

Caregiver's Corner

Caring From A Distance: Developing A Plan

(NAPSA)—No matter what modes of transportation are available to you, nothing shortens the distance when you find yourself in the role of caregiver—especially if you're trying to care for a family member from afar.

According to the National Alliance for Caregiving, some 34 million Americans are providing care to older family members—and 15 percent of them live one hour or more away from the person for whom they are providing care.

These “long-distance caregivers,” in many instances, are employed and have dependent children of their own. In some circumstances, due to physical distance and/or constraints, the caregiver may be unable to provide everyday hands-on care, but is responsible for arranging for paid care and coordinating needed services.

What You Need To Know

As a long-distance caregiver, you will need to determine if you will be the sole, main or primary caregiver or if you will share the role with other relatives or friends who live closer to your family member. Being a distance from your loved one does not preclude you from being the primary caregiver, but it may take a bit more ingenuity.

As a first step, an assessment of your loved one's care requirements is essential. The assessment should include both the current medical diagnosis and prognosis and an evaluation of the individual's need for assistance. You will have to differentiate between assistance with the Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs):

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A Series of Guides from MetLife in Cooperation with the National Alliance for Caregiving

Long Distance Caregiving

About the Subject

Advances in transportation have made us a very mobile society. People may move from place to place for a variety of reasons: to continue their education, to start a new position, to retire to a warmer climate. An adult child may move to another state to start a new job or may be transferred to another location by his or her employer. Age is not a deterrent to this mobility. In fact, within the last decade, the number of people aged 65 and older that have moved from one state to another has increased 65%. While some may have moved to be closer to children, others may move to a location that more suits their retirement needs. For many people this means that family is extended not just by marriage and the addition of new members, but by actual physical distance from one member to another. It could mean that your mother may now be in the Carolinas while you're still living in Chicago.



MetLife

Caregivers face many challenges on their search for the best care and make decisions about how best to help loved ones.

MetLife offers assistance—a series of guides, articles, personal financial suggestions and more—from a variety of people-related products.

Caring for an aging relative can be a challenge when you live far away, but there are tools to help make necessary arrangements.

- ADLs include bathing, dressing, toileting, eating and transferring from place to place (e.g., bed to chair).

- IADLs are supportive care activities such as laundry, meal preparation, shopping, managing finances, housekeeping and transportation.

The assessment must also include an evaluation of your family member's cognitive status, including his or her memory, judgment and ability to make decisions.

While a care recipient's needs will change with time, the initial determination of the extent and type of assistance your family member may require and the resources you will need to provide the care are critical to beginning the planning process. The assessment process may involve input from a variety of sources, both

informal and formal. Making regular visits to aging parents or other relatives is perhaps one of the most effective ways to assess their abilities and any changes that may be occurring over time.

Geriatric Care Manager

One option for a long-distance caregiver is the use of a geriatric care manager (GCM). A GCM is a professional specializing in the needs assessment and arrangement of services for older people. They are usually nurses or social workers. The GCM can:

- make an initial assessment of needs;
- suggest options for meeting identified needs;
- provide referrals to local resources; and
- arrange for services to be implemented.

You may find a GCM through the local senior center, Area Agency on Aging, elder law attorney or on the professional GCM Web site: www.caremanager.org. Be sure to check references and determine what licenses or certifications the care manager may have. Find out the cost of the various services and determine how they are billed.

Learn More

Helpful information can also be found in a free booklet called “Long Distance Caregiving” from the MetLife Mature Market Institute and the National Alliance for Caregiving.

For a copy, you can call (203) 221-6580, e-mail maturemarketinstitute@metlife.com, visit www.maturemarketinstitute.com or write MetLife Mature Market Institute, 57 Greens Farms Road, Westport, CT 06880.