

What is a Geriatric Care Manager?

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A geriatric care manager is an individual who has extensive professional training in the field of aging. The geriatric care manager takes a holistic approach to care, with an emphasis on the planning and management of all areas of the older person's life. The goal of geriatric care management is the preservation of dignity and quality of life for the aging person. Geriatric care managers encourage preventive measures for the "well elderly" and early planning for later-life. It makes little sense to spend more effort on planning for our estates after death than to assure that our wishes are respected during our lifetimes.

WHO NEEDS A GERIATRIC CARE MANAGER'S SERVICES?

As America ages, more and more people are finding themselves faced with the care of an elderly parent or relative. Often, they don't know where to turn. Many seek no help or outside support until after an elder suffers a severe medical incapacity. Most common scenarios:

- "Mother has become more forgetful and confused. She doesn't take her medication. I work all day and have my own children to care for. Where do I start?"
- "I live out-of-state. I've been calling my father regularly since mother died. Lately, he seems different. The doctor says there's nothing wrong, it's just old age. I'm worried. What can I do?"

Few guidelines exist for families confronting the transitions that occur as a family member ages.

FREQUENT PROBLEMS

- *Little, if any, planning has been done.* Families may be unprepared to cope

financially, emotionally, or in other ways.

- *Lack of information on the kind of help needed and the available options.*
- *Disagreement.* Family members, including the older person, may not agree on a course of action.
- *Red tape.* The system of services available to the elderly, both government and private, grows more complicated every day.

One out of two people over the age 80 need some type of assistance on a daily basis. But the type of help needed may range from transportation to housework to total care. A geriatric care manager, who is familiar with alternatives and skilled at navigating the maze of options, can provide expert guidance and advice.

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