

The employer has several ways to support the work ability of personal assistants

The work of a personal assistant involves several physical and psychosocial workload factors. There are also resources at work that support work ability. It is important for the employer to understand and manage the physical and psychosocial workload factors of the assistant's work in order to avoid work ability problems. Good work ability management is the employer's key means of supporting the work ability of assistants.



PERSONAL ASSISTANCE

According to the Disability Services Act, a person with a disability has the right to receive personal assistance due to a disability or illness for daily activities, work and studies, as well as for interaction, leisure activities and social participation. In 2023, the number of personal assistance customers was approximately 30,000, with an estimated 40,000 people working as assistants. One method of providing personal assistance is the employer model, in which the person with disability acts as the assistant's employer and is responsible, for example, for the safety and health of their assistants at work.



SOLUTIONS

Invest in a good start to the employment relationship.

Comprehensive induction of the assistant into the work, working methods and working environment is important. It is a good idea to review the key tasks and goals of the work with the assistant. Successful induction supports the assistant's commitment to work, fluency of work, safety and work ability.

Recognise physical and psychosocial workload factors.

The work of an assistant may involve various physical, psychosocial, cognitive and ethical workload factors. It is important to identify the workload factors and try to reduce excessive workload. The Occupational Safety and Health Act obligates employers to assess the harmful and hazardous factors of work. It is important to involve the assistants in the assessment, as they are familiar with their own work.

Strengthen job resources.

Job resources are factors that help to manage workload factors and support work ability. For example, good opportunities to influence work and working hours, good interaction with the employer and the meaningfulness of work are key job resources for assistants.

Strengthen work ability competence.

Taking care of assistants' work ability requires an understanding of the factors affecting work ability and the means of promoting work ability in different situations. Make sure that you receive support for your employees' work ability, if necessary. Make sure that your employees are familiar with work ability support practices, such as early support and support measures for returning to work as well as occupational health care services.

Provide sufficient support for work ability.

It is important to support work ability at different stages. Address the challenges of your employees' work ability actively and in time. If necessary, it is a good idea to make use of the expertise of occupational health care in matters related to work ability.

It is important to invest in early support for work ability

29%

of employers estimate that they have agreed practices for the early support of assistants' work ability.

The work of an assistant is psychosocially demanding

33%

of assistants estimate that there is at least quite a lot of psychosocial stress, such as unclear work objectives and interaction challenges.

The work ability of the majority of assistants is good

73%

of assistants gave their work ability a score of 8 or higher.

Future work ability is a collaborative effort!

What do we know?

The work of personal assistants involves several physical and psychosocial workload factors. The assistants experienced psychosocial and physical workload the most. Employers estimate that there are fewer workload factors in the work of assistants than employees. However, the majority of employers had identified the hazards, disadvantages and workload factors of the work. Employers estimated that they had the physical workload under control the best.

Personal assistants identified several resources in their work. The meaningfulness of work and cooperation with the employer were at a particularly good level. The most development needs were identified in induction and sufficient feedback on work. Assistants who perceived more resources in their work rated their work ability better than others.

The work ability of assistants was on average at a good level (average 7.9). However, approximately one in four rates their work ability as moderate at most. Approximately one in three employers had been concerned about the work ability of at least one of their employees during the last 12 months.

Why is this important?

Perceived poor work ability can be a sign of subsequent work ability risks. Taking care of employees' work ability is an important part of good management. Good work ability increases the fluency of work, the employee's motivation and helps to prevent disability.

What should be done?

Employers have several ways to support the work ability of assistants in various situations, such as foresight, early support and returning to work after absence. It is important for the employer to be familiar with the workload and resource factors of the assistant's work and the means of managing workload. At best, promoting work ability is part of everyday encounters and open discussion about work and working conditions with employees. It is important to tackle work ability challenges as early as possible and, if necessary, use external expertise in work ability matters.

TIPS FOR THE EMPLOYER ON TAKING CARE OF THE WORK ABILITY OF A PERSONAL ASSISTANT



- Ensure that the employee is well inducted into work and the ways of working.
- Identify workload factors and take measures to reduce the workload.
- Strengthen job resources, such as the meaningfulness and manageability of work, support for work and feedback.
- Make sure that the employee can influence their own work and working hours.
- Also consider how the assistant could get peer support for their work.
- Make sure that both you and your assistant know where to get support in case of work ability issues.
- Raise your concerns about the employee's work ability as early as possible.

AUTHOR AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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HOW THE FACT SHEET WAS PREPARED

The fact sheet is based on the *Työolot ja työkyky – tutkimus henkilökohtaisesta avusta* (Working conditions and work ability – a study on personal assistance) study surveying work ability and work ability management among personal assistance employees (n=313) and employers (n=111) insured by Varma. The survey link was sent to target groups through cooperation partners (Oima, well-being services counties). The research data was collected between November 2024 and February 2025. The survey was implemented by Aula Research Oy.

The results of the survey have been reported in the *Työolot ja työkyky -tutkimus henkilökohtaisesta avusta* report. Read the report [on our website](#) (in Finnish).

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