

Where To Begin

An Introductory Planning Guide for Family Caregivers

This guide will help you begin to plan for the care of an older family member or friend. You become a family caregiver when you accept this role.

A family caregiver

- gives care and/or support to a family member or friend
- gives care because of their personal relationship with the person receiving care
- is not paid for caregiving and is not a volunteer. A *care provider*, such as a nurse, home care worker or doctor, provides paid services to the care receiver.

Naming your role as a family caregiver can help you

- recognize the value of the care you give
- identify yourself as part of a larger group who also care for family members or friends. Connecting with other caregivers can reduce your isolation. Together, you can present a stronger voice to government.

As a caregiver, you must look after yourself. Family caregivers are taking on more responsibilities because of early discharge from hospital, current health services and an aging population. This guide will help you identify and plan to meet your own needs. Knowing how the older person can manage the activities outlined in the guide will aid you in understanding how much assistance he or she requires. This can help you decide what you are able to do as a caregiver and what help you need in the areas of support, training and time off.

A written plan can help to reduce stress and avoid a sudden crisis. Planning gives the care receiver an opportunity to state his or her needs and wishes for present and future care. Your written notes will be a record of thoughts and actions that can contribute to organizing a plan of care.

The organizations listed in the **Resources** section of the guide may be able to answer your questions and assist you in finding the help you need. You can add your community's resources in the **Local Resources** section of the guide.

Resources: Information, Support, and Services

Canada Customs and Revenue Agency

Toll Free: 1-800-959-8281 Website: www.ccr-a-drc.gc.ca

Disability Tax Credit, Caregiver Tax Credit, and Tax Credit for Medical Expenses.

Canadian Red Cross Society

Phone: (902) 423-3680 Website: www.redcross.ca

Free lending service for medical equipment such as hospital beds, walkers, wheelchairs, raised toilet seats, commode chairs, crutches. Donations are welcome.

Continuing Care, Nova Scotia Department of Health

Toll Free: 1-800-225-7225 Website: www.gov.ns.ca/health/ccs

Information about Home Care, Long Term Care, Adult Protection and meal programs.

Family Caregivers' Association of Nova Scotia

Phone: (902) 421-7390 E-mail: fcgans@nwood.ns.ca
Toll Free: 1-877-488-7390 Website: www.caregiversNS.org

Supports family caregivers and provides information on respite, resources, day programs, support groups, and research.

Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia

Phone: (902) 454-2198 E-mail: lisns@attcanada.ca
Toll Free: 1-800-665-9779 Website: www.legalinfo.org

Information on wills, family and criminal law, powers of attorney, guardianship, etc.

Nova Scotia Centre on Aging

Phone: Associate Director (902) 457-6546 E-mail: nsca@msvu.ca
Caregiver Resource Library (902) 457-6561 Website: www.msvu.ca

Research, continuing education and community outreach/consultation on age-related issues and the Caregiver Resource Library serving all of Nova Scotia.

Senior Citizens' Secretariat - provincial government

Phone: (902) 424-0065 E-mail: scs@gov.ns.ca
Senior's Information Line: 1-800-670-0065 Website: www.gov.ns.ca/scs

*Develops policies, programs and services for seniors. Also provides a newsletter, resource library, and the **Medication Record**. Call for a free copy of the Secretariat's **Programs for Seniors**- an invaluable resource book that describes organizations, services and programs throughout Nova Scotia.*

Veterans Affairs Canada:

Toll Free: 1-866-522-2122

Website: www.vac-acc.gc.ca

Administers the Veterans Independence program, which offers home care and home maintenance services to war veterans.

Victorian Order of Nurses:

Phone: (902) 453-5800 or call your local VON office.

Website: www.von.ca

A variety of volunteer programs designed to help seniors remain independent and to support their caregivers including day programs, meals, respite, and transportation.

Health Organizations

Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia

Toll Free: 1-800-611-6345

Website: www.alzheimer.ns.ca

**The Arthritis Society –
Nova Scotia Division**

Toll Free: 1-800-321-1433

Website: www.arthritis.ca

**Canadian Cancer Society –
Nova Scotia Division**

Toll Free: 1-800-639-0222

Website: www.cancer.ca

Cancer Information Service

Toll Free at 1-888-939-3333

CancerConnection, a peer support program for the person diagnosed with cancer or their caregiver.

