



CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT



Resources abound to help elderly stay in their homes

By Jane Sutter

Your parents are growing older but they insist they can still handle living in their own home.

But you are worried.

Is their home set up to support them as they age? Are they financially able to afford home health care or a care facility if that time comes? How do you even approach the subject with them? After all, you're still the "child," even if you're well into middle age or perhaps even a young "senior" yourself.

Developing a care plan for your loved one can be a good first step, according to Brittany Flanagan, director of Eldersource for Lifespan, a regional nonprofit serving Monroe County and surrounding Finger Lakes counties.

Eldersource, one of several programs at Lifes-

pan, serves older adults and their caregivers to help them access community services and long-term care, and help them with financial benefits. Care managers can meet with the caregivers and/or the care receiver (person who needs the care) and do an assessment of their needs, Flanagan said. This can cover a wide range of topics, including social, mental and physical health; finances and safety.

Once the assessment is done, the social worker works with the family to develop a care plan with set goals.

A priority for people who are concerned about how to care for their parents is safety — "identifying any special risk factors and what kinds of interventions need to happen in order to promote safety in the home," Flanagan said.

If the care receiver is at risk of falling, Lifespan offers a program called "Home Safe Home." A Lifespan representative does an in-home safety assessment that identifies slip and fall hazards, inadequate lighting and other problems. With the care receiver's permission, they can install items such as grab bars, handrails, hand-held shower head, raised toilet seat, tub seat or transfer seat.

The service is grant-funded and donation-based for older adults who meet income guidelines. Older adults whose incomes are above the limit are charged a labor rate and the cost of the safety devices, but Flanagan said the costs of devices are generally less expensive than if a person was to purchase them on their own.

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LIFESPAN:

On its website, Lifespan offers a multitude of information helpful to caregivers and older adults. There are many downloadable brochures about its services, along with lists of resources and much more. Lifespan gets its funding from a variety of sources, including government and the United Way. Some services are free while others are fee-based depending on income level. "We would never deny anyone a service for inability to pay," said Brittany Flanagan, director of Eldersource at Lifespan. All services are offered in Monroe County, and some are offered in other counties. Go to <https://www.lifespan-roch.org/> or call (585) 244-8400 or 1 (866) 454-5110.

NY Connects:

NY Connects offers free, unbiased information about long-term services and supports in New York State for people of all ages or with any type of disability. For information and to find the local office in your county, go to <https://www.nyconnects.ny.gov/contact-us> or call 1-800-342-9871. You can also access a free, downloadable 51-page Caregiver Guide on the website.

TRAINING FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS:

The New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) and Association on Aging in New York (AgingNY) have partnered with a company called Trualta to offer Trualta's web-based caregiver education and support platform at no cost to any unpaid caregiver in New York State, according to the Office for the Aging website.

New Yorkers can access the service at <https://newyork-caregivers.com>. Once registered, caregivers can select personalized training and track their progress on topics like self-care, stroke recovery, dementia care, medication management, and more. Users can log-in from any computer, tablet or smartphone.

AARP:

The organization's website has a wealth of free information, including a section devoted to caregiving at <https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/>.

Preventing falls is important to help seniors stay in their homes. According to Lifespan's brochure on Home Safe Home, every year about 35 percent of adults 75 or older fall, and 60 percent of those falls occur at home. About half of older adults who are hospitalized with a hip fracture are unable to return home or live independently again.

Dispensing of medication

It's a fact of life that as people age, they take medications. How do you make sure your loved one remembers to take their meds in the proper dosage and at the right time of day?

You're probably familiar with the plastic pill organizers that set up pills by day of the week and even by time of day to take the medication (morning, noon, night).

Flanagan said that local pharmacies will organize pills into blister packs if a customer requests them. That way, all the pills are in one spot and there's no opening of numerous bottles.

But if there's a concern that a person might forget to take their pills, there's technology to help.

