



HOME HEALTH AIDE GUIDANCE

What Are Home Health Aides Not Allowed to Do?

Learn common HHA boundaries, care-plan limits, when to call the nurse, what to document, and what to do when a task feels unsafe.

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What Are Home Health Aides Not Allowed to Do?

SHORT ANSWER

An HHA should not perform a task outside the written plan of care, the aide's verified training or legally permitted role, agency policy, or what can be completed safely. When a request is unclear, pause, protect the client, and contact the supervising nurse or agency.

The safest rule: plan, training, policy

A client or family request does not by itself authorize a task. Permitted duties depend on state rules, verified training, employer policy, the client-specific plan of care, and supervising-nurse direction.

A task that was allowed for another client may not be authorized for this client. Familiarity is not permission.

IMPORTANT

If a verbal request conflicts with the plan, stop and call the agency. Do not quietly add, remove, or substitute tasks.

Common limits for home health aides

- Do not diagnose a condition, interpret symptoms as a diagnosis, or prescribe treatment.
- Do not create, change, or ignore the plan of care.
- Do not independently start, stop, change, crush, split, prefill, or administer medication without the exact authorization, training, assignment, and supervision required.
- Do not perform unassigned sterile, invasive, or skilled nursing procedures.
- Do not force care, use restraints, threaten a client, falsify time or records, hide an error, or share client information with unauthorized people.
- Do not borrow money, use a client's bank card, accept large gifts, or mix personal finances with the client's finances.

Medication boundaries require extra caution

Medication rules vary by jurisdiction. Reminding or assisting with self-administration does not automatically authorize selecting a medicine, changing a dose, giving an injection, or deciding to hold a drug.

New York separately regulates Advanced Home Health Aides. Advanced tasks require additional certification, RN assignment and supervision, demonstrated competency, and an authorized order. A regular HHA should never assume those permissions.

IMPORTANT

If the package, directions, dose, timing, client condition, or request does not match the plan, do not guess. Contact the nurse.

When to call the nurse or supervisor

- A requested task is missing from the plan or conflicts with instructions.
- The client has a new, worsening, unusual, or concerning change.
- The client refuses important care or the task cannot be completed safely.
- There is a fall, injury, error, missing person, suspected abuse or neglect, unsafe environment, or boundary concern.
- You feel threatened, unsafe, pressured to falsify a record, or asked to keep a care concern secret.

Emergencies and refusals

Call 911 for immediate danger or severe symptoms such as major breathing difficulty, unresponsiveness, signs of stroke, uncontrolled bleeding, serious injury, chest pressure, fire, or violence. Then notify the agency as required.

For a non-emergency refusal, stay calm, ask what is bothering the client, offer an approved alternative, do not force the task, and report according to policy.

What to document

- Date and time.
- What you directly saw, heard, measured, or were told.
- The task offered, completed, refused, interrupted, or not completed.
- The immediate safety action taken.
- Who was contacted, when, and the instructions received.
- The client's response and required follow-up.

IMPORTANT

Use objective wording: "Client stated, 'I feel dizzy'" rather than supplying a diagnosis.

Professional language to use

“I want to help, but I need to follow your care plan and my agency’s instructions. Let me call my supervisor so we can confirm the safest next step.”

Frequently asked questions

Can a home health aide give medication?

It depends on state law, certification, the care plan, employer policy, and nurse assignment. A regular HHA should not independently select, change, or administer medication.

Can a family member authorize an extra task?

Family permission does not replace the care plan, client rights, state rules, agency policy, training, or nurse direction.

Should a refused task be documented?

Yes. Follow agency policy and record the refusal, what was offered, the safety response, notifications, and instructions received.

Sources and further reading

- NYS Department of Health — Home Care Information
- NYS Department of Health — Advanced Home Health Aides
- NYS Education Department — Nursing Law, Article 139

**Take a
clear,
calm plan
into your
first shift.**

The HHA First Assignment Guide organizes preparation, boundaries, reporting, and documentation reminders in one printable resource.

[View the HHA guide →](#)

General educational information only. This guide does not replace emergency services, medical care, legal or tax advice, agency policy, supervisor direction, or a client-specific plan of care. Requirements vary by location and situation. Do not record protected health information in this guide.

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