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A 'Care-ful' Plan

by Christina Drumm Boyd, CSA



The Path of the Caregiver

It is 2:45AM and the ringing of a telephone wakes you from a deep sleep. There is a strange voice on the other end of the line stating that your elderly mother is in the emergency room. After arriving at the hospital you learn that your mother can no longer safely live alone.

At this very moment it can feel like you have reached for a single grain of sand, but in return you got the entire beach dumped on you! It is not a matter of if, but when, life calls on us to be the silent hero - a caregiver. The path that you begin to walk can be full of trepidation, confusion and frustration. A rush of emotions and questions often consume the mind of a newly ordained caregiver...

- "Will mom have to go to a nursing home?"
- "Will we have enough money to provide the kind of care she is going to need?"
- "Will Medicare or Medicaid pay for anything?"
- "Is there a Living Will, a Power of Attorney?"
- "What are we going to do with the family house and all of the things that mom and dad have accumulated over the years?"
- "How long will this process take?"
- "How long will I have to be away from work?"
- "Am I making the right decisions?"

If this sounds like a lot to ponder, it is! The U.S. healthcare system can be a very broken road for seniors and their primary caregivers to have to navigate alone. Typically the primary caregiver is given no more than 48 hours notice prior to the discharge of their loved one from a hospital. The hospital social worker or discharge planner hands the caregiver a list of several nursing homes in the area that have availability and then the caregiver is literally on his or her own. Many caseworkers and

physicians either are unable to or don't take the time to discuss feasible care options and most caregivers are not aware that the list they are given may not be the best and definitely not the only options available.

The real question is then where does the caregiver typically go to seek out information?

Perhaps they consult with an elder law attorney. Elder law attorneys definitely provide a valued service, but law is their specialized area and the amount of assistance that they may be able to offer regarding the quality of senior communities, admission processes, associated costs will be limited.

With the help of an attorney the necessary, legal documents are in place for the aging parent, but the caregiver must also figure out how to pay for the necessary long term care. This may lead them to their aging parent's financial advisor. Your financial advisor is a great asset during this process, but his or her knowledge about the best healthcare for your parent may be limited.

Your parent's family doctor may be able to offer some advice, but many are unable to take time from treating patients to tour area senior healthcare communities and, therefore, not be able to offer an option. Because of this, I often advise my clients to consult a geriatric care specialist. Your loved one's physician joins the puzzle that appears difficult to complete.

Under these extreme time constraints (usually 48 hours), caregivers struggle to find quality information and resources for their senior loved one. So, where does one go?

Seven years ago, when I was working as a Director of Admissions for a local senior healthcare community, I was introduced to the "typical" primary caregiver. They would arrive in our lobby daily wide eyed and nervous,



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sleep deprived and living on caffeine.

The caregiver would sit down with me and begin to relay, for the 4th time that day, the series of events that brought them to meet with me. They would explain that the previous nursing homes they visited did not have availability, smelled terrible, were too cost prohibitive or were located 50 miles away from where they lived. The objections were always real, valid and endless.

I did not have the heart to send these haggard heroes away empty handed, and it was at this point in my career that Care Connect of Hampton Roads was born.

It was obvious to me that these caregivers embarked on their journey because of a single healthcare concern for their aging parent, but this single event would have an instant ripple effect on many other areas in both the lives of the caregiver and the senior. I realized very quickly that offering assistance to solve only the healthcare issue would simply not be enough. Caregivers need a one stop shop to offer advice, access to specialized service providers, hands on assistance and advocacy.

When life calls us to be one of the silent



heroes – caregiver - we start down a very complex path and quickly come to the realization that we are not going to be educated on providing care. The curriculum for senior care is rigorous. Take comfort in knowing that many have walked the path before you exposing pitfalls

and shortcuts, and an Elder Care Advisor can walk beside you, in back of you for support or in front of you, securing the way.

The biggest key to success for a caregiver is planning. Don't be affected by the "not me syndrome" when it comes to caring for your aging parent or loved one. Be prepared, expect the unexpected, and consult an Elder Care Manager before a crisis situation occurs, because having a plan in place can make all the difference in the word. 📌

Christina Drumm Boyd is a Certified Senior Advisor and President of Care Connect of Hampton Roads, Inc. which offers a holistic, total care approach to geriatric care management. Care Connect serves both the senior and the family that cares for them by addressing their core concerns... Outliving assets, health and safety and maintaining independence. She can be contacted at 757-232-9121 or at www.careconnecthr.com

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Who does your Family go to when faced with Elder Care issues?



Nephew - David
Defense Lawyer



Uncle - Tom
Stock Broker



Son - Rick
IT Professional



Daughter - Renee
Real Estate Agent



Daughter - Heidi
LPN Nurse

While specialists in their field your family are not experts in piecing together a comprehensive action plan to address immediate and future care needs.



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