

Guide to Employing a Domestic Worker



Qatar

01

Before You Employ

How can I hire the right domestic worker for me and my family?

Making a match between your expectations and the domestic worker's skills and personality is crucial to ensure that you are hiring the right person for the job.

Before You Decide to Hire:



Check if the country you are hiring from has a Qatar Visa Center (www.qatarvisacenter.com) to know whether you should follow the process listed therein.



Ensure that you have one or more video or telephone calls with the potential employee.



Speak to your family members about your decision and ensure that they are on board.



Make a list of the primary tasks you expect her/him to perform and the skills she/he will need to carry out these tasks.

Consider the plans for when you are on vacation.

- » Will the worker accompany you?
- » Do you have his/her permission if so?
- » Will she/he be housed with a trusted friend or family?
- » How will that be managed?
- » Will she/he stay at your place?

Understand that making the match does not end with his/her arrival, but continues throughout the settlement and training process.

You must therefore:

- » Periodically discuss the task list and how you wish the tasks to be performed.
- » Take time to train and give time to learn.

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“I shortlisted two workers from the CV's the agency supplied. I had more than one skype call with each candidate. After the second call I felt the worker I spoke to first was better suited to meet my expectations.”

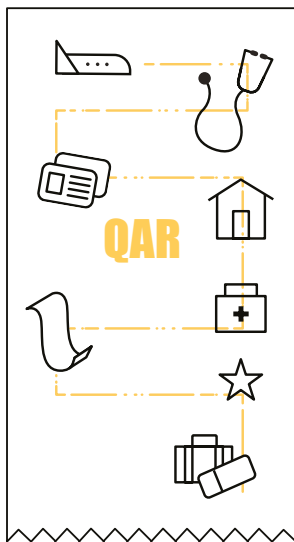
An Employer

What is the cost of hiring a domestic worker?

The cost of employing a domestic worker begins before he/she arrives, and continues throughout the duration of his/her employment, until he/she returns to his/her country.

Cost Includes:

- \$ Recruitment Fees*
- \$ Pre-departure expenses (eg: medical examination, police clearance, air fare)
- \$ Cost of Residency permit/Iqama
- \$ Cost of housing and food
- \$ Health Insurance
- \$ Salaries**
- \$ End of Service benefits as per the Qatar Domestic Workers Law
- \$ Return ticket at the end of contract, or home vacation every two years.
- \$ Determine whether monthly expenses such as toiletries, clothing, phone cards, are included in the worker's salary or will be provided in-kind.



**The Domestic Worker Law mandates that migrant domestic workers must be recruited through recruitment agencies licensed under Qatar's Labour Law. An employer may also recruit domestic workers directly from abroad with the approval of the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs.*

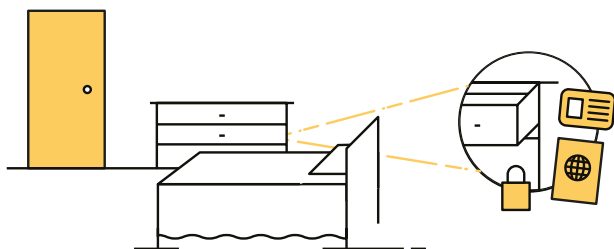
***It is illegal to deduct any fees, expenses or commissions from a worker's wage in return for the procedures of recruitment from abroad.*

02

Fostering Healthy Working Conditions in Your Home

What are the minimum standards for accommodation for domestic workers?

You must provide the worker with free and decent accommodation.



If you have a worker's quarters, ensure that the quarters are sanitary and that the door can be locked. If you have decided to provide him/her with a separate room within your residence, it is important to make arrangements that respect his/her privacy and the privacy of your family.

If the available option is shared accommodation (i.e. sharing a room with another worker), you can provide a curtain or partition to facilitate the privacy of each person.

He/she should also have a cupboard or drawers that he/she can lock, to keep safe his/her personal effects and documents.

TIPS

Making sure that the worker's accommodation – equipped with a bed, bedding, and lockable storage space – is ready before his/her arrival will help her/him settle better.

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“Maintaining privacy, enjoying family time and ensuring the worker’s break times properly was easier for me because her accommodation is annexed to the main house.”

An Employer

Is it necessary to have a contract with the domestic worker? What must the contract include?

Yes, a standard contract of employment is legally required. In Qatar, a domestic worker can be hired only through a written contract, approved by the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs (ADLSA). [Law No. 15 of 2017]

According to the domestic worker's law, the core elements in this contract include (*but are not limited to*) the nature and type of work, the wages agreed upon between the parties, normal working hours and rest period, the method and date of payment of wages, duration of contract, and conditions for renewal and termination of the contract.

