

# Planning Ahead for Elder Care

Planning is a vital stage in the elder care process. Unless we devote some time to planning for the future, we will not be prepared for the difficult decisions that inevitably lie ahead.

Remember—no one can predict the future; things will happen that you have not predicted. Thus, perhaps the most important thing to do is to plan for the unpredictable. What is the worst that can happen? What will you do when or if it does?

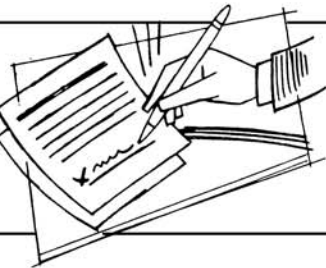
If at all possible, involve your elders in the planning process. They can contribute to their own future, and will feel loved and valuable. This will also give you some idea of their needs, wants and expectations for themselves and their lives.

Here are a few guidelines you can use in the planning stages:



## Establish Goals

Work on deciding what needs to be done now, what will need to be done in the future and why. These goals can be financial, medical, nutritional or related to living arrangements—whatever you and those who need help decide is critical. A clear set of goals will be invaluable as you help to form a plan for care.



## Get it in Writing

Write down the goals and plans, as well as any other information that comes out of these early discussions. Timelines are helpful.

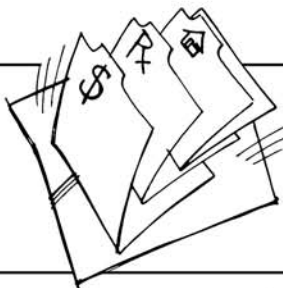


## Create a Support System

A support system of relatives, friends, neighbors, medical professionals and clergy will make the inevitable ups and downs of the road ahead more manageable for all involved.

## Research

Spend time in the library, on the Internet and talking to professionals to understand all the aspects involved in elder care. Researching everything may seem to take a long time—but in the long run it will save time, as well as money and worry.



## Organize

Organize and prioritize all financial, medical and other important information so that all parties can access it easily and quickly.

## Locate Resources

Contact agencies that offer services and determine eligibility, timing, etc.

## Understand Finances

Agree beforehand on who will pay for what, when and how. Finances can be one of the most difficult subjects to discuss with an elderly relative, but they are also one of the most important. Whether or not you are granted power of attorney over that person's finances, you will most likely be helping to make some of the financial decisions.

