

Beyond the Lockbox

THE QUICK VERSION

- 1 Give each aide their own code, never a shared key.
- 2 Schedule the code to the shift, with a little cushion.
- 3 Turn on notifications and read the log to confirm visits.
- 4 Unlock from your phone if an aide is ever stuck.
- 5 Delete an aide's code the day their assignment ends.
- 6 Call Bill at (330) 200-8042 to set it all up.

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Beyond the Lockbox — Smart-Lock Access for Home-Health Aides

Safer than a key under the mat or a dial lockbox — give each aide their own code and see who came.

————— An Extended Guide · No. 1871 · SMART LOCKS —————

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What's Inside

Everything in this guide, with page numbers. Skip to whichever chapter answers your question right now.

The 60-Second Version	5
1. The trouble with the lockbox	5
2. What a smart lock does differently	6
3. A separate code for each aide	7
4. Codes that match the shift	7
5. The access log: proof of the visit	8
6. Remote unlock when an aide is stuck	9
7. When the agency rotates staff	9
8. When the agency sends someone new	10
9. Who entered, and keeping it private	11
10. HIPAA and whose job it is	12
11. The backup key still matters	12
12. Pick a lock the aide can use	13
13. Setting up an aide code, step by step	14
14. The far-away family's view	14
15. Notifications: the gentle check-in	15
16. Agency code or individual codes	16
17. The day an aide leaves	17
18. One-time codes for a fill-in	17
19. Keeping codes private and safe	18
20. A simple monthly routine	19

21. When a code gives trouble	19
22. Working with the agency on access	20
23. When to Call Bill	21
Everyday Cheat Sheet	22
Plain-English Word List	22
A Picture to Follow Along	24
A Second Look	25
A Note From Bill	25
Your Visit — and My Promise	26

SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

If a home-health aide or a visiting nurse comes to the door, a lockbox on the handle or a key under the mat feels like the easy answer. But that one key opens for anyone who learns the combination, and it never tells you whether the visit happened. A smart lock does better in every way that matters: each aide gets their own code, the code works only during their shift, and the lock keeps a record of every visit.

- Give each aide a separate code tied to their name, not one shared key.
- Set the code to work only during the hours of their scheduled shift.
- Read the access log to confirm the aide actually came and went.
- Unlock remotely from your phone if an aide is locked out.

GOOD TO KNOW

The biggest weakness of a lockbox is that it cannot tell you who opened it or when. A smart lock's record is often the real reason a far-away family feels at ease.

It takes a few minutes to set up per helper, and then it runs itself. If you would like me to set it up and show your family the one screen you need, call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

1. The trouble with the lockbox

Convenient, but blind and shared.

A key lockbox, the kind with a dial or push-button combination that realtors use, seems like a tidy solution for letting an aide in. Mount it on the handle, give the agency the combination, and anyone from the agency can get the key. The trouble is that this convenience comes with two real weaknesses that matter a great deal when you are trusting someone with a loved one's home.

- One combination, shared by everyone, so you cannot tell who opened it.
- The combination rarely changes, so it spreads to more people over time.
- It keeps no record, so you never know if or when a visit happened.
- Anyone who learns the numbers has the real house key, not a limited code.

WATCH OUT

A key under the mat or in a flowerpot is worse still. It works for anyone, at any hour, who thinks to look, and burglars know every hiding spot by heart.

The deeper problem is that a lockbox hands out the actual key. Once an aide has the key in hand, they could copy it, and you would never know. The combination tends to drift, too, passed from one staff member to the next until you have lost track of who can get in. For a scheduled helper, that is more access than anyone needs.

I am not here to scare anyone. Plenty of families use a lockbox and nothing bad ever happens. But when there is a better way that costs about the same and gives you real control and a real record, it is worth knowing about, especially when the person inside is someone you love.

2. What a smart lock does differently

Control and a record, not just a key.

A smart lock changes the whole picture because it does not hand out a key at all. Instead, each person gets their own code, which you control from an app. You decide who has a code, when each code works, and you can see a record of every time the door opened. That is a different world from a shared key in a box.

- Each aide gets a unique code, so the lock knows who is who.
- Codes work only during the hours you set, matching real shifts.
- The lock records each entry with a time and the name of the code used.
- You add or remove any code in seconds from your phone, from anywhere.

GOOD TO KNOW

The feature that wins families over is the record. A glance at the app confirms the aide arrived at the usual hour, which answers the question that keeps far-away families up at night.

