

Minnesota Assisted Living and Home Care Provider Licensing and Regulation Support Toolkit

This material was prepared by Stratis Health under contract with The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). Use of this tool is not mandated by MDH, nor does its completion ensure regulatory compliance.

Congratulations on taking the first step toward starting or growing an Assisted Living or Home Care business in Minnesota. Deciding to start or grow an Assisted Living or Home Care business means taking on the dual responsibility of running a business and providing care for others. Choosing the right license, understanding the regulatory requirements, and setting up strong systems from the start can help you avoid unnecessary stress, delays, and costs.

This toolkit is meant to support new or expanding providers, owners, and administrators through that process. It will help you identify key components for success, with each section covering one piece of the puzzle. By working through these pieces, you can avoid common mistakes, save time, reduce costs, improve quality of care, and feel more confident in your decisions.



Codesigned by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Stratis Health, this toolkit was shaped by feedback from providers, new applicants, caregivers, and other contributors who shared their challenges and needs.

Mission, Vision, and Purpose

Before choosing a license or starting paperwork, step back and clarify the purpose behind your caregiving service. Your early choices shape everything that follows, from licensing and staffing to financial sustainability and daily operations.

Taking time now to reflect on your mission, vision, and values helps ensure that your business decisions align with both your goals and your capacity. This step may feel unnecessary, but it reduces the risk of costly missteps such as selecting the wrong license type, offering services you cannot consistently support, or expanding beyond what your staffing and resources allow.

This worksheet will help you think honestly and strategically about your motivations, strengths, and limits. As you work through the sections, consider what you hope to provide and what you can reliably sustain. A few minutes of thoughtful reflection can create a strong foundation for a caregiving service that is mission-driven and operationally sound. The answers you develop here

will guide key decisions throughout startup and growth and can be revisited as your organization evolves.



Toolkit:

Your Purpose and Path: A Worksheet for Mission, Vision, and Values [2_Your Purpose and Path]

This worksheet helps you clarify your purpose, define who you are best equipped to serve, and develop mission, vision, and values that guide licensing, service design, and operational decisions.

Business Needs and Responsibilities

After you identify the services you plan to provide and the population you plan to serve, assess which licensure best matches your goals and the needs of the people you will be caring for.

Exploring and planning the business component of your organization is vital. A strong grasp of your resources, staffing needs, finances, and operational capacity supports long-term sustainability. No matter which license type you choose, you cannot care for people safely without a solid business foundation supporting your work.

Some services operate 24 hours per day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. This level of responsibility has a major impact on staffing, budgeting, and leadership, especially for smaller organizations.

Toolkit:

Business Planning and Self-Assessment Worksheet [3_Business Planning & Self-Assessment]

This worksheet helps determine readiness for licensure by identifying operational risks, gaps, and sustainability considerations.

Minnesota Payment Sources for Assisted Living and Home Care [4_Payment Methods]

This resource provides an overview of common payment sources in Minnesota and how they apply to Assisted Living and Home Care services.

Additional Resources:

- [Assisted Living Licensure Application Materials – MDH](#)
- [Information about Starting a Home Care Agency in Minnesota – MDH](#)
- [How To Start a Home Care Agency – Minnesota Home Care Association](#)



Choosing the right license is one of the more important early decisions you will make when starting a caregiving service. Your licensure determines who you can serve, what services you may provide, and the rules you are required to follow.

This section helps you understand the Home Care and Assisted Living licensure options available in Minnesota and how each aligns with your goals, capacity, and planned services. The tools provided can support careful comparison of license requirements with your business capabilities, staffing, and readiness.

Taking time to evaluate your options now can help you avoid delays, unexpected costs, or the need for significant changes later. The goal is to select a license that fits both your vision and the needs of the people you plan to serve.

As you work through these resources, ask yourself:

- Is the license I am considering consistent with the services I can realistically provide?
- What changes do I need to make to qualify for this licensure?
- Are the changes needed realistic for my time, resources, and capacity?

Use this [Action Planning Worksheet \[18_Action Plan\]](#) to capture any next steps, barriers, or adjustments you need to consider so you can effectively move forward with clarity and confidence.

