

Geriatric Care Managers

Sometimes, especially when caregivers are separated by great distance from their elderly relatives, it helps to have someone to whom you can turn who can help arrange for the elder's care and safety. Geriatric Care Managers (GCMs) are becoming an increasingly popular solution to the problems that arise with long-distance care.

GCMs are professionals who specialize in helping the elderly and their families. They offer a wide variety of services, including crisis intervention, counseling, care management, housing management, guardianship, money management, advocacy, referrals and advice. Typically, they do not provide the hands-on care themselves, but they help in arranging and coordinating care—and monitoring a care plan once it has been implemented.

GCMs have college degrees—often Master's degrees—and significant experience in working with elderly clients. They come from various backgrounds—including nursing, social work and psychotherapy—and the services they offer vary according to their professional backgrounds. All GCMs, however, are committed to assisting elders maintain a high quality of life, independence and safety.

Who Needs a Geriatric Care Manager?

Adult children or other caregivers who live far away from an elderly relative are increasingly using the services of GCMs to help manage the relative's day-to-day care. GCMs provide a consistent contact for family members, and they can do everything from creating an overall care plan to intervening in case of a crisis or emergency.

Attorneys also sometimes rely on GCMs to evaluate a client's situation in a nursing home or assisted living

facility. Trust officers or other financial planners also use GCMs to create workable, cost-effective plans of care, and doctors or other health care professionals often rely on GCMs as intermediaries between a patient and the health care system.

Paying for a Geriatric Care Manager

GCMs bill their clients privately on a fee-per-service basis. The services provided by GCMs are not covered by Medicare or Medicaid, but some private insurance policies may cover the cost. Check with your policy to find out if it covers this kind of service. Even if you have to pay for a GCM's services out-of-pocket, however, the work they provide in arranging for cost-effective care—and easing the worries of family members—can make the initial costs well worth it.

Finding a Geriatric Care Manager

As you look for a GCM, you'll want to interview several in your elder's community so that you can find the one that best suits his or her needs. During these interviews, ask about background, services, qualifications and areas of expertise. Also look for someone who you can get along with; after all, this person will be someone you'll be working with closely over the next several weeks, months or even years. Make sure to check references and their professional reputation.

To get a list of GCMs in your elder's community, check with local hospitals, your Area Agency on Aging, or contact the National Association of Geriatric Care Managers or visit the association's website at www.caremanager.org.

Geriatric care managers are a good option for caregivers who live far away from their elderly relative. GCMs offer a range of services that can help develop, implement and monitor a complete care plan.