Think of it this way. A lockbox is one key that everyone shares and nobody tracks. A smart lock is a set of named, scheduled passes that you hand out and take back at will, each one leaving a footprint in the log. The same door, but a completely different level of control and peace of mind.

This matters most for families managing care from a distance. A son in Columbus or a daughter in Cleveland can set up and watch access for a parent's door in Atwater without driving out for every change. That is often the real reason people call me about a lock for a parent's home.

3. A separate code for each aide

So the lock knows who is who.

The foundation of a good aide setup is giving each helper their own code, never a shared one. This single habit is what makes everything else possible: the record, the clean removals, the whole sense of control. When each aide has a distinct code, the lock can tell them apart, and so can you.

- 1 In the lock app, add a new code with numbers unique to that aide.
- 2 Name the code plainly, like the aide's first name and the word Aide.
- 3 Avoid obvious numbers like the house number, a birth year, or a street number.
- 4 Save it, then test it at the door to be sure it works.

TIP

Give each person numbers nobody else has. Separate codes are exactly what let you see who came in and remove one person without disturbing anyone else's access.

When each aide has their own code, the access log reads like a guest book. Instead of seeing that some code opened the door at ten, you see that the aide's named code opened it. That is the difference between a record you can actually use and a pile of numbers you ignore.

It also makes endings clean. When an aide's assignment ends, you find their named code in the app and delete it, and their access is gone that moment. No collecting a key, no re-keying the lock, no wondering whether a copy is floating around. That clean, instant ending is the whole point of individual codes.

4. Codes that match the shift

Access only during the visit.

The second pillar is the schedule. Instead of a code that works any hour of any day, you set each aide's code to work only during the hours they are actually supposed to be there. Outside that window, the same code simply does nothing, and the door stays locked. This is where a smart lock leaves a lockbox far behind.

- A weekday aide might have a code that works Monday through Friday, during their shift hours.
- A weekend aide gets a code that works only Saturday and Sunday.
- A one-time fill-in gets a code that works once, then expires.

- Outside the set window, the code is dead and the door stays shut.

WATCH OUT

Set the window a little wider than the exact shift, say a half hour on each side, so an aide who arrives early or runs late is never left standing on the porch.

Matching the code to the shift is what makes a smart lock so much safer than a shared key. A lockbox key works at three in the morning for anyone who has the combination. A scheduled code works only when you meant it to, for the one person you gave it to, and not a minute more.

Most good locks and apps handle these schedules well, offering recurring windows for regular aides and one-time or date-range codes for fill-ins and short stretches. We will set yours to match the real shift pattern the agency gives you, so the access lines up with when help is actually expected.

5. The access log: proof of the visit

Did the aide actually come.

One of the quietest, most valuable features of a smart lock is the access log, sometimes called the history or activity feed. Every time the door locks or unlocks, the lock writes down when it happened and which code was used. For a family trusting an agency with a loved one, this record is worth its weight in gold.

- Open the app and find the history, activity, or lock log section.
- You see a list of entries with the time and the name of the code used.
- You can confirm the aide arrived for the shift and left afterward.
- You can spot a missed visit, like a morning the aide never came.

GOOD TO KNOW

This is the one thing a lockbox can never do. A shared key opens silently and leaves no trace. A smart lock's log turns access into a clear, checkable record.

For a son or daughter watching over a parent from afar, the log answers the question that gnaws at them: did the aide actually show up today. A glance at the app from anywhere gives the answer, with the time stamped plainly. No phone calls to the agency, no guessing, just the record.

It also settles small uncertainties gently. If an agency says a visit happened and the care notes are thin, the log shows whether their code opened the door that day and for how

long. There is no arguing with the record, and most of the time it simply confirms that everything went as it should.

6. Remote unlock when an aide is stuck

Let them in from your phone.

Now and then an aide gets locked out: a code did not save, a phone died, a new staff member was not given the numbers yet. With a lockbox you would be stuck, perhaps driving over or calling a neighbor. With a smart lock, you can unlock the door right from your phone, from anywhere, the moment the aide calls.

- The aide calls to say the code is not working.
- You open the lock app on your phone, wherever you are.
- You tap to unlock the door remotely so they can get in and start the visit.
- You then fix or re-send the code so it works on its own next time.

GOOD TO KNOW

Remote unlock needs the lock to be online through your home internet. A strong signal at the door is what makes this reliable when you need it in a hurry.

