

# LONG DISTANCE CAREGIVING



An estimated 11 percent of family caregivers live at least an hour away from their loved one. If you live an hour or more away, you might wonder what you can do to help. Start by understanding options for long-distance caregiving, ranging from coordinating services to providing respite for a primary caregiver.

## WHAT YOU SHOULD BE DOING

1. Develop a good understanding of the person's health issues and evaluate their current needs.
  - a. Can they still drive, pay bills, or walk long distances?
  - b. Are they able to perform routine daily activities like cooking and housekeeping?
  - c. Do they have trouble using the telephone or maintaining proper hygiene?
2. Gather family and friends involved in your loved one's care in person, by phone or by video chat. Discuss your goals, air feelings and divide up duties.
3. Make a team. Appoint someone to summarize the decisions made and distribute notes after the meeting. Be sure to include the loved one in need of care in the decision-making process.
4. Ask for help from people in the community such as: neighbors, old friends and their doctors.
5. Call your person with dementia and the primary caregiver at least once a week.
6. Find ways to help the primary caregiver.
7. Compile notes about your loved one's medical condition and any legal or financial issues. Include contact numbers, insurance information, account numbers and other important details.
8. Put together a list of their prescriptions, over the counter medications, doses and schedule.
9. Go through the house for potential hazards.
10. Stay for a week or weekend to observe the person and the house. Check to see how well your loved one is managing daily tasks.
  - a. Is your loved one able to drive safely, eat regular meals, keep up with personal grooming, and pay his or her bills?
  - b. Is your loved one taking medications as prescribed?
11. Plan ahead for future crisis.
12. Keep planning visits.

## ENVIRONMENTAL MODIFICATIONS:

If your loved one is able to live at home, you might want to perform a few simple environmental modifications that will help making living at home a safer and more comfortable option. Perform a full house check.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Caregivers do not like to ask for help, but they still need it.
- Even if you do not have caregiver skills you still can do other tasks that help the primary caregiver. Pay to have the grass cut or chores around the house done, have grocery's delivered, and organize finances are a few ideas.
- Talk to the primary caregiver ahead of time and find out what they would like done during your visit. Examples cut the grass, rake the leaves, install bath rails, declutter house, etc.
- Allow the primary caregiver time to go out alone and do enjoyable activities.
- Talk to the primary caregiver about arranging in-home care, hire professional caregivers, home health or nursing aides to help with some of the daily tasks.
- Consider implementing tools like video monitors and wearable activity trackers, remote door locks or even electronic pill dispensers that can notify you if someone has taken their medications.
- You may be eligible for time off from work for caregiving under the Family and Medical Leave Act.