

# CARING FOR YOUR LOVED ONE



## THE FAMILY MEETING

Caring for an adult family member is a stressful and challenging time for a family caregiver. A family caregiver is often overwhelmed by the amount of tasks, responsibilities, time, and money that is required to help their loved one live in the community. A family meeting is a useful tool that can help in this situation.

### **How Does The Family Meeting Help?**

A family meeting benefits the family caregiver and care recipient in several ways. Family members and trusted friends who participate in the meeting will become better informed about their loved one's condition and status. Everyone will be able to express their points of view, communicate concerns, and discuss ideas to achieve solutions to various problems. Family caregivers become more actively involved in their loved one's care by delegating and sharing tasks and responsibilities. This also decreases the workload placed on a family caregiver. Overall, the meetings help to build understanding and communication between all of the participants.

# **Family Meeting Guidelines**

There are several things to consider before the meeting takes place:

## **Involve the Care Recipient**

The care recipient should be present at the family meeting if at all possible. They may be the most important source of information that you have. Encourage the care recipient to be actively involved in the meeting to the best of his/her ability. It is beneficial for the care recipient to agree to decisions involving his/her care.

## **Plan an Agenda**

Deciding on the critical issues to be discussed at the meeting ahead of time will make the family gathering more organized and efficient. Planning the meeting will reduce the possibility that important topics will be forgotten.

## **Include Everyone Who Wants to Help**

The meeting should include all family members and close friends who want to help the care recipient. If a participant is not able to attend in person, have them call the residence and interact with everyone over a speaker phone.

## **Consider Using a Facilitator**

The presence of a professional to facilitate the meeting may help resolve anticipated disagreements between participants. Aging and Disability Resource Center staff is available to facilitate a family meeting.

## **Write a Plan Summary**

It may be a good idea to write down decisions to ensure that the wishes and needs of the care recipient are addressed.

# The Five Step Decision-Making Process

## 1. Gathering Information

- Medical information
- Financial information
- List of daily needs
- List of tasks that need to be completed
- List of formal support systems (e.g. community agencies, support groups)
- List of family members and friends who want to help

## 2. Formulating Options

- Everyone should brainstorm ideas and write them all down.

## 3. Evaluating Options

- Discuss the pros and cons of each idea.

## 4. Creating the Plan

- Don't be afraid to combine two or more ideas. Be creative to achieve a solution that works.

## 5. Acting on the Plan

- Make the necessary arrangements to jumpstart your plan.
- Establish a trial period to assess how well your plan is working. Another family meeting may be needed.

## **Long-Term Family Benefits**

Everyone can benefit from a family meeting. The meeting will answer many “what if?” questions that family members have concerning their loved one’s care. Uncomfortable issues that have been troubling family members can be addressed and potentially resolved. Family meeting participants will share tasks and responsibilities, which will decrease the stress and the financial burden shouldered by the primary family caregiver. Most importantly, the family meeting allows a care recipient and concerned family members to become active participants in the caregiving plan. The care recipient deserves to have the best quality of life possible, assisted by the people who love them the most. Please consider having a family meeting to make this happen.



**For more information Contact:**

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