This is a genuine comfort for families caring from a distance. If a new aide shows up and the agency forgot to pass along the code, a quick call to you solves it in seconds, without the parent inside having to get up and answer the door. The care goes on without a hitch.

After you let them in remotely, take a minute to sort out the code itself so the next visit runs smoothly on its own. Remote unlock is a wonderful safety valve, but the goal is always a working scheduled code, so the aide lets themselves in during their window without needing you at all.

7. When the agency rotates staff

Different faces, same door.

Home-care agencies often rotate their staff, so the person at the door may change from week to week. This is the exact situation where a lockbox falls apart, because the shared combination spreads to every new hire and never gets reeled back in. A smart lock gives you two clean ways to handle rotation instead.

- Option one: a single code named for the agency, used by whoever they send.

- Option two: a fresh individual code each time they tell you who is coming.
- With the agency code, you lean on the log's arrival times to tell visits apart.
- With individual codes, you know exactly which named aide came each day.

TIP

For most families, an agency code plus the access log is the simplest path. You get the record of visits without chasing a new code for every shift change.

The agency-code approach keeps your life simple while still giving you the record and the scheduled window a lockbox never could. Even though several people may use the same agency code, the log still stamps each arrival with a time, so you can see that the morning visit happened even if you do not know the aide's name.

If knowing exactly who came matters to you, ask the agency to tell you the day's aide and set an individual code for them. It is a little more work, but for some families the precise record is worth it. Either way, you are miles ahead of a shared key that anyone on staff can use at any hour.

8. When the agency sends someone new

A calm plan for a new face.

A new or unfamiliar aide at the door can be unsettling, especially for an older person living alone. A smart lock lets you handle a new face calmly and safely, so the care continues without anyone feeling exposed. The plan is simple and worth setting up before you need it.

- 1 When the agency tells you a new aide is coming, add a code for them with a schedule for just that shift.
- 2 If they arrive before you set it, use remote unlock to let them in, then sort the code.
- 3 Confirm with the agency the aide's name and expected arrival time.
- 4 Check the log afterward to confirm the visit went as planned.
- 5 Keep the code if they return, or delete it if it was a one-time fill-in.

TIP

If you are unsure about a new aide, a quick call to the agency to confirm who they sent and when gives peace of mind before you open anything, even remotely.

The beauty of this is that a new aide never needs the run of the house. They get a code that works for their one shift, you can watch the log, and if it was a one-time visit, the code

vanishes when you delete it. Compare that to handing a stranger the shared key from a lockbox.

For the person being cared for, this is quietly reassuring. They do not have to get up to let an unfamiliar person in, and they do not have to worry that a stranger now has a lasting key. The access is temporary, tracked, and under the family's control from the first moment.

9. Who entered, and keeping it private

The record is yours alone.

The access log tells you who entered and when, and that record lives in your lock app, under your account. It is your private record of your own door, not something broadcast to the world. Keeping it private is mostly a matter of guarding the app account the same way you would any important login.

- The log is stored in your lock app, tied to your account.
- Only people you share the app with can see it, so share it thoughtfully.
- Use a strong password and, where offered, a second step to sign in.
- Share access with family who help with care, and no one else.

GOOD TO KNOW

You decide who in the family can see the log. A primary caregiver and a backup is a common, sensible setup, so someone always has eyes on the door.

Who comes and goes from a person's home is sensitive, and it is right to treat it with care. The log is a tool for the family's reassurance, not a thing to leave lying open. Protecting the app account keeps that record where it belongs, with the people responsible for the care.

When you share the app with a family member, give them their own login rather than handing out your password, if the app allows it. That way each person has their own access, and you can remove one without disturbing the others, the same principle that makes the aide codes work so well.

10. HIPAA and whose job it is

A plain word on privacy rules.

Families sometimes ask whether a smart lock log runs into HIPAA, the health privacy law. Here is the plain truth, and I am a tech person, not a lawyer, so treat this as general guidance. HIPAA governs health care providers and agencies and how they handle medical information. It is their obligation, not yours as a homeowner keeping a record of your own front door.

- HIPAA binds the home-care agency and its staff, not you as a family member.
- Your lock log is a record of door access, not medical information.
- The agency is responsible for how its aides handle health details during a visit.
- Keeping your own access record private is good sense, not a legal burden on you.

GOOD TO KNOW

Agencies have their own duties to control access and protect patient information. Your smart lock does not add to those; it simply gives your family a clear record of your own door.

