

LONG DISTANCE CAREGIVING



You can provide care for a frail elder even when you live some distance away. Here are some helpful guidelines and resources.

Central Massachusetts Family Caregiver Support Program



Montachusett
Home Care
CORPORATION



Central Massachusetts
Agency on Aging



ELDER
SERVICES
OF WORCESTER AREA, INC.



TRI-VALLEY, INC.
"Home With You"

Central Massachusetts Family Caregiver Support Program

The National Family Caregiver Support Program was developed by the Administration on Aging and exists throughout the United States. The Central Massachusetts Family Caregiver Support Program, a cooperative effort of the Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging, Elder Services of Worcester Area, Montachusett Home Care Corporation and Tri-Valley, Inc. serves caregivers in 61 cities and towns.

The Central Massachusetts Family Caregiver Support Program recognizes that caregivers, whether they live in the same building, around the block, or out of state, need access to information, one-to-one assistance, training, respite and support. Caregivers need resources that are flexible, convenient and responsive to their family relationships, culture and language. The goal is to make a number of services available to assist caregivers including: information, resources, referrals, support, training, and outreach.

Caregivers served by this program include:

- Anyone caring for a spouse, parent, other relative or friend who is age 60 or older, or who has Alzheimer's Disease.
- Grandparents age 55 or older caring for a child age 18 or younger.
- Anyone over age 55 caring for a disabled individual who is not their child.

Caregivers are offered:

- Information and resources.
- Assistance accessing supports and services.
- **Free** one-on-one sessions in person, by phone or through email to assist in assessing options, making decisions and solving problems related to their caregiving role.
- Educational materials tailored to meet their specific caregiving needs.
- Group training programs on the social, emotional, health, legal, financial and housing aspects of caregiving.
- A **Caregiver's Scholarship Fund** which provides assistance arranging for and funding short-term respite, to provide a brief period of relief, and supplemental services, such as adaptive equipment, and other resources to complement care.
- A **Caregiver's Guide** filled with information about topics related to caregiving.
- A **Caregiver Organizer**, a handy pocket tool, which can be used for keeping track of an elder's social, medical and legal information. The tool is available in Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian & Albanian as well as online at SeniorConnection.org in French, Portuguese, Polish and Cambodian Khmer.
- A **Long Distance Caregiving Booklet** that provides information to long distance caregivers including help assessing a situation, local resources and websites.
- Group caregiver informational sessions and materials.
- Follow-up.

FROM A DISTANCE ASSESSING THE SITUATION



THE PHONE CONVERSATION

- Listen for warning signs.
- Gently probe for information about the person's health and well-being.

PREPARE TO TRAVEL

- Investigate travel options in advance.
- Be ready to commute when necessary.

IF YOU SUSPECT THERE ARE PROBLEMS

- Plan a non-emergency visit.
- Make the most of your in-home visit.
- Meet the friends, neighbors, faith based organizations and social contacts.
- If possible gather input from these contacts.
- Have copies of keys made, especially door and mailbox keys. Write down the security code if there is an alarm system.



FROM A DISTANCE ASSESSING THE SITUATION

THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

HOW IS THEIR GENERAL HEALTH?

- Do they keep scheduled doctor's appointments?
- How are they getting to the doctor's?
- Are they taking medications as prescribed?
- Do they utilize a weekly pill organizer?
- Are they using any over the counter medications?
- Is alcohol consumption a problem?
- Are there signs of depression, confusion, increasing forgetfulness or personality changes?

HOW IS THEIR GENERAL APPEARANCE?

- Is there an odor related to their personal hygiene?
- Are they well groomed (hair combed, face shaven)?
- Are they wearing clothing appropriate for the season?
- Are their clothes clean and in good repair?
- Are they able to do their own laundry?

FROM A DISTANCE ASSESSING THE SITUATION



HOW IS THEIR HOME KEPT?