Toll Free at 1-800-263-6750

**Canadian Diabetes Association –
Nova Scotia Region**

Phone: (902) 453-4232

Toll Free: 1-800-326-7712

Website: www.diabetes.ca

**Canadian Mental Health Association –
Nova Scotia Division**

Phone: (902) 466-6600

Website: www.cmhans.org

**Canadian National Institute
for the Blind**

Phone: (902) 453-1480

Toll Free: 1-800-565-5147

Website: www.cnib.ca

**Heart and Stroke Foundation
of Nova Scotia**

Toll Free: 1-800-423-4432

Website: www.heartandstroke.ca

Lung Association of Nova Scotia

Toll Free: 1-888-566-5864

Website: www.ns.lung.ca

**Parkinson Society Canada –
Maritime Region**

Toll Free: 1-800-663-2468

Website: www.parkinson.ca

Local Resources

Other health organizations, home care agencies and suppliers of medical equipment listed in your local telephone book.

"Where to Begin" was created by a student from the Maritime School of Social Work, staff and volunteers of the **Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia**, the **Family Caregivers' Association of Nova Scotia** and the **Nova Scotia Centre on Aging**.

Copies may be obtained by contacting any of these organizations.

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Société Alzheimer Society
NOVA SCOTIA



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Planning Guide

Notes

1. Personal Care

Ability to manage...

- bathing/hair care
- dressing
- foot care
- mouth care
- going to the bathroom

If needed, can obtain personal supplies for...

- incontinence/ostomy
- other: _____

2. Nutrition

Ability to manage...

- planning a special diet
- grocery shopping
- meal preparation
- operating appliances safely
e.g. stove, kettle
- doing the dishes
- safe food storage

3. Health Needs

Ability to manage...

- getting, organizing and taking medications
- documenting medications
e.g. **Medication Record**
- home oxygen
- obtaining referrals to specialists and clinics

4. **Mobility and Disability Accommodation**

in the community...

- drives own car, day and night
- access to regular buses or specialized transit
- access to taxicabs

within the home and property...

- climbing stairs
- needs grab bars in bathroom, railings in hallways, etc.
- reorganization or renovation to accommodate wheelchair use

adaptations to accommodate vision loss...

- interior and exterior lighting
- large numbers on phone
- contrasting paint on door frames and stairs

adaptations to accommodate hearing loss...

- flashing light door bells and fire alarms/smoke detector
- amplified phones

5. **Living at Home Safely**

Are there concerns about...

- frequency of contact or supervision: weekly, daily, constantly
- risk of falling: personal, household hazards
- wandering or getting lost
- security: locks, alarms, Lifeline 1-800-461-3346 or similar device

Will living arrangements need to change in the future?

6. Household Chores

Ability to manage...

light housework

- changing the bed
- laundry/ironing
- vacuuming and dusting
- cleaning the bathroom

heavier housework

- taking out garbage
- washing floors and windows
- shoveling snow
- cutting grass

Organizing household repairs and routine maintenance.

7. Social and Emotional

- sees people on a regular basis
e.g. daily or weekly
- usually seems content

8. Financial Matters

Ability to manage...

- paying bills
- banking
- preparing income tax
- budgeting for expenses

9. Legal Issues

- has an up-to-date will
- someone is appointed Enduring Power of Attorney
- has expressed wishes for end-of-life care
- someone familiar with location of important papers

10. Funeral Arrangements

- cremation or burial choice made
- cemetery plot obtained
- funeral plans known

11. Your Needs as a Caregiver

Are you able to ...

- add caregiving hours to your other responsibilities
- get help for planning and providing care
- accept offers of help from others
- identify and get the knowledge you need to provide care, e.g. safe lifting, bathing, understanding dementia
- arrange for respite (time off) from caregiving
- get the emotional support you need
- recognize signs of stress and exhaustion, e.g. sleeping poorly, crying frequently, irritable, feeling overwhelmed
- maintain your health through exercise, diet and regular medical check-ups
- obtain compassionate leave, through Employment Insurance 1-800-622-6232
- apply for caregiver tax credit 1-800-959-8281
- routinely evaluate your desire and ability to provide care