So you can keep an access log with a clear conscience. It is your door and your record. If anything, the lock supports good practice by limiting who can enter and when, which is the kind of access control agencies themselves are expected to maintain on their side of things.

If you ever have a specific legal question about an agency's privacy duties, that is one for the agency or an attorney, not for me. What I can tell you is that a family keeping a tidy record of who entered a parent's home is on entirely sound footing, and it is a thoughtful thing to do.

11. The backup key still matters

A way in when technology hiccups.

Even with the smartest lock, I never set one up without a physical-key plan, because batteries die and apps occasionally stumble. A backup key makes sure an aide is never truly locked out and that the person inside is never truly locked in, no matter what the technology does on a given day.

- Most replacement smart locks come with real keys as a backup.
- Keep a key with a trusted neighbor or family member nearby.
- Remote unlock from your phone is a backup too, when the lock is online.

- Fresh batteries are the simplest way to avoid ever needing the key.

WATCH OUT

Do not solve the backup-key problem by putting the key back in a lockbox or under the mat. That brings back the very weakness the smart lock was meant to fix.

The right place for a backup key is with a trusted person, a next-door neighbor, a nearby relative, someone you would call in an emergency anyway. That keeps the key out of a hiding spot a stranger could find, while still giving you a sure way in if a battery quits on a cold night.

And the surest way to never need that key is to stay ahead of the batteries. Most locks warn you well before they run low, right in the app. Swap them when the warning appears, and lean on lithium batteries for an outdoor lock through an Ohio winter, since they hold up far better in the cold.

12. Pick a lock the aide can use

A keypad, not a phone.

For aide access, the single most important feature is a keypad on the outside of the lock, so helpers enter a code with their fingers and never need a smartphone or an app. You do not want to depend on an aide installing software or being added to your account. A simple code on a keypad is something anyone can use on day one.

- Choose a full-replacement lock with an outside keypad or touchscreen.
- The aide enters their code by hand, with no phone required.
- Big, clear buttons help aides enter codes quickly in any light.
- Some locks add a fingerprint reader, though codes are simpler to manage for rotating staff.

TIP

A keypad lock, not a phone-only retrofit, is the right pick for aide access. You keep the app control for yourself; the aide just needs four or six numbers.

This is why I usually steer families toward a replacement lock with a keypad, like a Schlage Encode or a Yale touchscreen, rather than a retrofit that leans on the aide's phone. You manage everything from your app, and the aide interacts with nothing but the keypad. That split is exactly what you want.

Look for a keypad that is easy to read and press, with buttons that light up, since aides may arrive before dawn or after dark. A code that is quick and comfortable to enter is a code that gets used correctly, which keeps the log clean and the visits running smoothly.

13. Setting up an aide code, step by step

The most common setup.

The recurring aide code is the workhorse of this whole guide, so let me walk through it plainly. The exact taps vary by app, but the shape is the same everywhere: add a code, name it, schedule it to the shift, and test it. Here it is in order.

- 1 Open your lock app and go to the access codes or users section.
- 2 Add a new code and type the numbers for that aide.
- 3 Name it clearly, like the aide's first name and the word Aide.
- 4 Choose the recurring or scheduled option.
- 5 Pick the days of the week and the shift hours the code should work, with a little cushion.
- 6 Save it, then test the code at the door during its window.

TIP

Turn on an arrival notification for the aide's code if you want to know the moment they are in. It is a gentle check-in that needs no camera.

Once saved, that code lets the aide in only on those days and during those hours. The rest of the time it does nothing, and the door stays locked. You never touch it again unless the schedule changes, and if the agency shifts the hours, you just edit the window.

Many locks also let you turn a code on and off or change its schedule at any time, so you are never locked into your first setup. If an aide moves from weekdays to weekends, a few taps updates their window. This flexibility is something a fixed lockbox combination could never offer.

14. The far-away family's view

Watching the door from another town.

So much of this guide comes back to one situation: a family member caring for a parent from another town or another state. A smart lock is built for exactly this, letting you set up, watch, and adjust access to a parent's door without being there in person. It is the next best thing to being down the street.

- Set up and change aide codes from your own home, hundreds of miles away.
- Read the access log to confirm each day's visits happened on time.
- Get a notification when the aide arrives, so you need not watch the app all day.
- Unlock remotely if an aide is stuck, without troubling the parent inside.

