

Caregiver News – 10/2022

How to Share Caregiving Responsibilities with Family Members

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/how-share-caregiving-responsibilities-family-members>

Caring for an older family member often requires teamwork. While one sibling might be local and take on most of the everyday caregiving responsibilities, a long-distance caregiver can also have an important role.

As a long-distance caregiver, you can provide important respite to the primary caregiver and support to the aging family member.

Talk About Caregiver Responsibilities

First, try to define the caregiving responsibilities. You could start by setting up a family meeting and, if it makes sense, include the care recipient in the discussion. This is best done when there is not an emergency. A calm conversation about what kind of care is wanted and needed now, and what might be needed in the future, can help avoid a lot of confusion.

Decide who will be responsible for which tasks. Many families find the best first step is to name a primary caregiver, even if one is not needed immediately. That way the primary caregiver can step in if there is a crisis.

Agree in advance how each of your efforts can complement one another so that you can be an effective team. Ideally, each of you will be able to take on tasks best suited to your skills or interests.

Consider Your Strengths When Sharing Caregiving

When thinking about who should be responsible for what, start with your strengths. Consider what you are particularly good at and how those skills might help in the current situation.

- Are you good at finding information, keeping people up-to-date on changing conditions, and offering cheer, whether on the phone or with a computer?
- Are you good at supervising and leading others?
- Are you comfortable speaking with medical staff and interpreting what they say to others?
- Is your strongest suit doing the numbers – paying bills, keeping track of bank statements, and reviewing insurance policies and reimbursement reports?
- Are you the one in the family who can fix anything, while no one else knows the difference between pliers and a wrench?

Consider Your Limits When Sharing Caregiving Responsibilities

When thinking about who should be responsible for what, consider your limits.

Ask yourself the following:

- How often, both mentally and financially, can you afford to travel?
- Are you emotionally prepared to take on what may feel like a reversal of roles between you and your parent – taking care of your parent instead of your parent taking care of you? Can you continue to respect your parent's independence?
- How will your decision to take on caregiving responsibilities affect your work and home life?

Be realistic about how much you can do and what you are willing to do. Think about your schedule and how it might be adapted to give respite to a primary caregiver. For example, you might try to coordinate holiday and vacation times. Remember that over time, responsibilities may need to be revised to reflect changes in the situation, your care recipient's needs, and each family member's abilities and limitations.



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How to Support a Local Caregiver from Far Away

A spouse or the sibling who lives close to an aging parent often becomes the primary caregiver. Long-distance caregivers can help by providing emotional support and occasional respite to the primary caregiver. Ask the primary caregiver what you can do to help. Staying in contact with your parents by phone or email might also take some pressure off your parent or sibling. Just listening may not sound like much help, but often it is.

Long-distance caregivers can also play a part in arranging for professional caregivers, hiring home health and nursing aides, or locating care in an assisted living facility or nursing home (also known as a skilled nursing facility).

Long-distance caregivers may find they can be helpful by handling things online – for example, researching health problems or medicines, paying bills, or keeping family and friends updated. Some long-distance caregivers help a parent pay for care; others step in to manage finances.

How to Help a Parent Who Is the Primary Caregivers

A primary caregiver – especially a spouse – may be hesitant to ask for help or a break. Be sure to acknowledge how important the caregiver has been for the care recipient. Also, discuss the physical and emotional effects caregiving can have on people. Although caregiving can be satisfying, it also can be very hard work.

Offer to arrange for respite care. Respite care will give your parent a break from caregiving responsibilities. It can be arranged for just an afternoon or for several days. Care can be provided in the family home, through an adult day services program, or at a skilled nursing facility.

The ARCH National Respite Locator Service can help you find services in your parents' community. You might suggest contacting the Well Spouse Association. It offers support to the wives, husbands, and partners of chronically ill or disabled people and has a nationwide listing of local support groups.

Your parents may need more help from home-based care to continue to live in their own home. Some people find it hard to have paid caregivers in the house, but most also say that the assistance is invaluable. If the primary caregiver is reluctant, point out that with an in-home aide, she may have more energy to devote to caregiving and some time for herself. Suggest she try it for a short time, and then decide.

