

**Thinking about Becoming a CNA?**  
**Lesson Packet #3 – April 2015**  
***The Change Agent* <changeagent.nelrc.org>**

**Introduction:**

This lesson is designed to provide CCR-aligned activities in the context of content that provides information about work as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). The readings are GLE 5-8.

**Objectives:**

- to gain insight and perspective about working as a CNA
- to use evidence from the text to write about several aspects of CNA work
- to gain reading skills in the context of health care career exploration

**This lesson addresses the following CCR standards for reading and writing:**

- Read closely to determine what the text says; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. (R.CCR.1)
- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. (R.CCR.2)
- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (W.CCR.1)
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. (W.CCR.2)

**Materials:**

- This sheet
- Three articles with activities
  - “Taking Care of People Gives Me Joy” by Chibuzo Onwuamaegbu – Level 6 (from the “Good Jobs, Not Just Any Jobs” issue of *The Change Agent*, #36)
  - “Fighting for My Rights” Marie Stephanie Edma – Level 5 (from the “Women and Literacy” issue of *The Change Agent*, #19)
  - “Technology in the Care of Others” by Eva Ramos – Level 8 (from the “Technology” issue of *The Change Agent*, #37)

**Steps:**

- 1) Read “Taking Care of People Gives Me Joy” by Chibuzo Onwuamaegbu; do the activities on that page.
- 2) Read “Fighting for My Rights” Marie Stephanie Edma and do the activities on that page.
- 3) Read “Technology in the Care of Others” by Eva Ramos and do the activities on that page.
- 4) After reading all three pieces and doing the activities consider these questions:
  - a. What are some new insights you have about working as a CNA?
  - b. What are some questions you have about working as a CNA or some aspects of the work that you would like to know more about? Can you find a website to direct people to for information? Or the blog of a CNA?
  - c. Drawing from the texts, write an essay about one of the following. Cite specific lines in the texts and what they made you think about.
    - i. Would a CNA job be right for you? Explain.
    - ii. How does what you learned here help you think about your own career goals?
- 5) Evaluate the lesson. What writing and reading skills did you learn? What did you learn about CNA work? Did this help you think about your career goals and plans?

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# Taking Care of People Gives Me Joy

*Chibuzo Onwuamaegbu*

I work in a nursing home as a Certified Nursing Assistant. I assist the nurses and the doctors. In this nursing home, the people are mostly the elderly who are sick and are unable to help themselves. I see these elderly as my parents. So, when I am there with them, it gives me joy to take care of them and answer their calls.

## Able to Ask for Help

My nursing home recently hired more workers because there are so many patients and they have so

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many needs. Now I have many co-workers to interact with. This makes the work easy and more fun. I am able to ask them for help, especially in transferring patients from the wheel chair to the bed and from the bed to the wheel chair.

## Gaining Life Skills

Working at the nursing home has taught me a lot of skills that help me in my everyday life. For example, I know how to help my mom who had

a partial stroke. I walk her to the toilet, and I know how to sit her on the chair so that she won't fall. Also, at my church I help a woman who walks with a cane because she is disabled. Every time she comes to church, she looks for me to help her walk into the church and then to the toilet before I take her to sit in her favorite seat.



## Bringing Me Joy

The nursing home is a good job because it allows me to take care of the elderly and the sick who are unable to do things for themselves. I like helping people. It is my passion. I don't have any regrets about this work because it gives me such joy.

*Chibuzo Onwuamaegbu is a student at the Brooklyn Adult Learning Center in NY. Chibuzo was a teacher for many years, but she changed her profession when she came to the United States. She loves math, writing, and being in school to study to get her GED and go to college. She is grateful to be here in the U.S. and for her wonderful teachers, who are always there to help her.*

## Write about It

**Pick a topic below and write a paragraph.** Remember to include a topic sentence, at least two supporting details, and a concluding sentence.

- Explain why Chibuzo likes her job. Use quotes from the article.
- Explain why you like or don't like taking care of people. Be specific.
- Describe a kind of work that gives you joy and explain why. Be specific.

**Share your paragraph with others.** Get feedback from several sources. Re-write your paragraph, incorporating feedback that is helpful.

# Fighting for My Rights

Marie Stephanie Edma

**BEFORE YOU READ:**

- 1) Share a time you fought for your rights on the job.
- 2) Share what you know about unions. Read text in the box to learn more.

In my job as a certified nursing assistant, I have learned it is important to speak up. I take English classes, so I can speak up anytime and anywhere. I am a member of a union of health care workers.

## Background Information

### Union

A union is an organized group of workers who collectively use their strength to have a voice in their workplace. Through a union, workers fight for better wages, hours, benefits, job training, etc. Under U.S. law, workers have the right to join a union.