- Is the home clean and fairly organized?
- Are home repairs needed?
- Are housecleaning activities becoming too difficult?
- Is yard upkeep or snow removal an issue?
- What is in their refrigerator and cabinets?

HOW SAFE IS THEIR HOME?

- Are there working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors?
- Are there safety hazards (loose rugs, poor lighting, electrical cords, uneven floors, loose handrails, cluttered hallways)?
- Does the bathroom have no slip surfaces and grab bars to minimize the risk of falls?
- Are there burnt pots, pans or surfaces?
- Are the heating and cooling systems in working order?
- Is going up and down the stairs becoming difficult?
- Are there burn holes in the furniture (if they smoke)?
- Does someone trustworthy have a spare key to the home?



FROM A DISTANCE ASSESSING THE SITUATION

HOW IS THEIR MONEY BEING MANAGED?

- Are bills being paid on time (is there unopened mail)?
- Are bank accounts in order?
- Are there any signs of financial exploitation?
- Do mail, credit card statements, or bank accounts indicate any suspicious activity?

HAVE THEY PLANNED FOR LEGAL AND FINANCIAL ISSUES?

- Do they have a will, power of attorney and health care proxy?
- Are their documents accurate and up to date?
- Is a Representative Payee needed (a caregiver who receives government checks for an older person unable to manage money)?

DO YOU KNOW WHERE THEY KEEP IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS?

- Where are their legal, financial and insurance documents located? Are they in a secure place?
- Will they allow you to have a duplicate copy of important documents?

FROM A DISTANCE ASSESSING THE SITUATION



ARE THEY VITAL AND ACTIVE?

- Are mobility problems making it difficult for them to get out or stay active?
- Do they have a social outlet?
- Are they involved in any activities or hobbies?
- Has there been any significant loss in their lives?
- Do they have trouble sleeping at night?
- Do they get any exercise (at home or outside)?

NOTES

HERE IS A LIST OF SOME VALUABLE RESOURCES

- **Senior Centers/Councils On Aging**
- **Elder Service Agencies/Area Agency on Aging**
The Information and Referral departments can provide you with specific contact information on other resources. You can contact the Eldercare Locator at 1-888-677-1116 or www.eldercare.gov to locate the Area Agency on Aging in the elder's area.
- **Disease Specific Associations**
Commission for the Blind, Commission for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing, American Heart & Stroke Association, Alzheimer's Association, Arthritis Foundation, American Cancer Society, etc.
- **Hospitals**
Social Service Department, Discharge Planners, Support Groups.
- **Nursing Homes/Skilled Nursing Facilities**
- **Assisted Living Facilities**
- **Adult Day Health Centers**
- **Religious Organizations**
Parish Nurses and Volunteers.
- **Private Geriatric Care Managers**
Specialists who assist older adults and their caregivers in designing service plans for the elder. This is a fee-for-service option. You can find a private geriatric care manager in the elder's area by contacting www.caremanager.org.
- **Veteran Administration**
Contact your local Veteran's Agent.

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH LOCAL RESOURCES



Navigating the healthcare delivery system and becoming knowledgeable about social service programs can be very confusing. Here are some questions to help you through the process.

QUESTIONS THAT YOU CAN ASK

- What publicly funded services are available in the community where they live?

- Are they the right age and income level to be eligible for these services?

- Is there a professional (case manager) that you can meet with to discuss service options?

- What other alternatives are available for those who do not qualify for income eligible services?

- Are there volunteer programs in the community (transportation, reassurance phone calls, companionship)?

- Is there someone to help manage and monitor the services once they are in place, i.e. a private geriatric care manager or a case manager from an elder service agency?

Prepare to be patient and persistent. Have as much information on hand about your relative's situation as you can.



GETTING IN TOUCH WITH LOCAL RESOURCES

QUESTIONS THAT YOU MAY HAVE TO ANSWER

Personal Information

- What is their full name, social security number, date of birth, address?

- Do they own their own home?

- What is their monthly income?

