



Caregiver Tip of the Month – February 2010

Notes from Area Agency on Aging of North Idaho

Mom can't stay by herself any longer!

Think in terms of a continuum of care. It's not black or white. The choices are much greater than stay home or go to a nursing home. Stages can be planned for -- from a variety of home care to assisted living before nursing home care is ever needed.

- In-home service agencies help with vacuuming, bathing, medications, and can even provide transportation – agency costs usually start around \$16/hour.
- Transportation can be arranged through the KMC Care-a-Van at no charge for local medical appointments. Door to door pickup for hair appointments or shopping can be arranged with the KATS bus - \$1 each way for seniors within certain geographic locations.
- Meals can be delivered to the homes of qualified individuals for a suggested donation amount.
- Coping aids like utensils to aid in eating, grab bars in the bathroom for safety, or ramps to access the home more easily or even lifts to carry her up a staircase to extend her care at home.
- "Respite" care can provide caregivers a much needed break -- friendly visitors at no cost to you, adult day care centers at less than half the cost of in-home care and subsidized programs like the Area Agency's. "Respite" helps the caregiver avoid burnout and provides them time for their own chores, socialization and renewing energy.

Consider resources. Many families have saved for their later years. Many will find it hard to use savings because they come from a frugal generation. Many are amazed at the high costs of care today. Many will find it impossible with their limited incomes and medical costs, to pay for care. Many will need financial help, and many may never ask for it.

Costs will vary in all these instances: Staying at home is usually preferable and less expensive than assisted living or certified family home care--which will range in cost in the thousands of dollars per month. Plan for that later, once care is not able to be accomplished at home.

For those unable to pay, Area Agency on Aging or a home care agency can determine needed services. Discounted services may be available. And if no finances are available, and medically necessary help is needed to stay at home, mom can apply for Health and Welfare assistance. You may contact our office to help you with that application process. Early help at home may avoid a long nursing home stay.

Community agencies try to reach as many people as possible who don't have support systems in place. You can access those agencies from many points:

- If mom has been in the hospital, put together a plan with the discharge planner.
- Contact Area Agency on Aging to understand care options. We provide:
 - Information on local home health agencies, adult day care centers, and many other resources.
 - Access to our services, as well as to other agencies such as Health and Welfare or Senior Health Insurance Benefits Advisors.

How can you help mom?

Best advice: Working with mom, build a network of care for family and friends to step in as needed on a one time or regular basis, and research the resources that may be able to help with particular needs.

You need to plan so no one individual is strained to their limits. Realize mom will need emotional care and planning as you work together. Realize that there is help in the community, but realize that many agencies are strained by limited staff and funding from state and federal sources. It takes a community to care for our aging families—from you to many community services.

Contact Betsy Bullard, Area Agency on Aging, at 667-3179, ext. 222, or email infoassist@aaani.org to find out more about these options or to find Area Agencies on Aging throughout the country. They are good starting places to find resources and answer questions. For expanded caregiver tips go to our website at www.aaani.org and click on Family Caregiving on the left hand side of the home page.