In time, the person receiving care may have to move to assisted living or a nursing home. If that happens, the primary caregiver will need your support. You can help select a facility. The primary caregiver may need help adjusting to the person's absence or to living alone at home. Just listening may not sound like much help, but often it is.

For More Information About Caregiving:

National Respite Locator:

www.archrespite.org/respitelocator

Caregiver Action Network:

202-454-3970

info@caregiveraction.org

www.caregiveraction.org

Family Caregiver Alliance:

800-445-8106

info@caregiver.org

www.caregiver.org

Well Spouse Association:

800-838-0879

info@wellspouse.org

www.wellspouse.org

Eldercare Locator:

800-677-1116

eldercarelocator@n4a.org

<https://eldercare.acl.gov>

CAREGIVER FAMILY MEETINGS: 5 KEYS TO SUCCESS

<https://dailycaring.com/5-keys-to-successful-caregiver-family-meetings/>

Caring for seniors is a group effort

When an older adult needs care, it affects everyone in the family. That's why caregiver family meetings are so important.

Without participating in a meeting, people who aren't directly involved in caregiver are less likely to help out or do their share.

They might not understand the seriousness of the situation or realize how much time, energy, and money is needed.

But having a successful family meeting is a lot easier said than done.

You're bringing together a group of people with different points of view, emotional history, and different communication styles.

This means that having a successful meeting will take preparation.

We found wonderful advice on how to hold caregiver family meetings from Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA), a leading nonprofit organization.

Here, we walk through and explain the 5 essential parts they recommend for a productive family meeting. We've also included links to additional information and resources.

1. Who should attend?

What "family" means to you

Every family is different and has a different idea who is included in their "family."

In general, it's good to include the people who will be part of the caregiving team. That could mean including extended family, close friends, or paid caregivers.

The group could change depending on the discussion topics

When choosing the group, it may also help to think about the topics you're discussing.

For example, if you'll be discussing family finances, you may want to limit the meeting to immediate family.

But if you're talking about coordinating tasks like meals, housework, and doctor's appointments, you may want to have a larger group at the meeting.

Get external help if communication is a challenge

If family communications are already strained or the group doesn't work well together, you may want to include an outside facilitator.

A social worker, religious leader, or elder mediator could help the group work through difficult subjects.

Including your older adult...or not

Whether or not you include your older adult depends on your situation.

It could make some seniors feel like they're a terrible burden, while others may feel more comfortable knowing that everyone is working together, and their wishes will be respected.

However, not having your older adult at the meeting may encourage people to express their concerns without worrying about hurting their feelings.

Also, if they have dementia, they may not be able to understand that you're all working together to look out for their best interests. In that case, you may want to exclude them for their own peace of mind.

2. How should we begin?

Technology means that everyone can join

Good communication is essential for a positive and productive family caregiving meeting.

Use video chat or phone conference calls so everyone can participate no matter where they live.

Skype, Zoom, Google Meet, and Apple's FaceTime are good free video chat options.

And there are dozens of options for free phone conference calling – search “free conference call” on Google to find options.

Using a smartphone, you could also record the meeting for those who can't make it and send the recording via email.

Preparing an agenda is essential

Before you hold caregiver family meetings, prepare an agenda and send it out ahead of time.

That way, nobody will be surprised by the topics and you can get suggestions for additional discussion items.

The FCA article also includes a useful sample agenda in this section. Use theirs to get started and modify to fit your specific needs.

3. The meeting

Where to have the meeting

Choose a location where most people will feel comfortable.

For some, that might mean a family member's house.

For other groups, a neutral location like a coffee shop or public meeting room works better.

Try to minimize noise and distractions (like leaving young children at home) as much as possible.

Create a safe space for open discussion

Have a successful meeting means that everyone has a chance to say what they feel without being judged.

If people are able to share what they truly think, it will help the group resolve conflicts and find better solutions.

