

# ***FEAP NEWSLETTER***

*A Series of Educational Articles from your Faculty and Employee Assistance Program*

## **Elder Caregiving and the Working Person The Sandwich Generation...**

Many of us are now in the sandwich generation. We may be caring for our aging parents and caring for our children. Some of us have the added stress of health issues, financial concerns about college and retirement, and the desire to work reliably for another decade or two to cover it all.

**Elder Caregiving** is the process of helping to care for our elderly friends or relatives. This might be during an unexpected health crisis or more long term through the normal course of aging.

Depending on the resources and abilities of the adult children involved in this process, the caregiver may provide physical care or assist with decision making and planning. Regardless, there are many emotional, social, financial, medical and logistical issues associated with each step of elder caregiving and there are no right and wrong answers because each elder person's needs, desires and resources are different.

Elder caregiving is a process – not a one-time fix. It is important to be flexible and realize that once the adult child enters this process with someone they love, new issues will arise and decisions will need to be made as the situation changes. Know that the decisions and resources put in place at one point in time are temporary and must remain flexible. While this process may be stressful, it can also be very rewarding and a valuable gift to the elder person in one's life.



### **What can you do now to prepare and plan?**

At any point in the process of elder caregiving, the parties involved can review the status of several financial and legal items.

An attorney and/or a financial planner who has a specialty in elder issues may be needed for more specific assistance. At a minimum, the following items should be evaluated:

- Are wills established?
- Is there a Living Will or Advance Directive and do the family

members know what the elder person would want done in certain medical and life threatening situations?

- Is Durable Power of Attorney already established?
- Is property deeded to people who can sell, buy or maintain the property if no POA exists?
- Does the person have a reliable co-insurance health care policy?
- Is it time to have co-signatures on basic checking and savings accounts?
- Is the current housing arrangement likely to suffice in the event of physical frailty?

The most difficult time to consider these questions is when the elder person has a health crisis and needs post hospital care. That is the time you want to physically be with the person to provide emotional support and stability.

### **Long-distance Caregiving**

With today's mobile and scattered family structures, many employees have significant family members living hours away. As the elder person's care needs change, the employee may constantly worry and feel guilty about the elder's

needs and whether the loved one is safe. Fortunately there are resources in most communities to assist with long-distance caregiving. Through the Area Agency on Aging or a local hospital social worker, one can be connected to a Geriatric Care Manager in almost any community. This can be a valuable first step in obtaining a reliable assessment of the care needs of the elder person and assistance in matching community resources to the person's needs and abilities. The counselors at the EAP can help you locate aging and elder caregiving programs in other states and countries through our network with national EAP's.

### **Making the Most of Elder Caregiving**

If you are in the role of caregiving you will need to also take care of yourself:

- Pay attention to your own stress level
- Take care of yourself so you can care for others
- Spread the wealth – ask for help
- Remember to “be” with the elder person – talk, reminisce, share good times
- Plan for the future but don't worry about it

- Identify what you can control and try only to control that
- Let go of the unimportant things – simplify the rest of your life
- Use the “rainy day” money
- Take breaks

### **What Can FEAP Do to Help?**

The FEAP staff are professionally trained counselors who understand the dynamics of the aging process and know how to identify and access pertinent resources locally and nationally. The EAP services can include:

- Assessment of the employee's caregiving situation by looking at the social, family, financial, legal and emotional issues raised;
- Problem-solving and identification of the most pressing concerns;
- Providing concrete information about resources and how to access these resources;
- Clarification and emotional support;
- Individual and family counseling;
- Informational seminars or discussion groups on various Elder Caregiving topics.

For questions or to make an FEAP appointment, call:

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or 800 847-9355

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Other important local Elder Caregiving resources:  
Jefferson Area Board on Aging: 817-5222  
UVA Senior Services: 982-1090



The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a free, confidential, 24-hour service provided to all employees and family members.