A solid contract reflects the expectations of the employer, the rights and responsibilities of both parties, and sets clear boundaries for the employment relationship.



TIPS

A contract has little value if not comprehensively understood by the parties to the contract. Avoid ambiguous language and ensure that the contract is explained clearly to the worker.

Is there a limit to a domestic worker's daily working hours and how do I calculate daily and weekly working hours?

According to Article 13 and 12 of Law No. 15 of 2017, working hours cannot exceed 10 hours a day. During this period the worker is entitled to breaks for worship, rest and food, and such break periods should not enter into the calculation of the hours of work. The Standard Contract for Domestic Workers mentions that the work day is divided into 8 regular hours and a possible 2 additional overtime hours. If the worker agrees to work overtime then the overtime work (maximum 2 extra hours per day) must be remunerated as the following:

- » Basic hourly wage plus an extra 25% or more [e.g. QAR 10 hourly basic wage + QAR 2.5 = Total due for 1 hour of overtime during work day would be QAR 12.5]

His/her work week cannot total more than 60 hours.

Implementing a strict 10 hours per day rule may not appear practical at first, as all homes face unexpected needs, but it is achievable with mindful planning and proper scheduling. Foster a healthy work environment in your home by ensuring that the worker does not work for over 5 continuous hours without a break, and has sufficient rest periods during the work day, at night and in the week.

Periods during which domestic workers are on standby, and not free to dispose of their time as they wish and remain at the disposal of the household in order to respond to possible calls should be regarded as hours of work.

TIPS

Provide the worker with a timesheet – an easy-to-record chart with start and end times for daily tasks. Keeping a record of the hours she works will help you both be conscious of his/her working hours.

What is the minimum wage for a domestic worker? How should I pay his/her salary?

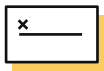
The monthly minimum basic wage for all workers in Qatar is QAR 1,000. The employer therefore, is obliged to determine his/her salary responsibly. Employers should be aware that some countries mandate a minimum wage through bilateral agreements with the State of Qatar.

A domestic worker from the Philippines for example, is entitled to a minimum USD 400/QAR 1460 monthly wage.

In determining wages, remember that a well-remunerated worker is likely to work more efficiently, be happier, and contribute towards a harmonious home.

Discuss with the worker how he/she would like to be paid.

By law, an employer is not considered as having met his/her duties unless they prove that they have deposited the worker's wage in his/her bank account, or handed him/her the wage in cash, by virtue of a receipt signed by the worker, which confirms his/her receipt of the wage in full.



Employers are prohibited from deducting any recruitment costs from a worker's wage.

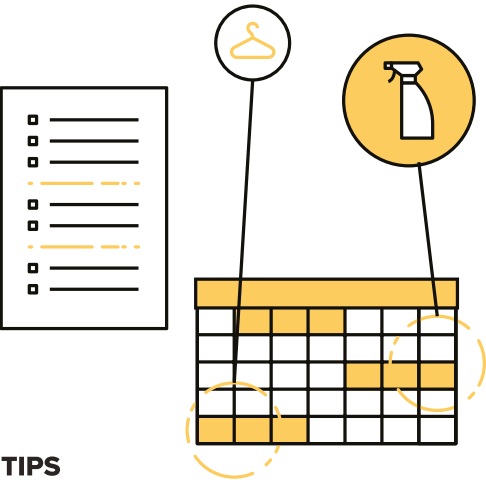
Upon the end of their contract, workers are also entitled to end of service benefits – a minimum of three weeks wages for each year of service since 12 September 2017, the date corresponding to the entry into force of the Domestic Workers Law.

What is a reasonable job scope or tasks to assign to the migrant domestic worker?

A reasonable job scope consists of tasks a worker can carry out on his/her own without undue physical or psychological stress, and which the worker is skilled or experienced enough to do. By law, an employer cannot task a worker with work that may endanger their life or safety.

Create a clear task list in the worker’s language.

It maybe easier to break his/her tasks down to daily, weekly and monthly tasks. If he/she is unable to read or write, you may communicate his/her tasks pictorially.



TIPS

Migrant domestic workers do not usually have a complete and extensive training before departure. Be prepared to teach, supervise and manage his/her work as he/she adjusts to your home’s preferences.

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“We did not share a common language, so I put up a chart in her room with pictures to identify each task I expected her to perform.”