Electronic machines dispense meds at a given time of day and remind people through a tone or a voice that it's time to take their medication. A caregiver loads the pills into the machine. Some machines are tied to an app that allows the caregiver to make changes in the schedule as needed. If a loved one has dementia, there are machines that have a lock and anti-tampering alarm system.

These dispensing machines can be helpful even if the person has a companion aide, as they are not licensed to dispense medication but they can remind the person to do so, Flanagan said. Hiring an aide who is allowed to dispense medication, such as a certified nursing assistant, is more expensive than having a companion aide.

Managing finances

Lifespan programs that can be helpful offer two options when it comes to helping someone manage their money.

In-home Financial Management involves having a trained volunteer come into the home once a month and help with bill paying, budgeting and checkbook balancing, Flanagan said.

In a second program, Financial Care Management, a client asks Lifespan to take on the role of power of attorney. In this fee-for-

service program, a trained professional actually pays bills, helps obtain government or other benefits, compiles tax information and arranges for tax preparation and filing, etc. The monthly fee is based on assets. Lifespan is fully bonded and insured, according to its website.

In-home aides

For many older adults, the ability to stay in their home involves having outside help come in to perform various tasks. Flanagan said the assessment that Lifespan provides looks at the person's needs and how to pay for it. For example, the assessment will determine if the person is a good candidate to apply for Medicaid, or should they look at a private pay, non-Medicaid program.

If a person is going the private pay route, then the decision becomes whether to hire an aide through an agency or find an aide who is not affiliated with an agency, Flanagan said. The advantage of the latter option is that it's cheaper than going through an agency, but the disadvantage is that the aide will not be insured by an agency.

Regardless of which option a person chooses, there is a large shortage of aides, Flanagan said. "There was an aide shortage before the pandemic and the pandemic just really, really hindered that a lot more."

Difficult conversations

It's common for Flanagan to receive a call from a concerned adult child about their elderly parent. The call goes something like this: "I know my mom needs this. I know something terrible is going to happen in the future. I can just see it happening, and if my mom would just do X, Y, or Z, we could prevent that from happening."

Then Flanagan will ask, "Well, what does Mom want, what does Mom say?"

"Well, she doesn't agree with me."

Flanagan acknowledged: "Those are really hard conversations to have, because you know that the caregiver is coming from a caring place. They care about the safety of their loved one. But we also have to remember that our loved ones are human beings, with the ability to make their own decisions and have autonomy about their own life decisions."

"Sometimes we can offer to have conversations with people and help them to understand that this is coming from a place of caring. Sometimes we do some education on

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prevention and what we've seen in the community, where something as simple as a fall can lead to a hospitalization that can lead to a stay in a rehab facility, that can lead to a long-term care placement. (But) if we can put an intervention into place, we can hopefully prevent that hospitalization or a long-term care placement from happening."

Sometimes an older person is resistant to having "a stranger" from the Home Safe Home program come into the home to do an assessment, Flanagan said. In that case, Flanagan says it's helpful to focus on the common goal, with the caregiver saying, "I want you to be able to stay in your home as long as possible, but in order to do that, we need to make some changes with regard to keeping you safe at home."

Flanagan also noted that sometimes the resistance cannot be overcome. "That's very difficult and it's very hard, but we sometimes have to know that we have done what we can do to prevent this from happening..."

Lifespan can provide the caregiver with the information and education on resources available so if the care receiver is willing to change their mind, the caregiver knows the resources available, and they can act quickly and don't have to start from scratch. "Sometimes we talk about just being prepared so when the opportunity arises, we can implement some safety measures. Kind of strike while the iron is hot."

Sometimes family members disagree about the right plan of action for their elderly parent. When that happens, Lifespan also offers a "coaching" program, where a "coach" meets with the family members to try to help

them reach consensus, Flanagan said.

If a family member is taking on the bulk of the care of a parent, Lifespan also offers respite services through a program called Partners in Caring Respite program.

