

# News Of Older Americans

## Bridging The Gap: Tips For Long-Distance Family Caregivers

(NAPSA)—More than 65 million Americans provide care or have responsibilities for an adult who is chronically ill, disabled or needs help with daily living activities, and one in 10 caregivers lives more than an hour away from the person they're helping. While this distance can complicate the responsibilities of being a caregiver, here are some tips that can help you manage the responsibilities of long-distance caregiving:

### Get Informed

Learn what you can about the condition of the person you're helping, including medical, physical, financial, social, emotional and safety needs. This information can help you anticipate potential issues and prevent a crisis.

### Contacts and Resources

Create a notebook or folder with vital information about health care, social services, contact numbers, financial accounts and other important information. Ask about written permission to receive medical and financial information.

### Find Trusted "Eyes and Ears"

Seek help from people in the immediate community: a next-door neighbor, a doctor or perhaps a case manager. Ask them to check in on the person you're caring for and to be your eyes and ears. Encourage them to call if they see anything that concerns them.

### Make a Medication List

Include all prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vitamins and supplements. Get doses and schedules. Update the list regularly and keep a copy with you.

### Talk About the Future

Find out if the person has an advance directive with health care preferences and, if not, encourage him or her to document those wishes. Make sure you have a copy and you know where a copy is kept.

### Get in Touch and Stay in Touch

Schedule regular calls with doctors and other caregivers to get up-to-date information about



**A person in your life who needs care can get help even if you're far away.**

the condition of the person you're caring for. Consider conference calls, so other relatives can participate in a single conversation.

### Consider Contacting a Program That Can Help

Programs are available to help when you are separated from the person for whom you're caregiving. Through a program called Solutions for Caregivers, for example, nurses provide an objective assessment of the situation, develop a care plan and discuss recommendations with the whole family.

Consider the case of Patti Andersen and her siblings. They had a problem—not with themselves but with their mother, who lived alone, halfway across the country. "Mom was depressed and negative," Andersen said. "I was worried about her burning things on the stove and her losing the house keys."

The Solutions for Caregivers program helped Andersen and her siblings manage their mother's care, and successfully transition her to the comfort and safety of a family member's home. "It offered hard facts and a kind person who was logical at a time of high emotions and anger, who could calm us down and help us understand," Andersen said.

You can learn more at [WhatIsSolutionsForCaregivers.com](http://WhatIsSolutionsForCaregivers.com).

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*Note to Editors:* Although November is National Family Caregivers Month, this article can be useful to your readers at any time.