

ELDER CARE UPDATES



**Spring
2002**

www.rochestereldercare.com

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Long Distance Caring What to Do When Your Elderly Relative Lives Far Away

by Karen Witkowicz

Very often in this mobile society, adult children move away to a different location, state or country. The years pass with no major concerns regarding parents or older relatives. However, because the adult children are not in close proximity to their relatives, they often are unaware that extra care is needed because of physical or mental deterioration. Parents also “cover” by telling the children “everything is fine” so they will not worry. Often, the children find out about their parents conditions when they come to visit at holiday or other times during the year. Sometimes a friend or relative calls them to let them know of problems.

There are steps that long distance relatives can take to assure proper care of their loved ones.

Assessment of your parents’ situation. Sometimes, what you hear on the phone is not an accurate picture of what is happening. People perceive things differently. Sometimes a person can stay home with services in place and other times, a move to an alternative setting is needed. Visit if you can as well as talk to friends, relatives and neighbors in the hometown. If you are still uncertain of the total picture and the safety of your relative, arrange for a professional who can be more objective in an assessment.



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What should the assessment include? It should take into account the medical condition and concerns of the elder. What kind of medical treatment, follow-up, and medications are needed? A talk with the doctor is in order. Can your relative manage medications on his/her own? Is your relative able to accomplish shopping, cooking, laundry, cleaning, dressing and bathing independently? Could there be some memory loss, dementia or loss of cognitive functioning? Might the person be depressed? What about transportation? Is the person still able to drive? What are the social opportunities of your relative? Are they able to interact with friends and have fun or are there some barriers that need to be addressed? All of this needs to be taken into account.

Once you know what needs to be done, pull a support network of people together as part of a care

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*“Excellent care for your loved one
. Peace of mind for you.”*

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If you need help making sense out of the maze of choices for elder care, a good option is to call a professional elder care manager. She can help you with the assessment as well as sort through the alternatives. Follow-up is important with any care plan and an experienced elder care manager can ensure proper follow-up as well as be your "eyes and ears" on the scene. If you have more questions about long distance caring, I will be happy to take your call. You do not have to walk this road alone. 1 ..

LONG DISTANCE CARING

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plan. Family, friends, neighbors, religious organizations, clubs are all places to draw people from into the caregiving team. Who can do what? Part of the care plan should be an emergency plan. Who would be the contact?

Familiarize yourself with the community resources in the area and what the costs are. Look over the relative's financial situation. There are agencies that deliver meals and any kind of help in the home as well as adult day services where the person goes outside of the home. There are many residential alternatives as well. ..

Resources For Caregivers

"Eldercare Locator Provides Critical Service for Caregivers, Families:

Long distance caregivers looking for services and agencies to assist their loved ones, relatives or friends who live in another town or state can call Eldercare Locator at (1-800-677-1116). There is an on-line version of Eldercare Locator on the web at www.eldercare.gov .

The website will initially provide consumers with basic contact information about elder service agencies in the state and local area requested by zip code. The site will expand to provide links to the full range of service now available by telephone.

Books:

" **Eldercare for the Millennium** " by Dr. Lisa Mienville and Dr. Bonnie L. Robeson

This is a compassionate and practical guide by people who have lived the elder care experience. Issues discussed include communication, approaching decisions, finances, legal help and living options. ..



Elder Care Solutions

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