

Spotlight On Caregiving

Long-Distance Caregiving: Reaching Out Across The Miles

(NAPSA)—Advances in transportation have made us a very mobile society. People may move from place to place for a variety of reasons. And age is not a deterrent to this mobility; within the last decade, the number of people aged 65 and older who have moved from one state to another has increased 65 percent.

For many people, however, this means that family is extended not just by marriage and the addition of new members, but by actual physical distance from one member to another. And somehow, no matter what modes of transportation are available to you, nothing shortens the distance when you find yourself in the role of caregiver and you are trying to care for a family member from afar.

Long-distance caregivers must often juggle the demands of two households. They frequently have to rely on reports from others about daily events. Work schedules, business trips and doctors' appointments have to be arranged and then rearranged. Care services have to be coordinated, services paid for and communication channels with family members and service providers kept open. The physical and emotional demands may feel overwhelming at times.

Assessing The Need

As a first step, an assessment of your loved one's care requirements is essential. This should include both the current medical diagnosis and prognosis and an evaluation of the individual's need for assistance. You will have to differentiate between:

- Activities of Daily Living—bathing, dressing, toileting, eating

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Long Distance Caregiving

About the Subject
Advances in transportation have made us a very mobile society. People may move from place to place for a variety of reasons: to continue their education, to start a new position, to retire to a warmer climate. An adult child may move to another state to start a new job or may be transferred to another location by his or her employer. Age is not a deterrent to this mobility. In fact, within the last decade, the number of people aged 65 and older that have moved from one state to another has increased 65%. While some may have moved to be closer to children, others may move to a location that more suits their retirement needs. For many people this means that family is extended not just by marriage and the addition of new members, but by actual physical distance from one member to another. It could mean that your mother may now be in the Carolinas while you're still living in Chicago.



MetLife

Caregivers face many challenges as they search for information and make decisions about how best to provide care to their loved ones. To help meet their needs,

MetLife offers *Since You Care*—a series of guides which provide practical and useful tools on a variety of caregiver-related products.



and transferring from place to place; e.g., bed to chair; and

- Instrumental Activities of Daily Living—laundry, meal preparation, shopping, managing finances, housekeeping and transportation.

Whatever the source of the initial concern, it is important to use whatever resources are necessary to complete the needs assessment. This may include speaking with your family member about the concerns you have or those he or she has raised. You may also gather information from friends or relatives who see your family member more frequently.

Another option for a long-distance caregiver is the use of a Geriatric Care Manager (GCM). This is a professional specializing in the needs assessment and arrangement of services for older people—usually a nurse, social worker or gerontologist. The GCM can:

- make an initial assessment of care needs;

- suggest options for meeting identified needs;
- provide referrals to local resources; and
- arrange for services to be implemented.

Communication Is Key

Communication with your siblings, family members and all others who are assisting or providing care—including any paid care providers—is vital to effective care planning, implementation and monitoring. As the primary caregiver:

- Ask direct questions.
- Do not make assumptions.
- Listen to what others have to say.
- Do not be offended if your request for help is declined. Other family members may be unwilling to help with a particular task, but ready and willing to do something else.

Caregivers face many challenges as they search for information and make decisions about how best to provide care to their loved ones. One good source of information on long-distance caregiving is a free booklet from the MetLife Mature Market Institute called “Long Distance Caregiving.” It is part of the “Since You Care” series of guides created in cooperation with the National Alliance for Caregiving. It includes information, resources and checklists. You can get a copy by calling (203) 221-6580, e-mailing maturemarketinstitute@metlife.com, visiting www.maturemarketinstitute.com or writing MetLife Mature Market Institute, 57 Greens Farms Road, Westport, CT 06880.