GOOD TO KNOW

A soft notification each morning when the aide's code opens the door tells an out-of-state daughter that her mother's day has started as it should, with no camera and no hovering.

This is the kind of thing that genuinely helps families sleep. A daughter in another state can glance at her phone over breakfast and see that the aide arrived at her mother's door at the usual hour. If the morning entry does not appear by a certain time, she knows to make a call and check in. A quiet safety net, nothing more.

You can share the app with a sibling or two, so the watching does not fall on one person alone. Then if the main caregiver is traveling or unavailable, another family member still has eyes on the door and can let an aide in if need be. Shared responsibility, all from your phones.

15. Notifications: the gentle check-in

Know the moment someone arrives.

Beyond the log you can look up later, most locks send a notification to your phone the instant a code is used. For a family caring for a parent from afar, this turns the lock into a respectful, camera-free check-in, letting you know the aide arrived without watching or recording anyone.

- Turn on notifications for the codes you care about, like each aide's.
- You get a message the moment that code opens the door.
- You can also be alerted if the door is left unlocked too long.
- Choose which codes notify you, so you are not pinged by your own comings and goings.

GOOD TO KNOW

Notifications are a quieter, more dignified way to keep watch than a camera. You learn that the aide came on time without ever watching the person being cared for.

A common setup is a notification each day when the aide's code opens the door, and another if the door is left unlocked for a stretch. That pair covers the two things families worry about most: that help arrived, and that the house did not end up left open. Everything

else can stay quiet.

You can tune these so the phone only speaks when it should. Turn them on for the helpers that matter and leave them off for the family's own codes, so you are not buzzed all day. A notification you actually read is worth ten you learn to ignore.

16. Agency code or individual codes

Choosing your approach.

Early on you will settle on one of two approaches, and it is worth weighing them plainly. You can give the agency a single shared code for whoever they send, or you can create an individual code for each named aide. Both are far better than a lockbox; they just trade simplicity against precision.

- Agency code: one code for all staff, simple to manage, visits still time-stamped in the log.
- Individual codes: one per named aide, more setup, but you know exactly who came.
- Agency code suits families who want it simple and trust the log's times.
- Individual codes suit families who want a name on every entry.

TIP

Start with an agency code for simplicity. If you later want to know exactly who comes each day, switch to individual codes. You can always change your mind.

For most Portage County families I work with, the agency code plus the log hits the sweet spot. It is one code to set and one window to schedule, and the record still shows that the morning and evening visits happened. That is usually all the detail a family needs to feel settled.

If the care is more involved, or if you want a precise record for your own peace of mind, individual codes are the way, and the agency can tell you each day's aide so you label them right. There is no wrong choice; it is simply how much detail you want in exchange for a little more upkeep.

17. The day an aide leaves

Clean endings, every time.

This is the feature that, more than any other, makes a smart lock safer than a lockbox for aide access. When an aide stops working for you, you remove their access in seconds, with no awkward conversation about returning a key and no doubt about copies. The access simply ends.

- 1 Open the app and go to the list of codes or users.
- 2 Find the departing aide by their labeled name.
- 3 Choose to delete or remove that code.
- 4 Confirm, and the code stops working immediately.
- 5 Glance at the log one last time to see their final visit, if you like.

TIP

Make deleting a code part of your routine the day an aide's assignment ends, not a week later. It takes ten seconds and closes the door on any lingering access.

Compare this to a lockbox. When an aide leaves, the combination is still out there in their memory and in the memories of everyone they shared it with. The only sure fix is changing the combination and re-telling everyone, which rarely happens. With a code, you just delete it and you are done.

This is also why separate, named codes matter so much. Because each aide had their own, removing one leaves everyone else untouched. The other aides, your family, and the person's own code all keep working exactly as before. Precise, clean, and immediate, the way an ending should be.

18. One-time codes for a fill-in

For the single, unexpected visit.

Sometimes the agency sends a fill-in for a single shift, or a visiting nurse comes once for a specific reason. For these, a one-time code is perfect. It works once, then it is gone, so there is nothing to remember to cancel and no lasting access left behind.

- 1 In the app, add a new code and choose the one-time or single-use option if your lock offers it.
- 2 If there is no true one-time option, set a tight window covering just that one shift.
- 3 Name it clearly, like Fill-in Tuesday.

- 4 Share the numbers with the agency or aide when it is time.
- 5 After the visit, confirm in the log that they came, and delete the code if it did not expire on its own.

