



Caregiver's Answers, Topics, and Helpful Information

In an endeavor to continually assist caregivers in their search for pertinent information regarding eldercare, our Certified Information and Referral Specialists address topics of most frequently asked questions via Caregiver's Answers, Topics, and Helpful Information (CATHI). Additionally, caregivers are invited to e-mail individual questions caregiver2@senior-resources-guilford.org and an Information and Referral Specialist will reply.

Dear CATHI,

Question: How do I know when my loved one can no longer live on his or her own?

Answer:

It can be very difficult deciding whether your loved one's living arrangements need to change. How will you know when they can't live alone any longer? Your parent or loved one will experience many difficulties as they age. It could be the loss of a spouse, different ailments, or disease. Staying alert and informed of your loved one's situation is important to maintaining their health and overall quality of life.

Safety

Many older adults are healthy but can no longer live alone safely. Dangerous obstacles including stairs, slippery floors, or tall shelves can be real hazards for seniors. Large yards with uneven terrain, poorly lit rooms, or small bathrooms in the home of the aging adult may also prove to be challenging, even hazardous. Falls can be detrimental to remaining independent at home. As they age he or she is at a greater risk of fractures from falling due to progressive loss of bone mass as part of the aging process.

Proper Self Care

The loss of friends and loved ones can have a devastating effect on seniors. Such losses can lead to withdrawal from social life, causing depression, loneliness, and can even progress toward isolation. Often personal hygiene and self-care are neglected as a result. Be observant when visiting your loved one. Take note of their physical condition. Encourage them to be as active and involved as they are capable of being.

Physical Disability and Disease

Health problems can make living alone difficult. If your loved one is experiencing a disability or disease, their quality of life and safety to live independently may be in jeopardy. Talk with your loved one and their physician about specific situations so you might be able to arrange and maintain a better living arrangement for them. This may be in their own home or somewhere else, depending on the situation. Alzheimer's disease or dementia can also be a factor. Look for signs they are forgetting more than just the little things.

Not Comfortable Alone

As a person ages, he or she may not be comfortable living alone any longer. Common signs of this are fear, depression, anxiety, feeling overwhelmed or feelings of isolation. If you consider the home hazards, health risks, loss of people in their lives, the inability to maintain a household and keep up with finances the signs might point to considering a new or different living arrangement.

It may be possible to hire a home care agency to have an aide help with daily tasks or you might need to consider home health care nursing if there are medical issues to consider. There are also many adult day programs that may be just what is needed to combat the loneliness and isolation of living alone. Take time to research and consider all the options available in your area. Include your loved one in the decision if possible. They will be much more invested in the decision if they were part of making it.

How Senior Resources of Guilford Can Help

Senior Resources of Guilford SeniorLine: SeniorLine is an information and referral service helping seniors find community resources to meet basic needs and maintain independence. Caregiver resources are also available to equip those looking for information on providing care for a loved one in their home.

Options Counseling: Senior Resources provides Options Counseling to older adults and their caregivers. Options Counseling provides guidance to individuals as they make informed decisions about long-term services and support. This service helps people think through the pros and cons of the various options while also considering the individual's current situation, values, preferences, and resources.

The information in this article was adapted from the article Signs an Older Adult Shouldn't Live Alone (Benjamin Rose Institute 2016)

Note: This is for informational purposes only.

For referrals to community organizations in Guilford County that assist older adults and caregivers with these documents, contact Senior Resources of Guilford's SeniorLine at (336) 884-6981 in High Point, all other areas (336) 333-6981 or the Caregiver Support Coordinator, at (336) 373-4816 or (336) 883-3586 in High Point.

