

# Introduction to Care Advocacy

A care advocate serves as a professional, personal advocate for a senior or disabled person while managing, rendering and referring various types of health and social care services for the person in order to:

- Meet long-term care needs;
- Improve quality of life; and
- Maintain the person's independence for as long as possible.

The care advocate also serves as an experienced guide and resource for families of older adults or those with chronic diseases, coordinating health and psychological care with the most suitable combination of services such as housing, home care services, socialization programs, financial and legal planning.

Services begin with a comprehensive assessment followed by a care plan tailored for an individual's specific circumstances. Based on the care advocate's monitoring, the care plan is updated as necessary.

## For whom are care advocacy services appropriate?

- Adult children who live at a distance or are close by but would like assistance for an older family member;
- Older adults who have some current or predictable health issues and who wish to maintain independence living in their own home;
- A company whose employee is losing work time because of caregiving responsibilities;
- An attorney or trust officer who is managing the estate of an older adult;
- A physician who recommends in-home assistance or monitoring;
- A clergy who would like to arrange assistance for an older adult.



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## What sort of training is typical of a care advocate?

The care advocate is trained and experienced in any of several fields related to health and long-term care options, including, but not limited to:

- Nursing;
- Gerontology;
- Social work; or
- Psychology.

## How to benefit from using a care advocate

Care advocacy services are offered in a variety of settings and can serve the needs of their clients with the following services:

- Conduct care planning assessments to identify needs, problems and eligibility for assistance;
- Serve as a valuable mediator between siblings or family members who cannot agree on the planning of care for their loved ones;
- Communicate and coordinate efforts across all medical and other care providers;
- Liaison for families at a distance, reporting back with any adjustments in care or financial issues;
- Provide client and family education on management of diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, MS, heart disease and diabetes;
- Provide information on costs, quality and availability of resources, and connect to specialists;
- Screen, arrange and monitor in-home help or other services;
- Contain costs by avoiding inappropriate placements, duplication of services, and crisis intervention to avoid hospitalizations.
- In some instances,
  - Provide household and daily finance management and conservator or guardianship assistance;
  - Assist with moving an older person to or from a retirement complex, assisted care home, or nursing home;
  - Offer counseling and support.

## Payment

Payment for care advocacy services is generally out of pocket, invoiced by the hour. Services are not covered by Medicaid, Medicare or by most private health insurance policies. However, some services may be billable to long-term care insurance.

To learn more about care advocacy services, call Alivity Care Advocates today.

Sources: National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers, Cress; Cathy Jo. Handbook of Geriatric Care Management. Jones & Bartlett Publishers, 2010.