

Caregivers for Older Adults: A Practical Guide for Families



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Introduction

As people age it is likely that they will require more assistance with daily activities from family members or even a hired caregiver. There are many benefits to having a designated caregiver for your loved one. Caregivers play a vital role in promoting senior independence and preventing loneliness. They take on significant responsibilities that ease potential stress for family members while ensuring the older adult's safety. In addition to providing direct care, caregivers may also manage household tasks, offering further support. Given the time they spend with the older adult, they often develop close, trusting relationships with both the individual and their family, providing valuable emotional support.



By spending a large amount of time with older adults, caregivers can encourage them to maintain their hobbies and assist them with organizing their calendar. This helps to make sure that appointments are not missed, while they continue to maintain their social lives as they age. Caregivers act as a supportive, reliable person in their lives that will advocate for their best interests.

This guide will not only help you better understand the role and responsibilities of a caregiver, but it will also give tips on how to find the right caregiver for your family member's needs.

Caregiver Responsibilities

Caregivers assist older adults multiple ways on a daily basis, though they are often not recognized as frequently as they should be for the extensive list of responsibilities they have. In many cases, caregivers assist with managing health conditions, transportation, and bathing. They also act as an advocate for seniors and frequently can provide emotional support. Caregivers have a rare opportunity to not only provide health assistance, but also become a friend and close confidant for your family member. They take the added stress away from family members with the daily help that they provide on an emotional, physical, and environmental level.

When considering a caregiver for your loved one, it's important to remember the full scope of services that a caregiver may provide. Here are 4 ways that a caregiver may assist seniors that may not immediately come to mind.

Category 1: Managing Health Conditions

- Understanding health conditions specific to the older adults they support enables caregivers to provide informed and effective care
- Monitoring and documenting any changes in health ensures that doctors and family members stay fully informed
- Attending medical appointments with older adults helps caregivers facilitate communication and continuity of care
- Taking thorough notes during doctor visits allows caregivers to provide accurate updates to family members and support informed decision-making

Category 2: Logistics

- Driving the older adults that they care for to appointments, activities, and grocery shopping
- Assisting with simple tasks such as bathing, dressing, and grooming

Category 3: Managing the Household

- Overseeing the completion of household chores.
- Handling grocery shopping and meal preparation
- Taking on daily chores like vacuuming, cleaning the restrooms, and keeping the kitchen space clean
- Maintaining safety in high-traffic areas by keeping them well-lit, loose rugs and electrical cords are secured, and floors are regularly cleaned
- Some caregivers may even manage lawn care and other outdoor maintenance

Category 4: Emotional Support/ Advocating

- Serving as a confidant and act as a form of companionship for the seniors they care for
- Acting as a trusted source of advice for families regarding their loved one's health, as they are the person that is with them consistently
- Helping families make accommodations for their family member and help support their decisions
- Encouraging senior independence and ensure that their voice is being heard by their family and medical professionals
- Communicating effectively with doctors, nurses, and family members to make sure the senior's needs are met



How Caregivers Promote Senior Independence

Having a caregiver for the senior in your life can help support your family member's overall independence as they age. Caregivers encourage participation in various activities that help prevent senior loneliness and sedentariness. They also help maintain safe environments, enabling seniors to move freely throughout their living areas without the worry of hazards potentially causing life altering injuries.

Safe Environments

- Caregivers are actively ensuring there are no potential hazards in the senior's everyday environment, helping them to move freely without assistance
- Checking that all pathways are clear, rugs and electrical cords are secured, and that floors are clean

Retaining Dignity

- Allowing seniors to participate in decision-making processes for everyday things is the first step in making them feel like they still have control over their independence
- Asking if they would like assistance before helping can be a way for caregivers to gain their respect and foster open communication

Socialization

- Caregivers help promote senior independence by encouraging them to continue to invest time in their hobbies and assisting them in coordinating an activity calendar that aligns with other appointments
- Assisting with an active social life that can help seniors maintain their independence, foster new relationships, and combat feelings of loneliness
- Caregivers have the unique opportunity to not only provide assistance for seniors, but to also be a friendly companion, engaging them in meaningful conversation with older adults in order to learn about them and provide them with more tailored care specific to their needs

Choosing the Right Caregiver

As seniors age it becomes harder for them to maintain their independence. There may come a time when they require assistance with daily activities. When this time approaches it is important to find a caregiver that your family can trust with your loved one. Deciding between private care, a care agency, or an assisted living home is a big decision. This article will outline a few of the things that need to be considered when choosing the right caregiver for your family member. Thorough background checks and research for both agencies and private care are recommended, as well as ensuring your new chosen caregiver has the right traits like reliability, clear communication skills, and the ability to be detail oriented.

Agency Care

- more information available regarding experience
- record of previous patient reviews
- wider variety of care options and licenses
- more safeguards in place, helping with reliability standards
- may have a higher cost

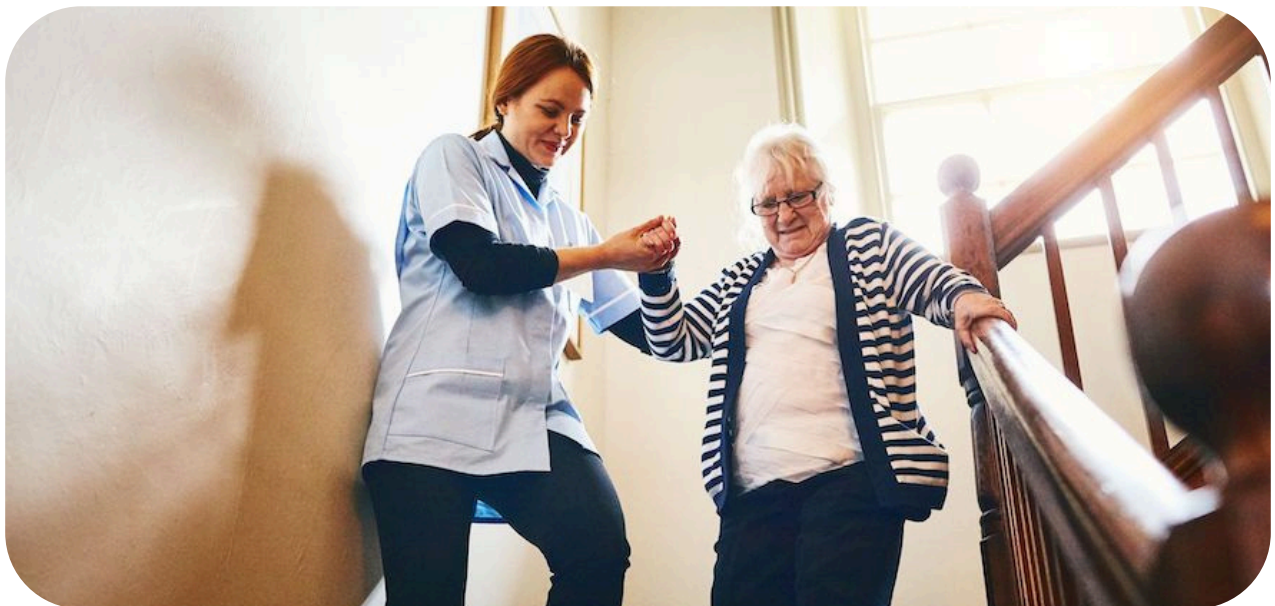
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Private Care

- strong caregiver/client relationships due to one-on-one consistency
- gives flexibility
- hiring process can be more involved due to lack of readily available information
- may be less expensive than agency care

The Right Skill Set

- ☐ Strong communication skills
- ☐ Clear background check and reliable references
- ☐ Organized, detail oriented, and trustworthy
- ☐ Patient, empathetic, and positivity
- ☐ On the go problem solving skills and quick thinking
- ☐ Scheduling flexibility and reliability
- ☐ Able to coordinate multiple appointments and social engagements



How UDS Helps

UDS serves most of Pennsylvania. We pride ourselves in being with you every step of the way, and making ourselves available for any questions and guidance.

Job Opportunities- UDS offers job opportunities for people looking to make a difference in a person's life by taking on the role of a caregiver. All employment opportunity requests should be submitted to the [UDSF Human Resources office](#).

Independent Living Services- offers in-home senior care services for Lancaster, Schuylkill, and Carbon Counties in Pennsylvania that help older adults maintain their independence with the help of a caregiver. ILS has over 35 years of experience in a wide range of home care services for older adults. Some of their common services are bathing, medication reminders, companionships, transportation support, prescription pick-ups, and housekeeping services.

UDSF welcomes your comments, questions, and requests. Use the contact form below to get in touch with us, and we'll get back to you as soon as possible. If you need immediate assistance, feel free to call us at **(888) 837-4235**.

Whether You
Have a
Question or
Want to Say
“Hello,”
We’re Here



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