

Respite Care – PLAN for it!



Photo credit: Al Schreitmueller

The Caregiver will likely need some respite services now or in the future. This is one of the biggest issues in Caregiving. Caregivers will burn out and require care if they don't take care of themselves. Respite services allow for temporary alternate caregiving so that the primary caregiver can attend to something besides the care recipient. Or in other words, respite means the caregiver can take some time off!

One of the keys to successful respite programs is to evaluate what the caregivers needs are and to address them through a planned program. There are different types of respite depending on how much and how often recharge activities are offered. As an example, the Caregiver Support Meeting might fall at lunch time from 11-1pm every Tuesday at the local Area Agency on Aging. Respite Care during those scheduled hours could make attendance possible. There are several options for Respite Care and the selection depends upon caregiver and care recipient needs.

Examples of caregiver needs:

- Rest needs
- The caregiver has to manage their own life regular activities
- The caregiver has social/support needs that are unmet
- An unplanned urgent event requires immediate time off
- Needs may be period, perhaps Thursday afternoons or in other regular time slots. Include these in the respite plan. –

Examples of Care recipient needs:

- They are relatively independent, but can't manage easily outside the home
- They need assistance with daily living activities like cleaning, cooking.
- They need more care including help bathing, eating, moving about.

The Respite Care should provide the caregiver appropriate blocks of time to meet their needs while addressing the level of independence that the care recipient will need during the respite period. Note

that circumstances change, and the Respite plan should take that into account if the Respite period is in the future. Yes, this is difficult to do, but to be a successful caregiver, one must anticipate and have some backup plans. One of the more beneficial steps a caregiver can take is to participate in a caregiver support group. Groups exist for aging and disability, Traumatic Brain Injury, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and all kinds of other challenging life events. These groups serve in a number of ways. Participants can get an emotional connection when they feel isolated by caregiving activities. There may be pent up resentments that can be released in the safety of these groups in a constructive way. The group reinforces the idea that others share many of the same issues. Moreover, they have dealt with these issues already and have wonderful ideas as well as resources to recommend.

Respite – types

- **In-Home Respite Care** This type of care is provided in the home of the care recipient. It is very important to know all the things required to be done while the primary care giver is gone. When interviewing respite care personnel, they need to be able to provide all the care items on the list. The caregiver support group may be able to provide specific names of people who have been successfully used in the past, as well as tip on what to look for in specific situations. Local government agencies may have lists of approved care givers who provide certain levels of support. Further, they may be able to refine the requirements and help in selection. An agency may be recommended which has a pool of pre-screened individuals who have passed criminal, background and reference checks, and who match the skills needed. There are many facets of selecting the right support, and it is best to do this ahead of time, when the need can be anticipated and alternatives thoroughly researched. The worst situations arise when the future is ignored, an “emergency” arises, and the first possible alternative found must be taken.

- **Out-of-Home Facility Respite Care** There are many diverse needs and specialized facilities may be available close by to address these requirements. You or your care advisor may be able to tailor a program which can be managed by a facility for a few hours, days or even weeks. These can be non-medical or provide medical components of care and allow an extended break. A caregiver may have a trip or other demand that can be possible with these services. Often the State Aging Unit or Area Agency on Aging (AAA) can be very helpful in getting the caregiver pointed in the right direction. Other agencies for specific disabilities may be involved in the care plan and they will usually know a good information or referral source. In some cases Respite Programs may have some financial assistance available. National Council on Aging has a Benefits Checkup program at www.benefitscheckup.org or your local agency may be able to provide “Options Counseling” support. The 2016 Genworth Financial Cost of Care Survey of nursing home, assisted living, and related services costs estimated the median national averages for costs: - Private Room Nursing Home: \$253/day - Semi Private Nursing Home Room: \$225/day - Home Health Aides: \$127/day - Adult Day Care Services: \$68/day. Survey data was taken in April 2016.

Tags: Respite, Sitter, caregiver, break, rest, breather, hiatus, relief, time off, time out, Adult Day Care