

Creating a Care Plan

As a caregiver, you will face many challenges and problems. A care plan will help you map out what needs to be done, when and by whom. It will also help to relieve stress and anxiety, so that you can focus on the problems and issues at hand. Care plans may cover a wide range of concerns and problems, or they can focus on one particular problem at a time.

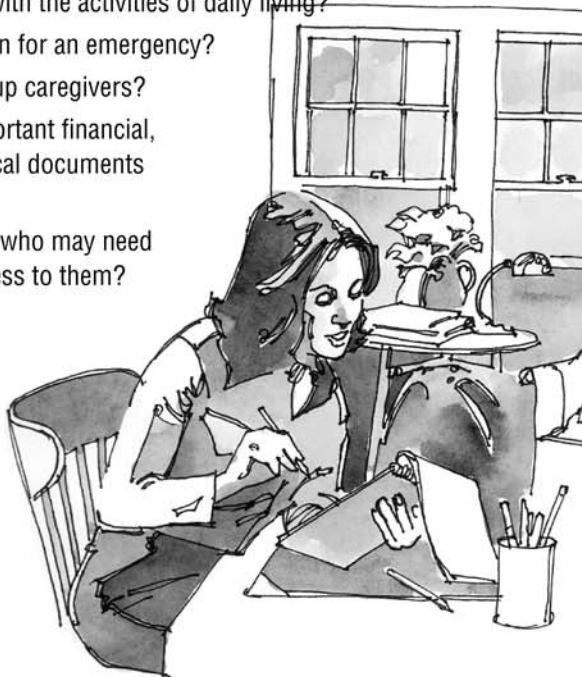
When creating a care plan, work with both the care recipient and other family members or friends to get as much input as possible into the decision-making process. This way, no one will feel left out and everyone will share some of the responsibility for the outcome.

What a Care Plan Can Include

A care plan can include anything that you want it to or need it to. Here are some suggestions:

- Who will care for my relative, and when?
- What kind of care is needed, and when?
- How will expenses be paid?
- Who will make what decisions and be responsible for what specific duties?
- Who will handle bills?
- Who will help with transportation?
- Who will help with meals?
- Who will help with the activities of daily living?
- What is our plan for an emergency?
- Who are back-up caregivers?
- Where are important financial, legal and medical documents stored?
- Does everyone who may need them have access to them?

When putting together a care plan, research available alternatives and options, then work with both the care recipient and other family members to make decisions.



CARE PLANS CAN BE CREATED IN FOUR STAGES

Stage 1: Evaluate the Situation.

What problems is your elderly relative having? What kind of help does he or she need? What are the specific symptoms of his or her illness? What are the problems and benefits of the current living situation? What sorts of problems are likely to arise in the future? Rank the problems that your elder is facing in order of importance or difficulty: transportation, personal care, meals, bill-paying, etc.

Stage 2: Research.

Find out as much information as you can about available alternatives and options. To help guide you, find local, regional, and national groups devoted to aging, elder care, and the illnesses of aging. Talk to doctors, therapists, and social workers to get advice and information. Find out what kind of help is available in your community—meals on wheels, senior centers, support groups, transportation services or hospice services.

Stage 3: Analyze.

After you have gathered all the available information, sit down with your elder and other family members and analyze your options. Look at all of the options and weigh their benefits and costs. Usually, there is no perfect solution; rather, it will be a matter of choosing what works best from the options available.

Stage 4: Decide.

In conjunction with all the others involved, make decisions and act on them. Go through your list of problems to be solved, and decide what can be done to alleviate or solve them. Although everyone might not agree with all the decisions, it is important that you work together, with everyone's input, to come up with feasible solutions.