

Home Management Tips for Caregivers



Cooperative Extension Service

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Caregiving is often an unexpected role for many people. It may occur suddenly or slowly over time as your loved ones decline in health and capacity. This brochure provides suggestions for making this transition more manageable and less stressful for you and your family members. Perhaps you have been confronted with this familiar scenario: Your parents' mail is scattered all over the place. Newspapers are piling up. They seem to be receiving numerous cheap products and lots of magazines. Looking closer you find bills not being paid, second notices or final notices of nonpayment, and/or checkbooks not balancing. When questioned, they seem to be acting secretive about their mail, accounts, telephone calls, and other actions with new "friends." What's going on?

Gather the Family

These are signs that the family needs to become more involved. Your parents need help now. Discuss the observations with family members and then specifically address such serious issues as these:



- What kinds of assistance do they need?
- Who can help them with daily living?
- Who can help them with their daily and long-term finances?
- Who can help them with their medical affairs?
- What resources are family members able to contribute?

Help Organize and Simplify Finances

- Know much money is coming in and out. Where is it coming from and where is it going?
- Put regularly occurring bills (utility, rent/mortgage, newspaper, etc.) on automatic bill payment.
- Locate and organize legal and financial documents such as insurance policies, birth certificates, investment statements, loan statements, etc. so that the information is readily available when needed.
- Create a list of their financial and legal professionals such as attorney, accountants, insurance agents, etc. with detailed contact information
- Make sure that estate plans have been prepared and are up-to-date.

Reduce Confusion About Medical Information

- Locate their medical history and keep it up to date. Be sure to include allergies.
- Develop a list of medical professionals, including names, addresses, telephone numbers, and receptionist's names.

- Make a list of all medications, what they are for, what the correct dosage is, and when they should be taken. Get rid of medications that have expired or are no longer needed.
- Make a list of medical equipment and supplies needed.
- Help them create and utilize a calendar for appointments as well as for intake of medications.
- Verify that there is a current advance healthcare directive.



Protect Against Identity Theft and Fraud

- Remove anything they don't need on a regular basis from their wallet (Social Security card, membership cards for every store, etc.). Put these in a safe place.
- Sort the mail with them and shred applications for new products (credit cards, loans, subscriptions, etc.).
- Go to the FTC's "National Do Not Call Registry" Website to limit most telemarketers from calling by telephone (home and cell numbers): www.donotcall.gov/.
- Go to www.annualcreditreport.com once a year to help them obtain free credit reports and verify accounts.
- Teach them to be wary of people promoting themselves or their products or services unsolicited.



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