FCA shares some great examples: “...the brother who is never present may reveal that he is unable to stand seeing someone sick, and the sister who is doing all the work may not realize how she pushes others away when they offer to help. Another sibling may be having marital problems which he or she has not yet shared with the family, and yet another sibling might be worried about losing a job.”

Don't jump into problem solving yet

It's best to see the whole picture before trying to solve the problem.

Make sure to hear everyone's thoughts and concerns before jumping into problem-solving mode.

Keep a list as things are discussed so nothing is forgotten.

Use respectful language

Speaking in a respectful way helps the group stay calm and keep the discussion productive.

For example, it's best to say “I feel...” rather than “you always...” or “you never...”

When disagreements come up, try to find parts that you could agree with rather than dismissing the entire concept outright.

Remember that the goal of the meeting is to work together to provide the best care and quality of life for your older adult.

Make sure agreements and responsibilities are clear

Before ending the meeting, make sure everyone understands what was discussed and decided upon.

If responsibilities or tasks were assigned, make sure each person is clear on what they have agreed to do.

Meet regularly

Caring for an older adult is complex and an ongoing responsibility.

That's why it's important to continue meeting regularly. This also takes the pressure off needing to resolve every issue in just one meeting.

After all, major decisions are best made after taking time to absorb the information and do research.

It's also helpful to establish a regular date, like 10am on the 2nd Sunday or each month, so everyone knows to plan around it.

But if a monthly meeting isn't possible, consider meeting every 2 or 3 months instead. The goal is to meet often enough to coordinate and keep everyone informed of significant changes.

4. Potential challenges

Family meetings won't necessarily be easy.

Everyone has emotional baggage and history with each other.

And it's not just the interpersonal relationships that matter, each person also has a different ability to cope with difficult subjects like illness, decline, and death.

The FCA article includes helpful examples of the types of family conflicts that can get in the way of a productive meeting.

Understanding these dynamics will help you figure out what will be needed to move forward.

But if the meetings keep breaking down into conflict, it may be necessary to bring in a third party to mediate the group discussion.

An important insight that FCA shared was that it helps to acknowledge that there's probably no fair distribution of work and that it's not possible to make everything even.

To make meetings more successful:

- Keep focused on specific issues and tasks
- Remind everyone that the goal is to care for your older adult as a team – not to fix family issues.

5. Win/Win situations

Work toward generally agreeing

Not all caregiver issues can be fully solved. Instead of trying to find a perfect solution, work toward a general agreement.

Even if the meetings are a bit painful and progress seems slow, this regular work will be worth it.

When there's a health crisis, the discussions that have happened will help all of you to make those tough choices together.

Be open to creative solutions rather than trying to divide work in rigid ways. FCA's examples show how this might look:

- "Carol finds it difficult to be around sick people, so when her brother got lung cancer, she knew she couldn't take care of him. However, she was more than willing to make the pastas of their native Italy and take them to him to comfort him during his illness."
- "Jesse lives a thousand miles away, but can get time off from work to be with her mother while her brother and his family take a vacation."
- When Ed's mother had surgery, Ed arranged to take care of his father with Alzheimer's, while his sister worked full time and helped with the expenses."
- "Gina takes her parents to medical appointments while her sister makes sure they get their medicines properly every night."

Accept compromises and appreciate help

There is no perfect solution, especially in caregiving. Everyone will need to be willing to compromise, especially the primary caregiver.

Assuming that's you, you might be feeling a little resentful that you're doing all this work and not getting what you're asking for.

Remind yourself that both you and your older adult will benefit when you ask for and accept help.

If you show appreciation and make someone feel good about helping, even if it wasn't exactly the help you wanted, they're much more likely to pitch in again.

Put it in writing

The group will be discussing a wide range of complex topics. Keep things clear and organized by taking written notes of all the decisions and agreements that are made.

A caregiving calendar helps schedule tasks and helps each person remember their responsibilities and commitments.



OPEN ENROLLMENT

2023 Medicare Part D

Open Enrollment Events

All events have Zoom and In-Person Appointments available.

Appointments are **REQUIRED**.

