

FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT NETWORK
FOR FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS WHO HELP OR CARE FOR OLDER ADULTS

An employed family caregiver has a minimum of three jobs: 1) self-care; 2) work duties; and, 3) helping or caring for an older adult. For the family caregiver who has a spouse and/or children, there is the fourth job of caring for these family members.

Whether family caregiving means periodically helping, hands-on care or concern about an older adult who lives in an assisted living or nursing home facility, there are demands on your time. It may involve coordinating older adult care services or medical appointments, going to medical appointments with your older adult, planning for future care and handling minor and major emergencies. This likely takes time away from work or creates “presenteeism”.

Most employers are aware that caring for older adults is common and growing. If caregiving is becoming a personal concern, speak to your supervisor or your company’s human resources professional about the company’s policy for making phone calls during work hours, taking time off for caregiving duties and what you are required to disclose when taking personal and sick days or hours. Also, check out your rights under the Family Medical Leave Act if it is available to you as an employee. Depending on your situation, you may want to discuss your caregiving situation with your immediate supervisor or human resources manager. Talk with them about possible options for time and flexibility.

Being organized helps you prioritize what needs to be done and may reduce the time dedicated toward actual care which allows you time to enjoy being with your older adult, family and friends. It also indicates to your employer that you are trying to control the effect of caregiving on your job. Be sure as part of your organization to include time for your personal interests. A family caregiver can only be good for everyone else – family members and work – if self-care is a priority. As they say on airplanes, put your own oxygen mask on before helping others!

Here are some tips that may be helpful in keeping up with personal care and family caregiving:

- **Make “to do” checklists:** Having things in writing can often help keep a person organized and make duties that seem “larger than life” less stressing and more manageable. Also, if a worry wakes you up in the middle of the night, **try writing it down.** You’ll feel free to go back to sleep knowing that you will see the reminder in the morning.
- **Ask for help:** Don’t be afraid to ask siblings, other family members or caring friends to help you with caregiving duties. Also, **communicate** to your spouse and children the type of help you need to take time for caregiving, and meet your family and personal needs. A family meeting can be helpful with discussion and acceptance of tasks to prevent family conflict. Professionals are available to facilitate if necessary.

- **Pursue community services or pay for help:** If your or your older adult's budget allows, check out paid in-home care services or having a geriatric care manager coordinate care. Delivered meals and other community services – free and for pay – may help. **Contact the Family Caregiver Support Network** to discuss your help options **414-220-8600**.
- **Make your older adult aware of your limitations:** The older adult you care about may not realize constraints you may have at work. Communicating this helps eliminate confusion and potential resentment about why you can or can't help in certain circumstances.
- **Group appointments and help duties:** If you group, for example, medical and hair appointments in an afternoon, or help with groceries and housekeeping for a few hours an evening or weekend day, caregiving duties may seem less demanding of your time. Grouping time may also make it easier to coordinate efforts with your employer and other family members.
- **Consider assisted living, adult day care or other care facilities:** Depending on the level of care needed, there are many assisted living housing and adult day care options available. Moving to housing with care services or using adult day services can be a positive change for an older adult, including more socialization and activities providing mental stimulation that wouldn't happen being isolated at home. It can also reduce your caregiving duties and give you peace of mind.
- **Respite Care – take a break, find relief and take care of you!** Family caregivers use respite in many ways depending on your needs. Take a vacation, go to a movie, visit with grandchildren, whatever you haven't had time to do because of your caregiving duties. You need to be healthy for everyone's benefit.

All care options should be coordinated with the consent and advice of your older adult when possible. It is better that you and your older adult approach caregiving as a team, rather than dictating care. No matter how stressed you get, it is important to have respect for your older adult's individuality and desire to be as independent as possible. We never parent a parent. They catch onto this through the tone of your voice, along with their loss of decision making. This can be demeaning and disrespectful. It can cause depression and helplessness. If you feel like you are "Parenting", you are now in the role of a caregiver. Caregiving calls for an informed, educated adult relationship. Reach out and ask for help.



Caregiver Support

**FAMILY
CAREGIVER
SUPPORT NETWORK**

(414) 220-8600

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