

What is a Family Caregiver?

If you are caring for a loved one who is ill or disabled, you are a family caregiver.

Eighty per cent of all caregiving is actually done by family members, not social service agencies, nursing homes or government programs.

Family caregivers are responsible for a wide range of emotional, financial, nursing, social, homemaking and other services, including the safety of their loved one, on a regular basis.

Family caregivers are responsible for someone else, whether that means providing 24-hour care for someone who can't dress, feed or go to the bathroom, or it means a little extra help for mom or dad when they need help cutting the lawn or understanding complex paperwork. There are also at least 10 million family members in the US caring for loved ones with special needs who are younger than 18 years of age.

Family Caregiving can go on for a few years or for a lifetime. It often feels like a very lonely, isolating experience, but... you are not alone!

Polk Family Caregivers provides an opportunity for family caregivers to visit with others who are facing the same concerns and obtain first-hand information, resources, guidance and reinforcement that will help in the task of being better prepared to be a family caregiver.

Why not join us?

About Us

Polk Family Caregivers is a nonprofit organization that provides advocacy, information and support to family members caring for their loved ones.

Polk Family Caregivers has been in operation for 12 years and has several hundred active members. If you would like to join, please contact us for membership information.

Polk Family Caregivers offers caregiver education workshops in Fort Meade, Lake Wales, Winter Haven, Bartow, Haines City, Lakeland, Mulberry, Poinciana and other cities in Polk County that will help you learn how to be better prepared as a family caregiver. If you would like further details, contact us.



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Polk Family Caregivers

...Help Begins Here!

Choosing In Home Care



www.polkcaregivers.org

Finding Help With Home Caregiving

Choosing in home care to relieve part of your caregiver burdens can be a daunting task. Luckily, some key questions and considerations can help narrow your choices with confidence.

There are several options in homecare: volunteer, private and professional agencies, sometimes called a *registry*. Don't assume that one type of in home caregiving aide is automatically better than another. Each type has advantages and quality varies greatly between aides and agencies. The important thing is to arrange a match that is exactly right for your loved one.

If you're hiring a private aide, you'll be responsible for interviewing. In addition to gathering background and criminal checks, you may also be responsible for employment fees such as social security, worker's compensation, unemployment and withholding taxes.

If you're enlisting a volunteer, you may be facing a waiting list, limited training and experience, or a limited amount of time the volunteer is available.

If you're hiring a professional home caregiving agency you'll probably be dealing with a coordinator until the actual homecare aide has been selected. In any case, make your expectations for care clear.

Things to Consider

Think of in-home care as a supplement to your caregiving tasks, not a replacement.

Have reasonable expectations. No private aide can manage 24/7 coverage, and it's unethical to ask someone to do so without a break. However, some agencies provide around-the-clock coverage by sending different aides for each shift. For other agencies, irregular hours or unpredictable schedules may be difficult to accommodate due to staffing shortages. Know exactly how many different aides you will be dealing with.

When do you need someone? Are specific services necessary, such as a weekly bath or help going to the bathroom, or do you just need some supervision for your loved one so you can have a break? Tell them exactly what you need so that there are no surprises.

Check the person's or agency's background. If you're dealing with a volunteer agency or homecare agency, ask about procedures for screening and choosing aides. Do they complete a background check? How many references are required? If you're interviewing a private home care aide, it will be up to you to ensure that the person has a good record of employment.

Ask about experience. Whether it is Alzheimer's disease, diabetes or another condition, some very good homecare aides have no experience with certain problems. The key is to find someone ethical and compassionate, with good basic knowledge and experience in homecare, who also has expertise in caring for those with similar health problems.

Question the private aide or the agency. Don't be shy about asking for credentials or proof of expertise.

Work Together

Once you've chosen, it's important to build a good working relationship with your home care aide:

Think of yourself as a supervisor. Be assertive about your loved one's needs without being overly controlling or nitpicky.

Keep communication open. Find out what happened while the aide was there. Did your relative exhibit any changes? Did the aide discover a technique that was particularly helpful?

Keep the aide informed. It's essential the caregiver be aware of any change in your relative's status to adjust accordingly.

Show appreciation. Most importantly, showing appreciation to the aide and respecting his expertise will help foster a good working relationship.