November 14, 2022

Middletown Senior Center
61 Durrant Terrace
Middletown, CT 06457
860-638-4540

November 16, 2022

East Lyme Senior Center
37 Society Road
Niantic, CT 06357
860-739-5859

November 18, 2022

Colchester Senior Center
95 Norwich Avenue
Colchester, CT 06415
860-537-3911

November 19, 2022

Senior Resources
19 Ohio Avenue
Norwich, CT 06360
860-887-3561

December 2, 2022

Colchester Senior Center
95 Norwich Avenue
Colchester, CT 06415
860-537-3911

December 5, 2022

Middletown Senior Center
61 Durrant Terrace
Middletown, CT 06457
860-638-4540



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on a fixed income?**

**Are you under 65, disabled
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**Contact Senior Resources
Benefits Enrollment Center**

**Our Benefits Counselors will screen and provide
application assistance for various programs.**

**Call now to schedule your Benefits screening!
860-887-3561 ext. 132**

Alzheimer's and Dementia Support Groups

Groton Senior Center

102 Newtown Road, Groton
Tomi Stanley (860)441-6785 or TStanley@groton-ct.gov
2nd Monday of every month, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
www.alz.org to learn more about caregiver programs

Alzheimer's Association – CT Chapter

2nd Thursday of the month, 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.
Quinebaug Valley Senior Center
69 South Main Street, Brooklyn
Kathy Demers (860)377-6416 kdemers48@gmail.com
Jean Ann Moore (860)208-2673 jamorre@snet.net

Hartford HealthCare Center for Healthy Aging

Virtual Dementia Caregivers Support Group
Call (860)972-6338 and enter 19623# when prompted
Mondays at 10:00 a.m.
Tuesdays at 3:00 p.m.
Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.
Fridays at 2:00 p.m.
Questions email: Adrienne.DeVivo@hhchealth.org

Hartford Healthcare Windham Hospital

Alzheimer's Caregivers Group
3rd Wednesday of every month, 10:00 a.m.
Johnson Room, 3rd Floor, Windham Hospital
For information call: (860)456-6785

Chestelm Health and Rehabilitation Center

534 Town Street, Moodus
3rd Wednesday of the month, 4:00 p.m.
To register contact Marie Sola
(860)873-6555 or recreation@chestelm.com

Mind Matters, LLC

801 Poquonnock Road, Groton
2nd Tuesday of every month, 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.
Contact: robin@mindmatters@gmail.com

Griswold Senior Center

Dementia Caretaker Support Group
Every 2 weeks on Thursdays via Zoom
To register call: (860) 376-2604

LiveWell Dementia Specialists

Virtual Meetings 2nd & 4th Wednesday of the month: 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.
<https://livewell.org/project/virtual-care-partner-support-group/>

Caregiver Support Groups

Mansfield Senior Center

303 Maple Road, Mansfield

Yamil Figueroa (860)487-9875 figueroay@mansfieldct.org

2nd Tuesday of each month, 3:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Quinebaug Valley Senior Center

69 South Main Street, Brooklyn

Kathy (860)377-6414 or Jean Ann (860)208-2673

2nd Thursday of the month, 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

VNA Caregiver Support Group

Madison Senior Center

For information contact Amanda: (203)245-5627

29 Bradley Road, Madison

3rd Tuesday of the month, 11:00-12:30 p.m.

Proof of vaccination required for this activity at time of registration

Zoom Support Group

Every Wednesday 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

For information contact Molly: (203) 584-0051

Middlesex Health

2nd Wednesday of the month, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Please contact Joan Perkins, LCSW

(860)358-2037 or joan.perkins@midhosp.org

Lawrence and Memorial Hospital

L & M Hospital, Conference Room 3

1st Tuesday of the month, 4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Contact: Carol Vara, MSW or Mary Sweeney

(860)442-0711 x 2483 or x 2078

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Groups

Senior Resources Agency on Aging

Sally Huck, Caregiver Program Coordinator
(860)887-3561 x126
Rose City Senior Center
8 Mahan Drive, Norwich
Last Tuesday of each month, 9:00 a.m.