Medical Information

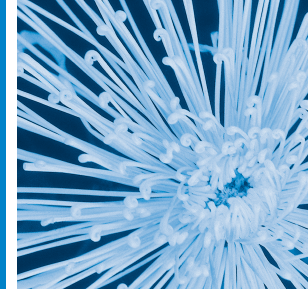
- What is their medical insurance?

- What are their medical conditions (history of cancer, diabetes, stroke, etc.)?

- Who are their health care providers (physician, home health agencies)?

- What are their current medications?

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH LOCAL RESOURCES



- Are they able to take their medications independently?

Activities of Daily Living

- Can they make their own meals?

- Do they need assistance with bathing, toileting or walking?

- Do they need assistance with laundry and housecleaning?

- Do they need assistance managing their finances?

- Are they able to use the telephone?

- Do they need assistance with transportation?

Once you have made the connection with the resources that meet the needs of the person for whom you are caring, it is a good idea to write down who you spoke with, the dates and any follow up that is needed.



CREATING A CAREGIVER PLAN

CREATING A CAREGIVER PLAN

- If possible try to have a meeting of all the significant caregivers with the person who is in need of assistance.
- Work together on a plan for getting the assistance they need.
- Write down the plan and review it periodically.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- Those who are most committed and involved are often more likely to become emotionally and physically exhausted and overwhelmed.
- It is important to identify both positive and negative feelings as a caregiver, and to accept and understand those feelings so you can better cope with them and with the person for whom you are caring.
- It is essential to take care of your own well-being.
 - Find time for your interests.
 - Develop releases such as exercise.
 - Maintain supportive relationships.
 - Join a support group.
 - Manage your time effectively.

- ## NOTES

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FROM A DISTANCE RESOURCES ONLINE

RESOURCES

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

www.aoa.gov Administration on Aging
www.benefitscheckup.org Benefits Check Up
www.medicare.gov Nursing Home Database
www.nahc.org Homecare / Hospice / Medicare Information
www.ncoa.org National Council on Aging
www.nadsa.org National Adult Day Services Association
www.nih.gov/health National Institutes of Health
www.seniors.gov Social Security Information
www.state.ma.us/dph Mass Dept. of Public Health
www.eldercare.gov The Eldercare Locator
www.va.gov/ Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

CAREGIVING RESOURCES

www.aarp.org American Association of Retired Persons
www.caps4caregivers.org Children of Aging Parents
www.caregiver.org Family Caregiver Alliance
www.caregiving.com Helping You Help Aging Relatives
www.caregiving.org National Alliance for Caregiving
www.familycareamerica.com Long Distance Caregiving
www.livhome.com Home Care, Counseling and Care Management
www.nfcacares.org National Family Caregivers Association
www.seniorconnection.org Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging
www.eswa.org Elder Services of Worcester Area, Inc.
www.montachusethomecare.org Montachusett Home Care Corporation
www.tves.org Tri-Valley Elder Services, Inc.

FROM A DISTANCE RESOURCES ONLINE



www.800ageinfo.com Caregiver Resources in Massachusetts

www.lastacts.org End of Life Care

www.alzwell.com Online Support Network

HEALTH RESOURCES

www.alz.org American Alzheimer's Association

www.americanheart.org American Heart Association

www.arthritis.org Arthritis Foundation

www.cancer.org American Cancer Society

www.diabetes.org American Diabetes Association

www.nad.org National Association of the Deaf

www.strokeassociation.org American Stroke Association

www.death-dying.com Online Emotional Support, Information, Tools and Resources

www.mayohealth.org Mayo Clinic

www.healthfinder.gov Disease Information

www.hospicefed.org Information on Hospice Care and Resources

www.intelihealth.com Harvard Medical School/John Hopkins

www.ipl.org Internet Public Library

www.lightship.org Mental Illness

www.lungusa.org American Lung Association

www.merck.com Merck Manual Including Merck Geriatrics

www.rxlist.com RX List Drug Name Index

www.webmd.com WebMD