

Working with a Geriatric Care Manager

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Working with a Geriatric Care Manager

While services for older adults are expanding, researching options can be time-consuming and expensive. And often, circumstances require that decisions be made *now*. Family members may live at a distance...and even if they live nearby, they may be overwhelmed with juggling careers, children and other responsibilities. They may not be able to do all that is required, and the older adult may feel uncomfortable with increasing dependence on family members. A care manager can help.

Money spent for the services of a care manager can save money in the long run. The care manager helps with cost containment by matching the person with the appropriate level of care; helping avoid the use of unnecessary services; ensuring the use of lower-cost options which are available through insurance, public programs and community-financed services; and monitoring the situation, making changes as necessary.



What is a Geriatric Care Manager?

Most professional care managers have experience either in nursing or social work, and special training in gerontology, social work, nursing or counseling. Many are members of professional associations and are certified or licensed in their field. A good care manager “knows the ropes” of eldercare, and knows the available services in the area. He or she may be consulted for short-term solutions in a crisis situation...for longer-term planning...and for ongoing monitoring.

What Services Can a Care Manager Provide?

Assessment—The relationship with client and family usually begins with a thorough evaluation of the person’s status and needs. The care manager may interview the person, and family members; evaluate the person’s physical and mental condition, social situation and daily activities; identify problems; and provide a writ-

ten report of the assessment and plan of care.

The care manager may also review medical records; consult with the person's physician; visit the person's home; make recommendations for care options and services; and determine eligibility for services.

Arranging for

services—Once the initial assessment is complete, the care manager can also help arrange for the needed services and see that they are delivered.

If the person is *moving to a long-term care facility, assisted living community or board and care home*, the care manager can help match the person with an appropriate program. The care manager may also assist with the move.

If the person is *staying at home*, the care manager can screen, arrange for and monitor home support services, such as meal delivery services, chore services, and home nursing.

Monitoring and follow-up—A care manager may also follow up and monitor to see that necessary services are being effectively and professionally delivered.

Act as liaison—When family members live at a distance, the care manager may visit the person's home and contact family regularly by telephone, keeping them apprised of their loved one's well-being, and alerting them to any problems.

Advocacy—The care manager can assist in discharge planning, proper placement, and rehabilitation choices, working with the health care provider and insurance company.

Offer counseling and support—Some care



managers can provide family or individual counseling.

Miscellaneous services—A care manager might also be called upon to provide money management, or to serve as legal guardian or conservator.

How Can I Locate a Care Manager?

Senior Information and Referral, a government-supported service, is available in all communities. The phone number should be in the local phone book. You may also use the

National Eldercare Locator, a service of the U.S. Administration on Aging, at their toll-free number (1-800-677-1116) or online at www.eldercare.gov.

Information about care managers may also be found through *the discharge planning department of a local hospital*.

The *National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers* website, www.caremanager.org, includes a list of members.

How to Choose a Care Management Professional

Questions to ask include:

- What are the person's qualifications, education and experience? Is the person licensed?
- Can the person provide relevant references (from physicians, hospital discharge planners, public agencies, or others)?
- How long has the person been providing care management services?
- Is the person familiar with local resources?

- How will assessment and follow-up be handled? Can the care manager visit the older adult in his or her home? How will the provider keep in contact with family?
- Does the care manager accept placement fees when making referrals to specific providers? If so, will he or she be objective in making recommendations?
- What are the charges, and what services are covered? What does an initial assessment cost, and what does that cover? Will the person give an estimate of hours that will be required?
- How soon can the care manager conduct an assessment? Is he or she available on-call?

Do not hesitate to interview several candidates before selecting the person that the older adult and family think is the best choice.

How Much Will It Cost?

Government-supported public care managers are available. But keep in mind that the large caseloads of public care managers (an average of 85 clients, versus 22 for private care managers) makes it difficult to receive individualized attention. For an increased level of personalized service, work with a private geriatric care manager, if possible.

Private care managers charge either a flat fee or hourly for an initial assessment (which runs on average anywhere from \$100-\$500, depending on the person's rate and what is involved). After that, the care manager will probably bill on an hourly rate, including travel time (between \$60-\$100 per hour).

For some low-income seniors, care management services may be available through Medicaid or other government programs. Some forms of long-term care insurance also reimburse for care management services. However, clients and families most often pay costs out-of-pocket.

My Notes: