

VISITING ELDERLY LOVED ONES FOR THE HOLIDAYS - SIGNS TO LOOK FOR

Aging Life Care Managers offer insights on how to help

During the holiday season families and friends visit aging loved ones. Frequently this is the time when they discover troubling changes in health, behavior, or physical appearance of their family member. Many will discover their aging loved one now needs more help or attention.

Long-distance caregivers -- those who live a significant distance from a person who needs care -- are turning to professional help for managing the care of their aging family members. A recent survey by the Aging Life Care Association®, shows that over 30% of an Aging Life Care Professional's® case load involves families attempting to coordinate care for a loved one from a distance.

The 382 participants revealed the top reasons why long-distance caregivers seek help from Aging Life Care Professionals®, also known as geriatric care managers. The data shows Aging Life Care Professionals® are contacted most often by long-distance caregivers when:

- There is a crisis or emergency (76%)
- Making a visit sees significant changes in health, behavior, or home maintenance (57%)
- There is a need to explore placement options or relocation (41%)

When family members are visiting their senior family members, they should keep their eyes open to some of the signals to look for indicating a need for attention and possible intervention for the safety of an aging family member.

- Frequent falls or unexplained bruises
- Unexplained weight loss of 10 lbs or more in a 12-month period
- Forgetting to take medication/overdoses of medication/mistakes in taking medication as ordered/abusing medication
- Bizarre or deviant behavior; extreme suspiciousness
- Getting lost while driving or walking
- Loss of interest in social activities/social isolation
- Neglecting to pay bills or cash checks
- Not eating properly or regularly
- Confusion/judgment in question/increased forgetfulness
- New balance or mobility problems and refusing to use cane or walker
- Health complaints/symptoms, but refusing to see the doctor

Caregiver Burnout

- Spouse is overwhelmed or in poor health caring for a dependent spouse
- Family members struggling to meet the needs of their loved ones, exhausted, or overwhelmed

During, or even after, the visit can be a good time to contact a geriatric care manager for a free 30-minute consultation to learn about their services and how they might be able to step-in as the “professional” that the parents will acknowledge and allow to assist them. Often there are boundaries between the parents and their adult children that make it hard to cross into the roll reversal of parents needing help and the adult children being the ones directing the shots. Bringing in a professional puts a little safety buffer in the relationship.

Care managers can be hired to conduct a full assessment and develop a care plan to help solve immediate needs.

To find a care manager in your area, go to www.aginglifecare.org

Source: The Aging Life Care Association™ (ALCA) is the professional organization for Aging Life Care Managers, professionals who have extensive training and experience working with older people, people with disabilities and families who need assistance with caregiving issues. For more information or to access a nationwide directory of professional Aging Life care managers, please visit www.aginglifecare.org.