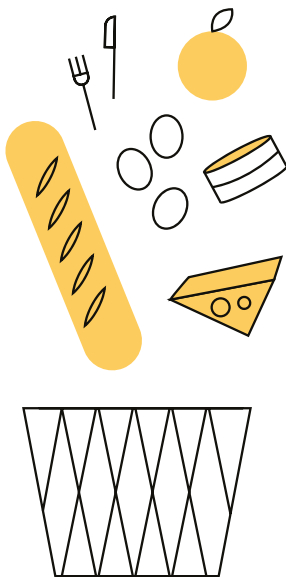
An Employer

What is sufficient food for a domestic worker? Should I ask him/her to cook his/her meals separately?

Sufficient and nutritious food is essential to maintain health and wellbeing.

Some workers may prefer to cook their food separately, especially if there are cultural and/or religious differences between the worker and employer. If this is the case, you must provide him/her with ingredients regularly, in addition to facilitating other requirements necessitated by this arrangement, such as time to prepare his/her meals.

Alternatively, you may give him/her a sufficient food allowance or ask him/her to join family meals.



TIPS

It is important to recognize that the worker has a right to refuse to handle certain types of food based on his/her cultural/religious preferences.

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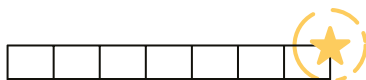
“The worker complained that she was not receiving food from the employer. We called the client (employer) to inquire. During the conversation it became clear that there was a misunderstanding between the worker and employer: The employer regularly ate bread-based meals, unlike the worker who was used to a rice-based diet. This led to the miscommunication.”

A Recruitment Agent

Is a domestic worker entitled to a day off and breaks during the day?

A proper rest day is one that gives the worker a complete emotional and physical break from his/her work life. Being well rested will help him/her to stay physically fit and value the work he/she performs for you.

Domestic workers are entitled to have suitable periods of rest during the working day, which allow for meals, rest and prayers in line with the general direction of the law to “preserve the dignity” of workers.



A weekly rest day of 24 continuous hours is also a right of the worker.

Decide on the day with his/her input, taking into account his/her work needs, cultural, religious and social preferences.

If occasionally and upon your request, the worker agrees to work during his/her rest day, he/she is entitled to take their 24-hours rest on another day. In addition, you must pay him/her an amount equivalent to the basic wage for the normal working hours plus an extra pay not less than 150% of the basic wage [e.g. QAR 10 hourly basic wage + QAR 15 = Total due for 1 hour of overtime during a rest day would be QAR 25].

While the manner in which a worker should dispose of his/her rest is not mentioned in the law, he/she is free to go out with friends or stay indoors.

What are some other basic rights and duties I must be aware of?

It is illegal to retain the travel documents of any worker. If he/she chooses to leave it with you for safe keeping it is imperative that you do so only with written approval from him/her. You can provide the worker with a lockable storage space that he/she can access freely at any time, in which he/she can store his/her personal documents and belongings.

Confiscation of travel documents entails a fine up to QAR 25,000 by Law No. 2015/21.

His/Her medical expenses are your responsibility (Law No.15 of 2017).

These expenses should not be deducted from his/her salary. You must ensure that he/she has access to medical care and bear the full cost of it, including hospitalization.

**A health card can be obtained from the nearest Primary Health Centre (PHCC) at QAR 100.*

When the domestic worker starts working for the first time, he/she can be subject to a probation period. However, remember that the probation period cannot exceed three months and there can only be one probation period with the same domestic worker. The probation period must be agreed with your domestic worker and indicated in the employment contract prior to starting work.

Domestic workers no longer need an exit permit to leave Qatar. He/She should however, inform you about his/her plans to leave the country at least 72 hours in advance. This can be done either verbally or in writing.

Can I terminate the employment contract of the worker?

As an employer, you can terminate the employment contract with the worker.

During the probation period, you have the right to terminate the employment contract with your domestic worker if he/she is unfit to carry out the work agreed upon in the employment contract. You must notify the worker at least 1 month before the termination through the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs (ADLSA's) electronic system.

After the probation period, if you wish to terminate the employment contract of the worker you have to notify the worker through the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs' electronic system. If the worker has worked with you for two years or less, the notice period is 1 month; and if the worker has worked with you for more than two years, the notice period is 2 months.

A domestic worker can also terminate the employment contract.