Advance planning

It's never too early to start planning for care for an older person, Flanagan said. She advises people to consult with an attorney for estate planning, especially given that Medicaid requires a five-year look-back at the applicant's financial picture.

The good news about trying to keep an elderly person at home is that New York State offers a lot of resources, a substantial number compared to what was offered 15 years ago when Flanagan started working in this profession, she said. "There are many more options to keep people at home than there ever were before. That seems to be the big goal of everybody, to keep people at home and age at home as long as it's safely possible."

Jane Sutter is a Rochester-area freelance writer.

HELPFUL APPS:

There are a variety of digital tools available to help caregivers get organized, keep track of a loved one's whereabouts, monitor medications and more. Use the internet to search for the type of app that you need.

Watch for These Warning Signs of Abuse in Minors

No longer wants to see a **particular person** they had been close to

Declining **academic** performance

Tries to hide use of **technology**

No longer interested in **activities** they used to enjoy

Changes in **personality**

Demonstrates **aggressive behavior** or constantly angry

Tries to get minors **alone**



Commits physical and emotional **boundary violations**

Withdraws from family or friends

Keeps **secrets** with minors

Gives lavish **gifts** to minors

Allows or encourages minors to **break laws** or rules

Is overly interested in **spending time** with minors

Has **inappropriate** or suggestive conversations with minors

Does not believe the **rules** apply to them (or, does not follow rules or protocols)

Takes **photos** without approval, or asks minors to send them photos

... and These Warning Signs of Perpetrators



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

Creating a Safe Environment Newsletter

is published quarterly by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester with the aim of helping all of us keep children and vulnerable adults safe at home, at church and in all places in our community.

Comments can be directed to:

Tammy Sylvester,
Diocesan Coordinator
of Safe Environment Education
and Compliance,
585-328-3228
or Tammy.Sylvester@dor.org.

Victims of sexual abuse by any employee of the Church should always report to the civil authorities.

To report a case of possible sexual abuse and to receive help and guidance from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, contact the diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator:

Deborah Housel
(585) 328-3228, ext. 1555;
toll-free 1-800-388-7177,
ext. 1555
victimassistance@dor.org.

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ADDITIONAL SAFETY RESOURCES

ONLINE SAFETY RESOURCES

CHILDREN & TEENS' SAFETY SITES:

Webonauts Internet Academy:

<http://pbskids.org/webonauts/>

PBS Kids game that helps younger children understand the basics of Internet behavior and safety.

NSTeens:

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

A program of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children that has interactive games and videos on a variety of Internet safety topics.

FOR PARENTS:

Common Sense Media

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/parent-concerns>

A comprehensive and frequently updated site that is packed with resources. Dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing information and education

Darkness to Light organization:

www.d2l.org

Darkness to Light is a non-profit committed to empowering adults to prevent child sexual abuse.

Family Online Safety Institute:

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

iKeepSafe:

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

Resources for parents, educators, kids and parishes on navigating mobile and social media technologies

LOCAL RESOURCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Bivona Child Advocacy Center

(Monroe, Wayne counties):

www.BivonaCAC.org

585-935-7800

Chemung County Child Advocacy Center:

607-737-8449

www.chemungcounty.com

Child Advocacy Center of Cayuga County:

315-253-9795

www.cacofcayugacounty.org

Finger Lakes Child Advocacy Program

(Ontario County):

www.cacfingerlakes.org

315-548-3232

STEBEN COUNTY: Southern Tier Children's Advocacy Center:

www.sthcs.org

716-372-8532

NYS State Central Registry

(Child Abuse Reporting Hotline):

1-800-342-3720

NYS Child Advocacy Resource and Consultation Center (CARCC)

866-313-3013

Tompkins County Advocacy Center:

www.theadvocacycenter.org

607-277-3203

Wyoming County Sexual Abuse Response Team:

585-786-8846

Yates County Child Abuse Review Team:

315-531-3417, Ext. 6