

Hospice Update for February 17, 2004

Long-Distance Caregivers Continued...

Who's on your team? You live far away. Ask yourself, "Who is in regular contact with my loved one? Possibilities include: Nearby siblings or family members and close friends; neighbors who know your relative well people your loved one sees frequently, such as clergy or a housekeeper who comes often; or professionals with longstanding relationships. Compile a list of names, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses for these people. Leave spaces for care managers, social workers or other professionals who can help you navigate the care system.

As you see the kind of help your relative needs today--what he or she can, or cannot do independently--you'll be in a better position to understand how the local community can support the two of you. Remember, whenever possible, to make these decisions in agreement with your loved one.

Services in your community may include: Meal delivery, adult day care, in-home aides, transportation, help with Medicare claims, support groups, volunteers, financial assistance. Learning about the formal system in the local community will take some effort. There are good tools available to help you.

The Administration on Aging's ELDERCARE LOCATOR is useful in finding aging services in your loved one's community. You may reach the Eldercare Locator via telephone at (800) 677-1116, or visit www.eldercare.gov. (I just tried the phone number and got a real live person immediately!). They will provide contact information for every Area Agency on Aging in the country.

FAMILY CAREGIVER ALLIANCE'S will connect you to an information specialist who can offer advice on local services. Or e-mail infor@caregiver.org.

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON AGING BENEFITS CHECK UP at www.benefitscheckup.org will help you find out whether your relative qualifies for state and federal assistance programs.

There are more ideas available in the Handbook for Long-Distance Caregivers by Bob Rosenblatt and Carol Van Steenberg, Mss or if you would like to discuss these issues with someone, call Hospice at 923-7276 and Nancy Jean Keeler will be happy to talk with you.