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LOS ANGELES CAREGIVER RESOURCE CENTER
A Program of the USC Family Caregiver Support Center

FAMILY CAREGIVER CHECKLIST

Below is a checklist of suggestions that will help you prepare for your role as a family caregiver and help prevent caregiver burnout. Each of these points are further explained in the pages that follow.

Familiarizing yourself with these caregiver topics and how they may relate to you and your specific situation will then help you return to this checklist and mark the areas of caregiving with which you are knowledgeable and those you may need assistance navigating.

- ☐ **Know and familiarize yourself with your family member's diagnosis**
- ☐ **Familiarize yourself with the legal aspects of family caregiving:**
  - ☐ Durable power of attorney
  - ☐ Living will
  - ☐ Trusts
  - ☐ Conservatorship
  - ☐ Advanced Healthcare Directive/ Healthcare Proxy
- ☐ **Understand your family member's health insurance policy and benefits**
- ☐ **Understand eligibility requirements for various aspects of long-term care planning:**
  - ☐ Medi-Cal & In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)
  - ☐ Social Security Benefits
  - ☐ Veteran's Benefits
  - ☐ Long-term Care Insurance
- ☐ **Determine the most appropriate living option for your loved one's situation:**
  - ☐ At home
  - ☐ Residential Care Facility (including Assisted Living)
  - ☐ (Skilled) Nursing Facility
- ☐ **Realize self-care is not selfish and Identify Best Practices**
- ☐ **Develop a support system for yourself AND a team to help with your care recipient/partner; this may include:**
  - ☐ Identifying individuals with who to partner
  - ☐ Tap into community agency, organization, association offerings

Please call us at toll-free at **(800) 540-4442**
or visit our website **LosAngelesCRC.usc.edu** for more information.

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Your Family Member's Diagnosis:

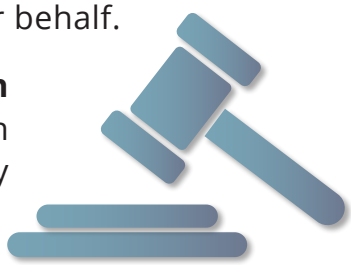
Getting clear on your family member's diagnosis is key to navigating your caregiver journey. Begin by consulting with your physician to get a clear diagnosis for your family member or a better understanding of your situation if the diagnosis is not apparent.

If a diagnosis is available, your physician may refer you to resources to familiarize yourself with your specific situation and/or resources that may assist in your caregiving.

Legal Aspects of Family Caregiving:

It is essential that legal arrangements are made as early in the caregiving process as possible. Many of these legal aspects will establish very clear guidelines for the future management of your family member's health, finances, and well-being.

Without these being in place, as time marches on and your family member's condition worsens, they no longer may be in a position to advocate for themselves in the way they would have wished, and you may not be authorized to do so on their behalf.



Below is a list of documents that would be beneficial for both you and your care recipient/partner. For further information about any of the following, contact a reputable Elder Care Attorney and/or call a non-profit legal organization.

Durable power of attorney: an appointed individual that has the responsibility to manage the medical, legal, and financial tasks of the care recipient/partner who no longer is able to for themselves

Living will: a written statement identifying an individual's needs and desires concerning medical treatment when they are unable to express end-of-life care wishes

Trusts: assigning one or more individuals to supervise property/assets for the benefit of another person

Conservatorship:
a judge-appointed individual assigned to administer financial affairs (as well as health-related) of another person due to physical or mental constraints

Advanced Healthcare Directive/ Healthcare Proxy/POLST:
legally binding documents that identify specific health care choices that should be honored if the care recipient/partner is incapable of deciding for themselves, due to health decline

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Health Insurance Policies and Benefits:

Health insurance may provide a degree of financial protection during a medical crisis and may help to alleviate financial burdens associated. This is why it is very important to understand your family member's health insurance policy and benefits.

The Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) provides individuals with free one-on-one Medicare counseling about supplemental plans, prescription drugs, Medicare Advantage plans, long term care, legal appeals, and more.

HICAP Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program

Please call HICAP at **(800) 434-0222** to set up an appointment with a counselor at a local HICAP office.

If you are unable to go to an office, a counselor may be available to connect with you virtually.

The limited income health coverage for California residents known as **Medi-Cal** requires understanding of its policies, requirements, and benefits.

For the most accurate information, call the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services, **dpss.lacounty.gov**, at the toll-free number **(866) 613-3777**.

If you have a private health insurance plan, please contact your health insurance provider for a better understanding of your health insurance policy and benefits.

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Long-Term Care Planning:

Although family caregiving may at many times be stressful, it is important that you begin planning for the long-term to help address any potential unforeseen challenges.

Additionally, different programs have differing eligibility requirements, and it is equally important to understand whether your family member is eligible to receive the benefits of a given program.

Below are various aspects associated with long-term care planning:

Medi-Cal: Medi-Cal offers free or low-cost health coverage for limited-income California residents that may include long-term care.

More information including eligibility may be found at the California Departments of Social Services and the Department of Health Care Serivces's sponsored website at **benefitscal.com** - if you prefer to call, this website will give you the correct number based on your zip code at their website **benefitscal.com/Help/request-call-back/HCCAL**.

In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS): The In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program helps pay for services provided to limited-income older adults or individuals with a disability, so that they can remain safely and comfortably in their own homes.

These services may include light housecleaning, meal preparation, laundry, grocery shopping, personal care services, and protective supervision for those with a mental health disorder. **IHSS is considered an alternative to out-of-home care** (this will be discussed in the section below regarding living options).

Visit the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Social Services at **dpss.lacounty.gov** for more information. For those within Los Angeles County, IHSS telephone applications may also be completed by calling **(888) 944-4477**.