WATCH OUT

Not every lock has a true single-use code. If yours does not, use a tight scheduled window instead and delete it afterward so it cannot be reused.

This is far safer than giving a one-time fill-in the shared lockbox combination, which they would then know forever. The one-time code works for their single shift, you watch the log to confirm they came, and then the access is simply gone. A stranger passing through leaves no lasting key.

For a visiting nurse or a therapist who comes on an irregular schedule, you can lean on these short-lived codes each time, or set a recurring code if they settle into a pattern. Either way, you control exactly when their access lives and when it ends, which is the heart of the whole approach.

19. Keeping codes private and safe

A few simple rules.

A code is only as safe as how you handle it. A few plain habits keep your aide codes private and the home secure, and none of them are complicated. These are the same habits I teach every family I set up, and they take almost no effort to follow.

- Give each aide a different code, never a single shared one across unrelated helpers.
- Avoid obvious numbers like the house number, a birth year, or anything on the mail.
- Share a new code privately, by a phone call or the agency's secure channel, not a note by the door.
- Change a code if you ever suspect it has spread beyond the person it belongs to.
- Wipe the keypad now and then so worn numbers do not hint at a code.

WATCH OUT

Never tape a code to the door or leave it in a lockbox. The whole safety of the system comes from the code staying with the person you gave it to.

If your lock offers it, you can turn on a feature that lets the aide type a few random extra digits before their real code. That way anyone watching cannot tell which numbers are the actual code, even if they see it entered. It is a small touch that foils a casual onlooker.

These habits take almost no effort and they keep the whole system honest. The point of individual aide codes is control, and that control only holds if each code stays private to the one person it belongs to. Treat a code like a key, because that is exactly what it is.

20. A simple monthly routine

Keep it tidy without thinking hard.

Once you have a few aide codes going, a light routine keeps everything tidy so the system stays useful rather than becoming a jumble. This is the gentle discipline I teach every family, and it asks only a few minutes a month.

- 1 When a new aide starts, add their code the same day, named and scheduled.
- 2 When an aide leaves, delete their code the same day.
- 3 Once a month, open the code list and make sure every name still belongs there.
- 4 Glance at the log weekly to confirm the visits you expect are happening.
- 5 Keep a short written list of who has a code, in a safe spot, not on the door.

TIP

The monthly review is the secret. Five minutes once a month catches the stray code nobody deleted and keeps your list matching real life.

This routine also makes the log a better record. When the code list is clean and current, the history reads clearly, because every name on it means something. A messy list with old codes nobody remembers is where confusion creeps in, so a little tidying keeps it trustworthy.

If keeping up with this feels like a chore, especially for a family already stretched by caregiving, it is exactly the kind of thing my Support Plan covers. I check in, tidy the codes, and confirm the log is doing its job, so you do not have to carry it in your head.

21. When a code gives trouble

The usual fixes.

Now and then an aide's code does not behave, and it is almost always one of a few simple things. Before you worry, run through this short list, which solves the great majority of cases without a service call.

- The aide says the code does not work: check the clock. If they are outside the set window, even by minutes, the code will not open.
- The lock's time is off: if the time zone or clock drifted, schedules fire at the wrong hour. Re-check it in the app.
- The code never saved: open the app and confirm the code is really in the list and active.
- The lock is offline: a dropped internet signal can delay a new code reaching the lock. Give it a moment or check the signal.

TIP

If a brand-new code will not work right away, make sure your phone and the lock are both online so the schedule has actually reached the lock. A weak signal at the door is the usual culprit.

The window mix-up is far and away the most common. An aide tries the code a half hour before their window opens, it does nothing, and everyone assumes it is broken. Widen the window a little, or wait for the start time, and the problem disappears. Meanwhile, remote unlock gets them in.

If you have checked all of this and a code still misbehaves, that is a quick one for me. Often I can sort it on a forty-nine-dollar remote screen-share without even coming out, right there in the app with you, so the aide is not left waiting next time.

22. Working with the agency on access

A little coordination goes a long way.

A smart lock works best when the home-care agency knows how it is set up, so there are no surprises when an aide arrives. A short, friendly conversation with the agency up front keeps the access running smoothly and spares everyone a locked-out morning. Most agencies have seen smart locks before and are glad to work with one.

