



# EMPOWERED CARE PARTNERS

Roles and Responsibilities and 10 Considerations

# CARE PARTNERS

Have you ever pondered all that being a care partner entails? Many people underestimate what is involved in providing compassionate and needed care. People tend to not think about the more tangible aspects of being a care partner—the *tasks* involved.

Today we're going to look at those roles and responsibilities as well as the 10 considerations to help you determine...as care partners...if it might be time to get more involved and help a loved one address challenges he or she may be facing.

More than 1 in 5 adults — a total of 53 million adult Americans — are now unpaid family caregivers, according to a [new report from AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving](#) (NAC).

The number of caregivers has climbed from 18 percent of adults in 2015 to more than 21 percent in 2020, an increase of 9.5 million adults who provide assistance on everything from grocery shopping to wound care to medication management. The biggest boost came among those caring for adults 50 and older, which accounted for just over 14 percent of caregivers in 2015 and nearly 17 percent this year. Many receiving care were boomers, who are now ages 55 to 75, according to the report.

In fact, boomers are pivoting from taking care of friends and loved ones to needing care. Now their children and grandchildren are stepping up.

# Care Partner Roles and Responsibilities

- **ADVISOR-** Initiate a conversation to help a loved one identify potential challenges, talk about concerns, share information, and considering alternatives that may help to maximize their independence and quality of life.
- **ADVOCATE-** Looking out for a loved one's best interests as an authorized agent (e.g. Power of Attorney, etc.). Working with that person to ensure they get the information, care, support, and treatment they need and deserve.
- **COORDINATOR-** When appropriate helping to look for services, such as professional caregiving, physical therapy, yardwork, repairs, scheduling appointments, coordinating deliveries, helping facilitate end-of-life planning, and more. Help identify who is on your care team.

- **EVALUATOR-** Helping them evaluate and assess their ability to live independently, handle their own personal care, manage medications, operate a motor vehicle, and more. Also, help with identifying and evaluating appropriate programs and services that best match their needs and wishes.
- **MEDIATOR-** With permission from your care partner help family members and others communicate with each other as well as with health care and social service providers in making decisions, and resolving issues in a positive and helpful manner.
- **PROTECTOR-** Taking charge when necessary to help ensure the safety and well-being of the person who is needing an intervention.

- **PROVIDER-** Directly providing hands on assistance when a loved one is not able to take part in their care due to physical or cognitive limitations. Assistance often addresses the following types of needs:
  - **EMOTIONAL-** Listening and responding to concerns, providing encouragement and moral support, and simply “being there” for someone.
  - **FINANCIAL-** Organizing bills, writing checks, balancing checkbooks, and providing money to help cover expenses- hopefully having established their permission previously.

- **PHYSICAL-** Assisting with daily living activities, including personal care, household chores, meals, driving, when they become dependent.
- **SOCIAL-** Helping them maintain regular contact to minimizing isolation and boredom through relationships and helping loved ones stay in the loop.
- **SPIRITUAL-** Helping people find meaning and purpose in life, maintaining hope, coping and finding peace through prayer, meditation, and cultural, and religious preferences. At their request involving their faith community.

# 10 CONSIDERATIONS

TO HELP DETERMINE IF IT MIGHT BE TIME TO GET MORE INVOLVED

1. **MEDICAL CONDITION-** Has your loved one been diagnosed with a disease, illness, or other medical condition that could impact his or her ability to function in daily life?

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2. **DRIVING-** If your loved one drives, is there reason to believe he or she poses an above average risk of being involved in an accident? How are your loved one's vision, reflexes, and ability to respond in unexpected situations?

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3. **FOOD/NUTRITION-** Is your loved one eating a balanced diet? Is his or her weight stable? Does he or she have a reasonable variety of food in the refrigerator with future expiration dates?

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**4. HYGIENE-** Does it appear your loved one is bathing and brushing his or her teeth regularly? How are his or her overall appearance, grooming and ability to match clothing compared to prior years? Are the bed linens and towels fresh? Does the soap in the bathroom appear to have been used recently?

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**5. BEHAVIOR-** Does your loved one seem anxious or irritable- more so than usual? Does being away from home make him or her uncomfortable? Does he or she seem depressed? Is there inconsistency in the things he or she says? Does your loved one remember names, places and current events?

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**6. DAILY TASKS-** Are basic tasks, such as getting ready to go out or preparing a meal or shopping, overly challenging, frustrating, or time consuming for your loved one? Does their living space appear clean? Is there a concern about hoarding?

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**7. MEDICATION-** Can your loved one manage his or her medications properly including dosage, frequency and changes in prescriptions? Does your loved one understand why he or she is taking the medication? Are prescriptions getting refilled on a timely manner?

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**8. FINANCES-** Does it appear your loved one is capable of making sound financial decisions? Is he or she able to manage personal affairs and finances? Does he or she have a reasonable amount of cash on hand? Have there been any unusual purchases or suspicious expenses or investments?

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**9. MAIL/EMAIL-** Is the mail stacking up? Is there reason to suspect any past due or delinquency notices or email hacks? Does your loved one appear to be a target for solicitation and sweepstakes offers or fraudulent emails?

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**10. SAFETY-** Is your loved one careful about turning off appliances (e.g. stove, coffee pot, etc.)? Does he or she ever carelessly leave candles or cigarettes burning? Are sharp objects properly put away. Are firearms properly put away? Are the stairs and hallways unobstructed? Are the doors and windows locked? Is he or she able to easily locate their house and car keys? Is there any reason to believe someone is trying to control or take advantage of him or her?

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**This is a great exercise to continue to do every six months as your loved ones condition or disease progresses.**

Adapted from "A Caregiver's Starter Kit" (no longer available)

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