

Women Caring from a Distance

The National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC) estimates that 13% of Americans provide long-distance care for a loved one. In addition, almost a quarter of these caregivers are the primary person providing assistance (National Institute on Aging). Women who are long distance caregiving, on average, miss more work, spend more time helping, spend more money, and are more often the only, or primary, helper in the situation when compared to their male counterparts (National Alliance for Caregiving).

Long-distance caregiving presents many unique challenges. These women must gather information about their loved one from a remote location, organize professional and volunteer help (friends and neighbors), and navigate government systems like Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security over the phone or by email. Already stressful and emotional tasks are more complicated due to the distance.

Long-distance caregivers often feel guilty or helpless, yet, there are many things one can do to assist loved ones. The following are tips for those caring remotely:

- Provide emotional support, coordinate services, and pay bills for the loved one.
- Organize and keep all relevant paperwork in one place. This way, if you are upset or flustered, you will be better prepared to make quick decisions if necessary. Share this information with others located in the US in case you are unreachable for emergency decisions.
- Coordinate family meetings to delegate tasks, discuss emergency protocols and long-term care plans. Make sure the older adult is included in these meetings.
- Establish a list of support contacts: family, friends, neighbors, doctors and community organizations. Make sure these contacts are aware of your situation. Keep this with your documents.
- Make the most of your visits with your loved one. Find out what his or her needs are, set up appointments during your visit, and determine problem areas (Is the house clean? Is she unusually forgetful?).
- Seek professional help for your loved one. Caremanager.org provides definitions for the different types of care available such as assisted living, skilled nursing facilities, and adult day care).
- If the person is already living in an assisted living facility, set up appointments with the caregivers during your US visits.
- It is also important to take care of yourself. There are many online resources and support communities for long distance caregivers that can provide assistance.

For more information:

www.caremanager.org

<http://www.nia.nih.gov/>

www.aarp.org

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/caregiving/MY01266>

<http://www.n4a.org/>

www.alz.org

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