- Tell the agency the door uses a code, not a lockbox, and how the aide will get the code.
- Agree on whether you use one agency code or an individual code per aide.
- Ask the agency to notify you when they assign a new or fill-in aide.
- Confirm who at the agency you call if an aide has trouble at the door.

TIP

Give the agency a single clear point of contact in your family for door access questions. One person managing the codes keeps things from getting muddled.

Share codes with the agency through whatever secure channel they use, not a note left at the door or a text that lingers on a shared phone. Many agencies have a proper way to pass this kind of information to their staff. Using it keeps your codes as private as they ought to be.

It also helps to let the agency know you keep an access log, framed simply as a record for the family's peace of mind. There is nothing adversarial about it. Good agencies welcome the clarity, and it quietly encourages everyone to keep to the schedule, which is exactly what you want for a loved one's care.

23. When to Call Bill

Set up, explained, and kept tidy.

You can set up aide access yourself, and the apps make it reasonably friendly. Where I help is getting it right the first time: a keypad lock chosen well, the schedules sensible, the names clear, the log and notifications turned on, and the whole thing explained so you and your family can manage it with confidence from anywhere. I have been doing hands-on tech work for more than thirty years.

- Managing care for a parent from a distance: I set up codes, the log, and notifications so you can watch the door from anywhere.
- Several aides or a rotating agency to juggle: I get the codes named, scheduled, and tidy.
- A code acting up or an aide locked out: often a quick remote fix.
- Want it all explained in plain words, on a simple card: I do that on every visit.

GOOD TO KNOW

My first visit is a flat ninety-nine dollars. A remote screen-share to fix or add a code is forty-nine dollars. My Support Plan is thirty-nine dollars a month, and it includes keeping your aide codes tidy and your log working all year.

I serve Atwater, Ravenna, Kent, Streetsboro, Aurora, Hudson, Stow, Mogadore, Tallmadge, and the rest of Portage County. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or email bill@billshometech.com. If I am on a job, my booking assistant Sophie can get you scheduled.

If I have helped your family breathe a little easier about who comes and goes from a loved one's door, a quick review means the world to a local one-man shop. You can leave one at g.page/r/CSFv0jbCfFINEAE/review. Thank you, and take care.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

The quick reference for aide access that beats a lockbox. Keep it handy.

- Each aide: their own code, named, never a shared key.
 - Schedule each code to the shift, with a little cushion.
 - Check the log to confirm each visit happened.
 - Aide stuck? Unlock from your phone, then fix the code.
 - Aide leaves? Delete the code the same day.
- 1 Add the code and type the aide's numbers.
 - 2 Name it clearly with the aide and role.
 - 3 Set the recurring shift days and hours.
 - 4 Turn on an arrival notification if you want it.
 - 5 Read the log to confirm the visit.

WATCH OUT

Keep a backup key with a trusted neighbor, never back in a lockbox or under the mat.

WORDS TO KNOW

Plain-English Word List

Lockbox — A small box with a combination that holds a key, letting anyone with the numbers get the actual house key.

Access code — A number an aide types on the keypad to open the lock, which you control from an app.

Recurring code — A code set to work on certain days and shift hours that repeat every week.

One-time code — A code that works for a single visit and then expires by itself, good for a fill-in.

Scheduled window — The hours during which a code will open the door; outside it, the code does nothing.

Access log — The in-app list showing when the door was opened and which code was used; also called the history or activity feed.

Remote unlock — Opening the door from your phone over the internet, useful when an aide is locked out.

Notification — A message sent to your phone the moment a chosen code opens the door.

Agency code — A single code shared by whoever a home-care agency sends, simpler than an individual code per aide.

HIPAA — A health privacy law that binds care providers and agencies, not a homeowner keeping a record of their own door.

Keypad lock — A smart lock with buttons on the outside, so an aide enters a code without needing a phone or app.

Backup key — A physical key kept for when a battery dies or the app stumbles; best held by a trusted neighbor or relative.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

Lockbox vs smart lock

Access for a home-health aide

Key lockbox	Smart lock
• One key, everyone shares • Combination spreads over time • No record of visits • Hard to take access back	• A code for each aide • Works only during the shift • Logs every visit • Deleted in seconds

A smart lock gives control and a record a lockbox never can.

Illustration — a schematic; details vary by device and setup.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Set up an aide code

Four steps in the app

**Name it, schedule it to the shift, then watch the log.**

Illustration — a schematic; details vary by device and setup.

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: **billshometech.com/book** · **bill@billshometech.com**

This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.