

Catholic Caregivers

'Caregiving is pro-life!'

Hiring a Case Manager

Are you having trouble keeping track of everything that's happening? Are you afraid you may drop one of the many balls you're trying to juggle? Consider hiring a case manager to help you out.

Typically, a geriatric case manager, sometimes called a care manager, is a social worker or a registered nurse who has been trained to work with elderly clients. This person can assess your care-receiver's needs and design an individualized care plan. He or she knows resources in your area and the eligibility criteria for programs and will be able to assist you and your loved one with accessing whatever services are needed.

If you're a long-distance caregiver, this person will continue to monitor your loved one's condition on a regular basis and report to you any changes or concerns.

If you and your care-receiver live in the same area but the demands of your job or your family make it difficult, if not impossible, for you to help as much as you would like to at this time, or if you simply don't know where to start to look for the variety of services your loved one needs, hiring a case manager might be the solution.

Some social service agencies offer case management as part of their programs. You can also look into hiring a private case manager. There will be a cost. There may be a fee for the initial assessment and/or family consultations. Fees vary widely. It pays to shop around. The most expensive is not necessarily the one that will best fit your loved one's needs. And, of course, the most reasonable might not work either.

If you decide to hire a private case manager, do your research. Find several individuals and check out what each has to offer. See if he or she is affiliated with a national organization that monitors case managers (such as the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers). What about the case manager's education and other credentials? Request a list

of references. Does he or she have a social work or a medical focus? Will your case manager be in contact with you on a regular

basis, or are you supposed to check in with him or her?

And, of course, bring your care-receiver in on the process as much as possible. Let him or her meet this person. If they clash, it's probably not going to work with that individual.

Keep in mind that a case manager will not clean your care-receiver's house, drive Dad to the doctor, or give Mom a bath, but a manager will set up services to ensure those things get done.

If your care-receiver's condition worsens, services can be added (even to the point of placement in a nursing home). If it improves, those services can be modified or dropped.

A good case manager can be your eyes and ears. This person can make sure your loved one is receiving the care that's needed and put your mind more at ease, too.

Free Caregiver Prayer Book

For a free copy of "The Little Book of Caregiver Prayers" contact the Friends of St. John the Caregiver at 1-800-392-JOHN (5646); write to FSJC, P.O. Box 320, Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043; or send an e-mail to MonicaDodds@YourAgingParent.com.

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