Eastern CT Area – Mansfield

Janit Romayko (860)569-1978, Call to Register
Big Y Mansfield, 141 Storrs Road, Mansfield Center
2nd Wednesday of each month, 9:15 a.m.

United Services - Kinship Support Group

Plainfield Area
Lori Bergstrom, Prevention Services Manager
(860)412-8665 lbergstrom@usmhs.org
United Services, 303 Putnam Road, Wauregan
2nd Tuesday of each month, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Bereavement Support Groups

Middlesex Hospital

Virtual/Online Session

Every 2 weeks on Tuesday, 5:30 – 7:00p.m.

Register online at <https://middlesexhealth.org/hospice-care/support-group-registration/support-group-registration>

The Estuary

Bereavement Group

Micaela Finnegan (860)388-1611 x204

Montville Senior Center

12 Maple Avenue, Uncasville

Every Friday, 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Sign Up at (860)848-0422

Brian's Healing Hearts

Loss of Spouse or Partner Support Group

1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month

6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

2nd and 4th Wednesday

10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

<https://brianshealinghearts.org/resources/grief-support-programs/>

or call (860)451-8354

Center for Hospice Care

Bereavement Counseling

227 Dunham Street, Norwich

(860)848-5699 Toll Free 1(877)654-4035

Day Kimball Healthcare

Evening Bereavement Group, 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Day Bereavement Group 12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Registration Required

Suzon Warner (860)928-0422 x7316

Parkinson's Disease Support Groups

Windham Hospital Family Healthcare Center

5 Founder Street, Willimantic, 2nd floor conference room

2nd Wednesday of every month, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

1 (855) HHC-HERE to Register

A support session for patients, family, and caregivers will be followed by
30 minutes of LSVT Loud activities

CT Parkinson's Disease Working Group

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church

1055 Randolph Road, Middletown

3rd Saturday of the month, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Most meetings are virtual at this time.

Call (860)704-9519

Email: martha.jaffe@cpwg.org

Day Kimball Healthcare

Parkinson's Disease Monthly Support Group

For information contact:

Victor Gregoire (860)774-6143

Hartford Healthcare

Parkinson's Living Room Online Support Group

4th Friday of the month, 1:00 p.m.

For information call (860)870-6385

<https://hartfordhealthcare.org/file%20library/services/pdfs/cfmcdc-pd-living-room-flyer.pdf>

Lawrence and Memorial Hospital

Windham Fall Estates, Activity Room, Groton

3rd Wednesday of the month, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Contact: Donna Weissman (860)536-1020

Diabetes Groups

Live Well with Diabetes

6-Week Workshop

Learn how to better manage your ongoing health condition.

To register contact Lori Rygielski

(860)887-3561 x 127 or lrygielski@seniorresourcesec.org

Hartford HealthCare Windham Hospital

Windham Hospital Diabetes Education Classroom

112 Mansfield Ave, Willimantic

1st Wednesday of every month, 1:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m.

Call to register 1 (855) HHC-HERE

Lawrence and Memorial Hospital

Joslin Diabetes Center affiliate at L & M Hospital

For location and time contact: Joslin (860)444-3366

Substance Abuse Groups

Nar-Anon

"Steps" to Serenity" Support Group

For Information go to www.naranonctma.org

Or Contact (860)377-8309

Al-Anon

Al-Anon Face Alcoholism

For Information go to www.ctalanon.org

Or Contact 1 (888)825-2666



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Account Name: Your first and last name
 Invoice Number: Cash for Causes




Mail to: 19 Ohio Avenue, Norwich, CT 06360 - or - Contact: Erica (860) 887-3561 x 110



We hope you find this month's edition of our Caregiver of Children newsletter informative.

Senior Resources currently produces a monthly caregiver of children newsletter. We are looking for feedback on any ideas you may have for future editions.

Please contact Sally Huck with any ideas/suggestions or if you wish to be removed from our mailing list.

Sally Huck: SHuck@seniorresourcesec.org or 860 887-3561 x 126.

To read previous editions of this newsletter please visit:
www.SeniorResourcesEC.org/stay-informed/grandparent-newsletter