for any number of reasons. If a patient starts to fall, do not try to stop the fall. First, grasp the patient and get as close as you can then, guide the patient gently to the floor by bending your hips and knees. If necessary, get help to lift the patient from the floor.

As a home health worker, you are at a very high risk for back injury. This is primarily due to the ergonomic risks of lifting and transferring patients. Many times, just taking a few minutes to follow simple precautions can spare you agonizing back pain. Evaluate each home for hazards and find ways to minimize those hazards. Maintain good posture, use safe body mechanics and protective lifting devices, act safely when lifting and transferring patients and keep your body fit so you can protect your back from injury. **It's your back don't break it!**

## Defensive Driving

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The primary objective of defensive driving is to prepare the driver for road danger, bad weather, accidents and crime. These are the worst conditions that a driver may face. First Choice Home Care is committed to your personal safety and would like to offer you a few tips on some common situations that you may encounter.

### *Fog*

- Slowly decrease speed.
- Use only low-beam headlights.

- Put your turn signal on well in advance.
- Put your brakes on early to warn the drivers that are behind you.
- Never try to pass another automobile.

### *Snow and Ice*

- Drive slowly.
- Give yourself extra time and space to stop.
- Use the squeeze technique when braking.
- Press the brake pedal until you feel the brakes are about to lock.
- Let up and then, press the pedal again.
- Do not use this technique if you have anti-lock brakes. Instead, keep your foot on the pedal.

### *Skidding*

- Turn the wheel in the direction that you want the front of the automobile to go.
- Hold on to the steering wheel tightly.
- Avoid making sharp turns.
- Keep your foot off of both the accelerator and the brake.
- Do not accelerate or brake before you have control of the automobile (braking or accelerating may cause your automobile to go in the opposite direction).

### *Rain*

- Slowdown.
- Avoid sudden turns.
- Increase the following distance.
- Pull over to the side of the road when you cannot see due to downpours.

### *Road Construction*

- Follow road signs.
- Keep your eyes focused straight ahead.

### *Night Driving*

- Turn the low beam headlights on at twilight.
- Before starting to drive at night, give your eyes several minutes to adjust to the dark.
- Slow down and leave at least one car length between you and the automobile that is ahead of you.
- Do not look at the headlights of an approaching automobile instead, look forward and slightly to the right.

### *Emergency Vehicles*

- When an emergency vehicle is approaching you from behind or, to your left side (if there are multiple lanes), get out of the way.
- Move to the right side of the road.
- Slow or stop your vehicle.
- Pull back into traffic when it is safe.

### *Animals*

- Watch for animals.
- If an animal wanders into the road, slow down and attempt to steer away from the of your

animal.

- Avoid slamming on your brakes.
- Avoid “overreacting” which may cause you to lose control

### *Accidents*

- When approaching the scene of an accident, use caution and move slowly.
- Brake early to warn other drivers to slow down.
- Be prepared if you are stopped by law enforcement.
- Carry your driver’s license, proof of insurance, and vehicle registration.
- Carry important information about your health condition(s).

### *Trucks*

- Do not drive too close to trucks.
- Never pull out in front of a truck or, cut a truck off. Usually, a truck’s stopping time is no greater than that of a car.
- Do not drive in a truck’s blind spot.

### *Railroad Crossings*

- Never drive around gates or flashing red lights.
- Expect a train on any track at any time.
- Never drive onto a railroad grade crossing unless you are sure that you can clear the tracks.
- Get out of your vehicle if it stalls.

## Fire Safety

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Learning objectives: Upon completion of this section, you will be able to:

1. Identify the four steps of the RACE **fire response** plan;
2. Identify the four steps of the PASS method of extinguishing a fire;
3. Describe how to report a fire;
4. State the importance of containing a fire;
5. Distinguish between the different types of fire extinguishers
6. First Choice Home Care maintains a fire program that is designed to promote prevention and protection from injury for employees, patients and visitors. In order to meet these goals, these questions must be answered:

### *What is Fire?*

Fire occurs when fuel, heat and oxygen are present in the ideal quantities for combustion to occur. Eliminate one of these elements and combustion will not occur.

### *What should you do in case of a Fire? (RACE)*

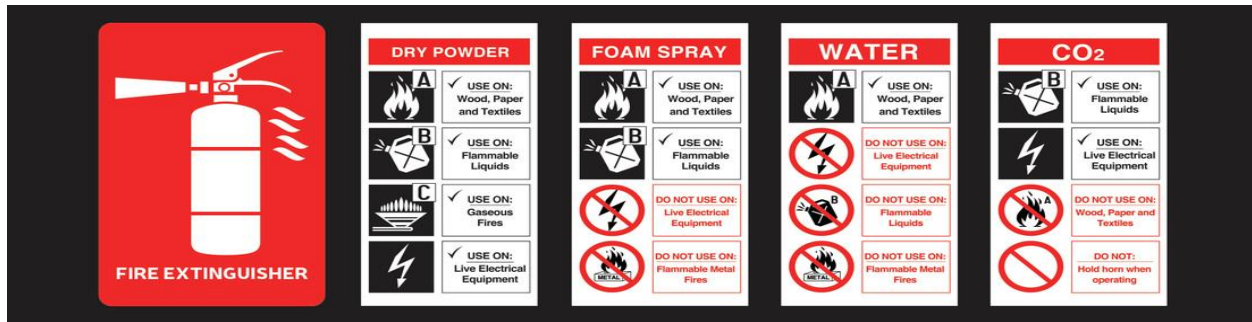
**Rescue** - Remove anyone from immediate danger if possible.

**Alert** - Alert the fire department on the telephone and use the paging system to announce “Code Red.” Give the exact location and repeat the announcement.

**Confine** - Confine the fire. Close the door to the fire and, all remaining doors.

**Extinguish** - Extinguish the fire and/or consider evacuation.

*What kind of fire is it and what type of extinguisher should you use?*



*Is there a fire extinguisher in your client's home?*

It is the responsibility of the employee to review the fire plan and to be aware of the location of all fire extinguishers.

*How do you use a fire extinguisher? (PASS)*

**Pull the pin**

**Aim the nozzle at the base of the fire.** Hitting the tops of the flame with the extinguisher won't be effective.

**Squeeze the trigger.** In a controlled manner, squeeze the trigger to release the agent.

**Sweep from side to side.** Sweep the nozzle from side to side until the fire is put out. Keep aiming at the base while you do so. Most extinguishers will give you about 10-20 seconds of discharge time.

*Why close the doors?*

This helps to contain the fire in one area and, prevents additional oxygen from getting in to the room causing the fire to increase. In addition, closing the doors, protects people from smoke which is the biggest killer in a fire.

Fire prevention is everyone's responsibility! It can save lives and keep fires from occurring.

- Be careful with all smoking materials. Instruct patients not to smoke in bed and, instruct caregivers to remove smoking materials from patients who are unsafe with them.
- Store flammable substances in proper cans, storage cabinets, and in appropriate places.
- Do not block exits and hallways.
- Report any unsafe conditions to your supervisor or, to the safety officer.
- Inspect electrical equipment prior to use (report frayed cords or other types of danger immediately). When possible, turn off electrical equipment that is not in use.
- Oxygen patients should be in a smoke free environment.