



## **Care Managers Can Reduce Family Pressures**

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Working with a care manager can significantly lower family stress, providing reassurance that the right steps are being taken to ensure a loved one's quality of life. Care managers are often trained nurses, psychologists or social workers, and their familiarity with local services and supports can provide invaluable assistance to confused or overwhelmed parents, adult children, or siblings of a person with special needs.

The care manager's potential roles are many. Frequently, they begin by performing an extensive assessment of a person's needs, working with the individual and family members to develop a detailed plan that covers health care, living arrangements, social activities and government benefits. They can recommend home-based services and assistive technologies that will enable someone to remain within the community or identify the long-term care facilities best suited to meet the individual's requirements for medical treatment.

Many care managers provide far more than advice, though, playing an active part in coordinating and monitoring services and keeping families informed. Their daily involvement can ease conflicts between caregiver and career responsibilities. Care managers can attend doctor's appointments, intervene with hospital staff, and even ensure that medications are taken and bills are paid. If there are problems with service providers, they advocate on the individual's behalf.

These professionals can be especially helpful when family members live at a distance, or aging parents must plan for the time when they will no longer be able to care for their adult child with special needs. In the latter case, it's important to begin working with a care manager early so that they can bond with the individual, learn about their daily routines and minimize disruption.

If a special needs trust (SNT) is being administered by a corporate trustee or someone else having infrequent contact with the beneficiary, a care manager can advise on which disbursements would most contribute to the individual's quality of life without affecting their eligibility for means-tested government programs. Care managers and special needs attorneys often collaborate. If a care manager discovers that a guardian should be appointed, that a health care proxy is needed or that other estate planning documents are necessary, they may refer the matter to legal counsel they have come to trust. On the other hand, a special needs attorney may ask a care manager to provide expert advice when

family is out of town or family members disagree on planning. Care managers may also be helpful in creating a life care plan and estimating e lifetime expenses for the purpose of a personal injury settlement or the funding of an SNT.

Given the care manager’s significant responsibilities, it’s important that families conduct research before choosing one, and special needs attorneys are well positioned to provide referrals. Another good source of information is the [National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers](#), which certifies care managers who meet the organization’s strict education and experience requirements.

Caring for a loved one with special needs can be both exhausting and confusing. But working with a care manager-temporarily or on a long-term basis-can make all the difference.

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