Toolkit:

[Interactive Decision Tree \(5\) \[In development\]](#)

Description

[Decision Tree Infographic \(6\) \[In development\]](#)

Description

[Minnesota State Assisted Living and Home Care License Types \[7_Licensure Types\]](#)

This resource provides general descriptions of the different Assisted Living and Home Care licenses issued by the MDH.

[Minnesota Payment Sources for Assisted Living and Home Care \[4_Payment Methods\]](#)

This resource provides an overview of common payment sources in Minnesota and how they apply to Assisted Living and Home Care services.



Regulatory Compliance

Regulations help keep individuals served and staff safe. They are laws you must follow, and they set basic expectations for safe, reliable care and quality of life.

If you are new to the regulatory world, or if legal language feels overwhelming, you are not alone. The resources in this section will break things down into clear, everyday language so you can understand what the regulations mean and how they apply to your services.

You will see frequent references to *surveys*. A survey is a review or inspection completed by a regulatory agency to check if a provider is following regulations.

As you review the regulations, take time to read each one carefully and think about whether it is something you can realistically meet on an ongoing basis. Understanding the expectations upfront will help you decide if a license is the right fit.

Regulation Basics: How to Read, Understand, and Apply Rules

Overview of Health Regulations and Oversight [8_Overview of Regulations]

This document provides a high-level overview of how regulations are structured, organized, and enforced.

Guide to Reading Regulations [9_Guide to Reading Regulations]

This document explains how to read regulatory language, showing you how regulations are structured and how to understand what is required.

Guide to Interpreting and Operationalizing Regulations [10_Guide to Interpreting and Operationalizing]

This document describes how to translate regulatory requirements into practical, day-to-day operational practices.

Interpreting and Operationalizing Regulations Worksheet [11_Interpret and Apply Regulations_Worksheet]

This worksheet supports regulatory clarity by helping providers interpret requirements and assess how regulations apply to their specific services, settings, and operations.

Be Survey Ready: Continuous Survey Readiness [12_Be Survey Ready]

This document outlines strategies for maintaining ongoing compliance and readiness for surveys.

Assisted Living: Continuous Survey Readiness Annual Plan [20_Compliance Calendar_AL]

This document is a structured annual work plan designed to support ongoing compliance and survey readiness for assisted living providers by organizing required oversight, quality, staffing, and resident care activities throughout the year.

Home Care: Continuous Survey Readiness Annual Plan [21_Compliance Calendar_HC]

This document provides an annual work plan template to help home care providers maintain continuous compliance and survey readiness by scheduling required reviews, oversight activities, and quality management practices throughout the year.

Toolkit:

Differences between MDH and DHS [13_MDH and DHS]

This document explains the key differences between the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), including agency roles and contact information.

Terms You Should Know: Statutorily Defined Terms [14_Terms You Should Know]

This document lists terms defined in Minnesota statutes to support consistent understanding and reduce the need to search within statutes.

Acronym List [15_Acronyms]

This document provides a reference list of commonly used abbreviations and acronyms related to licensing, regulation, and survey activities.

Assisted Living Regulations and Requirements [16_AL Regulations & Requirements]

This document summarizes the core Minnesota state licensing requirements applicable to assisted living providers.

Home Care Regulations and Requirements [17_Home Care Regulations & Requirements]

This document summarizes the core Minnesota state licensing requirements applicable to home care providers.



Action Planning

Action planning helps turn ideas, decisions, and requirements into clear, manageable steps. Whether you are just getting started, preparing for licensure, responding to a survey, or improving an existing service, a simple action plan can help you stay focused, organized, and moving forward.

This step brings together what you have learned so far and supports you in identifying goals, deciding what needs to happen next, and tracking progress over time. Breaking larger goals into smaller, realistic tasks can make complex requirements feel more manageable and help prevent important steps from being missed.

Toolkit:

Action Plan Worksheet [18_Action Plan]

This worksheet helps you organize next steps, track progress, and stay on course as you work toward meeting licensing and compliance requirements.

Provider Connections and Ongoing Communication [19_Connections for Providers]

This list highlights key connections, communication channels, and subscriptions that potential and current providers can use to stay up to date on regulations, guidance, and education.

Licensure Application Resources:

- [Assisted Living Licensure Application Materials – Minnesota Department of Health](#)
- [Information about Starting a Home Care Agency in Minnesota – Minnesota Department of Health](#)
- [How To Start a Home Care Agency – Minnesota Home Care Association](#)

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