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Long-Term Care Planning:

Social Security Benefits: Social Security benefit payments are determined by the earnings generated during your working career and are provided to retired individuals or those who are disabled.

For more information about your family member's Social Security benefits, please call **(800) 772-1213** or visit their website **www.ssa.gov**.

Veteran Benefits: As a veteran, individuals and their dependents are eligible for benefits and services that provide financial and other forms of assistance through the Veteran's Affairs. **These services may include:**

- VA Caregiver Support
- Education and training
- Home loans
- Life insurance
- Vocational rehabilitation

For more information, please visit the VA Caregiver Support House website, **www.caregiver.va.gov**, or call **(855) 260-3274**.

Long-term Care Insurance: Many may be surprised to learn that **Medicare does not cover long-term care. Long-term care insurance is different than the traditional health insurance.** It often is very expensive to secure.

That said, long-term care insurance is designed to cover long-term services and support, whether in one's own home or in a residential/assisted living center. It also may provide benefits for skilled nursing.

Long-term care insurance plans reimburse for services to assist with the activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing, or eating (dollar amounts vary depending on your individual coverage).

For general guidance on long-term care, please visit the official U.S. government website managed by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services at **www.longtermcare.gov** or call **(202) 619-0724**.

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Living Environment Options:

It is important to consider the various advantages and disadvantages of different living options to decide the most appropriate living environment for your unique situation.

Below are the types of living arrangements available:

At home: This option allows your family member to live in a home setting or within a family member's house. Care recipients/partners may have the need to hire home care professionals to assist with activities of daily living (i.e. eating, bathing, using the restroom, routine chores, etc.).

Explore your current coverage through your private healthcare insurance, Medicare, and/or Medi-Cal to see what you may be eligible for, including temporary or long-term support.

Residential Care Facility: Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly (RCFEs) -- sometimes noted as assisted living facilities, retirement homes, and board and care homes -- provide care, supervision, and assistance with various activities of daily living to individuals over the age of 60 or individuals under the age of 60 with comparable needs. Under certain circumstances, RCFEs may also provide medical services.

Skilled Nursing Facility: Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs) are also referred to as Nursing Homes or Rehabilitation Facilities. They provide medical, nursing, and rehabilitative care. Residents often cannot perform one or more activities of daily living.

SNFs must have readily accessible physicians for its residents. Some SNFs may be specialized to only care for individuals with a given disorder, such as psychiatric disorders.

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Self-Care:

Self-care involves prioritizing your own mental and physical well-being while serving as a caregiver. Taking care of yourself is not selfish. Engaging in your personal interests and hobbies is a great way to nurture yourself and lessen potential for caregiver fatigue and burnout.

Try some of these:

Sensory: spending time outdoors, taking a warm bath, burning a scented candle, listening to music, paying attention to breathing, etc.

Pleasure: gardening, watching a film, creating art/craft projects, journaling, intimacy, etc.

Mental Stimulation: clearing clutter, trying a new activity, participating in a crossword puzzle or word search, reading about a new and unfamiliar topic, etc.

Spiritual: reading poetry or motivational quotes, meditating, praying, spending time in nature, journaling, doodling, listing a few things for which you are grateful

Emotional: giving yourself permission to feel your feelings and writing them down, crying and laughing when needed, practicing self-compassion, etc.

Physical: walking/running, stretching, trying out yoga or dance moves, bike riding, napping, etc.

Social: going out for a meal with a companion/friend, chatting on a call, joining a book club or support group, spending time with yourself, etc.

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Support Systems and Care Teams:

Family caregiving may often be a very stressful situation, especially when being handled alone. It is important to develop a strong support system and care teams. Engaging your family members, your chosen/extended family and friends, and healthcare providers is an effective step to developing what you will need during your caregiver journey.

Additionally, many family caregivers find emotional support from faith-based organizations, non-profits, meetup groups, gyms/clubs, and other support groups. **As discussed in the self-care section, it is important to find a community that fits YOU and will support your interests and hobbies.**

Available Services and Resources:

It is important that you don't try to handle family caregiving alone. Engaging in available services is a way of developing a sense of community outside of your family caregiving situation.

While this document is not all-inclusive, it provides a starting point for your caregiver journey. For more guidance, do your own research through online sites such as the eldercare locator on their website: **eldercare.acl.gov/Public/index.aspx**.

eldercare locator

Know that we at LACRC are here for you. If you are located in the Los Angeles County area, we're happy to help you navigate the services and resources that best fit you and your situation. Contact us at **(800) 540-4442** so we may help guide you.

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Available Services and Resources:

We also offer a California state-wide online option to get the caregiver support you need. Family caregivers of adults with chronic physical or cognitive conditions such as Alzheimer's, stroke, Parkinson's, TBI and other illnesses may tap into **CareNav, a secure, confidential online portal designed to make caregiving a little more manageable** by providing family caregivers personalized services to match their unique caregiving needs, such as: fact and tip sheets, videos, online classes, support, caregiver resources, skilled family consultants, and more.

By answering a few simple questions and self-identifying with your caregiver needs, you'll get an immediate return of appropriate literature and resource links to explore.

CareNav™

In addition, in the following weeks, you will receive a phone call from one of our intake specialists dedicated to your geographic location for a more comprehensive assessment and tailored resources to benefit you and your care recipient/partner.

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Visit here to get started: **usc.cacrc.org/login**

You Are Not Alone:

This checklist and the information contained within is just a start. In no way is it meant to be all-inclusive, and it's not intended for you to figure it out on your own.

Please don't hesitate to connect with us. Our mission is to support our family caregivers.

Give us a call at **(800) 540-4442** and visit our website **www.LosAngelesCRC.usc.edu** to see what we may have to offer you.

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