



Resources to Help Those Caring for a Loved One at Home

Description:

An overview of resources available to people caring for a family member or loved one at home.

Synopsis:

Being a caregiver can be overwhelming, particularly if you are juggling other responsibilities, such as working or raising a family. Knowing where to turn for help can make a difference -- both in the quality of care your loved one receives and in lessening the stress and responsibilities on you. This article provides some of the resources you can turn to for help.

Callout:

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Body:

If you provide home-based care to a loved one, you are not alone. Millions of Americans provide unpaid family care every year.

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Where to Go for Assistance: Elder Care Support

If the person you are providing care for is 65 or older, there are many resources available to you. One of the first stops to make is the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA), which can be found online at www.aoa.gov. The AoA is dedicated to helping "elderly individuals maintain their dignity and independence in their homes and communities."

The AoA also maintains a Web site called the Eldercare Locator (www.eldercare.gov) that can help caregivers find local agencies that provide home and community-based services such as transportation, meals, home care, and support assistance.

Other helpful online resources:

- The Medicare website (www.medicare.gov) details the various types of home health care services that are covered under Medicare and furnishes tools designed to help those in need of care choose home health care providers. Be sure to access the booklet "Medicare and Home Health Care."
- ElderCarelink (www.eldercarelink.com) is a referral service consisting of over 50,000 senior care providers across the United States and includes nursing homes, assisted living facilities, adult daycare, and home care services.

- The Visiting Nurse Association of America (VNAA) website (www.vnaa.org) has a database of visiting nurses in your area. The VNAA is an association of individuals who provide cost-effective health care to the elderly and the disabled.
- If your loved one is a veteran, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (www.va.gov) provides a detailed listing of VA health care benefits. Additional services can be obtained from the nonprofit Disabled American Veterans (www.dav.org), including claims assistance and transportation to VA hospitals.
- The consumer-facing site of the National Association for Home Care and Hospice (www.nahc.org/consumer) offers guidance and resources to help caregivers find services in their area.
- Both the National Cancer Institute (www.cancer.gov) and Cancer.Net (www.cancer.net) have extensive sections devoted to caregivers that include guidance on finding support services, including home health care.

Where to Go for Assistance: Caregiver Support

The National Family Caregivers Association (NFCA) has a wealth of resources for caregivers at its Web site (www.thefamilycaregiver.org), including an online support network and a library of helpful tips on topics ranging from reducing stress to care management techniques. Other resources include:

- The Family Caregiver Alliance (www.caregiver.org) started as a small task force created to assist San Francisco-based caregivers. It has now grown into a national organization dedicated to advancing the development of high-quality, cost-effective programs for caregivers in every state.
- AARP (www.aarp.org) has a number of online communities devoted to caregivers, including those specific to loved ones who are suffering from cancer and Alzheimer's. There is no age requirement to participate in any of AARP's communities.
- The National Alliance for Caregiving (www.caregiving.org) also has online resources to help those who are providing help to others, including its Family Caregiving 101 site (www.familycaregiving101.org), which offers education and support.

The average family caregiver works either full or part-time -- in addition to nearly 20 hours of care per week.* Those responsibilities really add up. So do your best to heed the advice of the many advocacy groups encouraging caregivers to carve out some time to take care of themselves, both physically and mentally.

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