### Union steward

A union steward helps co-workers implement their contract and defend their rights on a day-to-day basis. Stewards understand their co-workers' concerns, organize with them to take action, and communicate their priorities to other union leaders.

### Workers' rights

In the U.S., workers have fought and won rights that are guaranteed by federal and state governments. These include the right not to be discriminated against, the right to a minimum wage, to overtime pay, to family medical leave, to safety, and more.

**Sources:** <launionaficio.org/what-is-a-union>; <www.ufcw.org/>; <www.workplacefairness.org>

In the union, workers have more power. We can make our voices heard. Here is a story of one time when I had to speak up.



In January, I made a vacation request for August. The Director of Nursing approved the request. I saved the document along with my paychecks.

In July, when I looked at the schedule, I saw I was scheduled to work for the whole month of August. I went to the administrator, Mr.

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**He said that I could not go on vacation. He said that if I went to Haiti, I would be terminated.**

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Kneland, and I said, "Well, Mr. Kneland, I requested an August vacation at the beginning the year. It was approved by the Director of Nursing. However, now

I see my name on the schedule for August. I have already made reservations to fly to Haiti and I cannot cancel the ticket."

Mr. Kneland replied, "The request has to be approved by me and not the Director of Nursing."

I countered, "Show me the paper saying that the Director of Nursing does not have the power to approve a vacation form."

He started getting angry. He said that I could not go on vacation. He said that if I went to Haiti, I would be terminated.

I banged my fist on the table and I said to him, "Don't play games with me because I am not a

child. I am an adult! Since I requested my vacation and it was approved, I will take it and then I will come back to work.”

Mr. Kneland backed down. He could see that I knew my rights. By making myself heard, I became stronger. Sometimes managers try to put us down. However, the union makes us stronger

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because it teaches us how to defend our rights. After this incident, I realized that workers can have more power than managers if they communicate and organize together. I decided to become a union steward. In June of 2002, I graduated from the union’s steward

school. This accomplishment has made me feel stronger and more powerful. Workers are here to stay, but managers like Mr. Kneland – who was eventually fired – are temporary if they abuse and manipulate workers. Fellow workers, I hope you think about your goals and dignity because you can achieve whatever you want.

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*Marie Stephanie Edma is from Haiti. She works at East Village Nursing Home as a certified nursing assistant, and she is a member of SIEU Local 2020 and a student at the Worker Education Program. This piece has been edited and adapted for this lesson plan.*

### Write about It

**Summarize:** Write a one-sentence summary of Marie’s article.

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**Look for evidence:** What helped Marie speak up about her vacation time? Find at least three specific things she mentions in the text that helped her speak up. Use the space below to list them. Then write a paragraph with a topic sentence, supporting details, and a concluding sentence. Share your paragraph with others. Get feedback and revise.

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2. 

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3. 

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# Technology in the Care of Others

*Eva Ramos*

## PRE-READING VOCABULARY:

amputate, prosthesis, hygiene

A typical day at my job as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) is very busy. I start my shift by looking over my schedule and reviewing reports of my patients' activities from the day before. In this way, I am better able to help my patients and think about any problems that they might have.

Just last week, I was preparing for my shift when I heard one of my patients crying. I went to see what the problem was. She told me that her

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**Not only has technology advanced to give patients better options, but technology has improved my workplace.**

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doctors said that she needed to have one leg amputated. I told her about another patient of mine who faced the same problem. Doctors told him that if they amputated his leg, his health would improve.

Although this was a difficult decision for

him, he decided to go ahead with the operation. Today with the help of physical therapy and a prosthesis, his health is better and he is happier.

I thought that it would benefit my patient to meet this individual, so she could have some

perspective on how her life might improve. She has not made a decision about her surgery yet, but she is more hopeful about her options.

Not only has technology advanced to give patients better options, but technology has improved my workplace. Now I have more time to spend talking with and caring for my patients. For example, we now enter assisted daily living (ADL) activities for each patient on the computer. ADL activities are: walking safely, dressing, and taking care of personal hygiene. Being able to read my patients' ADL activities on the computer gives me up-to-date information about what my patients' needs are so that I can better support them. We also enter information about their vital functions, such as temperature, pulse rate, and blood pressure. Once the vitals and the ADLs are entered on a computer, this information helps other health care workers do their job as well. Thanks to technology I can do my job more efficiently. Most importantly, I have more time to be an emotional support for my patients.

Technology has improved patient care in many ways.



## Write about It

Write a paragraph about the ways technology has played a role in the work of this CNA. Use details and quotes from the text. Make sure your paragraph has a topic sentence, supporting details, and a concluding sentence.

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*Eva A Ramos is a student at Northwestern Connecticut Community College in Winsted, CT. She is working on her GED in order to pursue a career in the medical profession. This piece has been edited and adapted for this lesson plan.*