If the worker wants to terminate the employment contract and change jobs within the probation period, he/she must notify you at least one month before leaving the job, through the ADLSA's electronic system. In addition, the new employer of the worker must compensate you a portion of the recruitment fees and one-way air ticket, if incurred by you. However, the compensation amount should not exceed 2 months of the worker's basic wage, and you should discuss the amount with the new employer.

If the worker wants to leave Qatar during the probation period, the worker must notify you through ADLSA's electronic system. You can discuss the notice period with the worker but it cannot be more than 2 months.

After the probation period, if the domestic worker wants to terminate the employment contract he/she has to notify you through ADLSA's electronic system. The worker must notify you one month before leaving if he/she has worked for two years or less; or two months before leaving, if he/she has worked for more than two years.

If the domestic worker terminates the employment contract in the absence of any breach of the employment contract or the Domestic Workers' Law by you, and wishes to return to their home country; you should at least cover part of the cost of the return air ticket. The amount you cover should be proportional to the actual time the worker completed out of the full term of the employment contract period.

Example: The domestic worker wishes to return after completing 18 months of a two-year contract (24 months). Let's imagine the price of the return ticket is QAR 1,500 QAR. In order to calculate how much you should at least pay,

- » Divide 1,500 by 24 (the overall duration of your contract): $1,500 / 24 = 62.5$
- » Since the worker worked for 18 months, you should at least pay: $62.5 \times 18 = \text{QAR } 1,125$

03

Building a Mutually Beneficial Working Relationship and a Happy Home

How should I address the domestic worker?

~~KHIDAMAT~~

~~MAID~~

~~SERVANT~~

When you welcome a domestic worker into your home, you are in effect welcoming a stranger into your most private space. In such a relationship, even the seemingly small things count. How you and your family (especially children) address him/her will have an impact on the relationship.

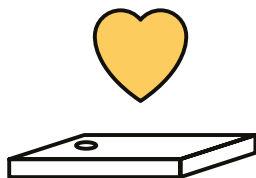
Opting out of terms like khidamat, maid or servant when addressing or referring to him/her, and choosing instead to call him/her by his/her name, will contribute to a better relationship.

Legal terms used to identify domestic workers differ from country to country. In the Philippines, they are known as “Household Service Worker (HSW)”, in India– as “Domestic Service Worker (DSW)” while international laws governing the rights of these workers often refer to them as “foreign or migrant domestic worker”.

Should I allow the domestic worker to have and use a phone?

Both new and returning migrant workers often face the hard reality of losing the support of family and community.

Being in contact with family and friends will give him/her the emotional security he/she needs to address issues of loneliness and isolation. A phone, then, is an important tool in the well being of a domestic worker.



Some employers are concerned that phones may be a distraction from work.

If so, ensure that you communicate rules of phone use, and follow up these rules with reminders. For example, that he/she may use the phone only during his/her break times. If you are concerned about maintaining privacy for your residence or family, then you can provide/allow a regular phone instead of a smart phone.

Regardless of how you choose to deal with this issue, it is vital that you inform him/her about the boundaries and guidelines of phone use.

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“I did not have any problems or issues with phone use by our helper. We had ‘House Rules’ written and displayed, which included times she could use her personal phone and I followed it up with reminders until she was accustomed to them.”

An Employer

How do I ensure that the domestic worker maintains the boundaries I expect him/her to maintain with my children?

Preparation and communication are key. Recognize that both the worker and the children have a role to play in this matter.

Before you decide to employ, make sure that your family is ready to have a domestic worker living in your home. When he/she arrives, speak to your children about the way they should treat him/her, and his/her role in the house. Ensure that your family and especially children are aware of and respect his/her rest times and day off.

Clearly articulate rules you expect him/her to follow with regard to your family and follow them up with reminders.

Also check with your domestic worker to make sure that all members of the family including children as well as other domestic workers are treating them well.

What can I do to help him/her feel at home but also ensure that he/she understands that he/she is here to do a job?

In addition to the tips and guidelines above you must,

- » Encourage communication
- » Appraise the work he/she does, this will help him/her to develop the mindset of an employee
- » Give him/her instructions clearly and give him/her time to learn
- » Inform him/her about the laws governing domestic workers in Qatar
- » Be informed about his/her culture, values and lifestyle
- » Explain under what circumstances he/she may be repatriated

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“You may talk to me about any problems you are having and express your likes and dislikes, but please do so at appropriate times. Don’t try to discuss something important when I am trying to work on something else.”

An Employer

*This booklet was developed in collaboration with Migrant-Rights.org
with the support from the International Labour Organization.*

