Société Alzheimer Society

Having a Back-Up Plan

Why it's important to have a plan and what to include in one

Why a back-up plan is important

When planning is done before the need arises or a crisis occurs, positive things happen:

- Individual(s) will assume the care or oversight and will understand more clearly what works well or what doesn't work well.
- Care or service providers will be better prepared to take over in the event of absence.
- Plans are well thought out when emotions are calmer and caregivers are not rushed to make important decisions.

Unforeseen circumstances

It is important as a caregiver to plan ahead. There could be unexpected events that will prevent you from continuing your caregiving role. Some examples of these circumstances are:

- You become ill.
- The health care needs of the person with dementia changes suddenly and you need help to manage needs.
- There is another responsibility or personal emergency that requires your immediate attention.
- You need a break from your caregiving role.
- You are unable to reach the person with dementia due to circumstances beyond your control i.e. car trouble or bad weather.

A well-thought out plan will allow you to consider details you may not have time to think about later. Planning ahead will help to decrease stress and anxiety during unforeseen circumstances and identify who your supports are and how you can reach them.

Creating your back-up plan…

A good backup plan will include having all pertinent contact information & documentation readily available. You may also wish to have considered some of the following:

- Decide who you can call to provide care and oversight. You may need a couple of people who will agree to be on-call at a moment's notice.
- Create a weekly/monthly schedule and include appointments, and on-going scheduled activities.
- Write out what a normal routine for the day would be for the person with dementia as well as strategies you use that are effective.
- Discuss fully all information with those who will be your back-up caregivers.
- Talk to all family members, so they will know your plan and have a clear understanding of their role.

Make a list of personal and professional contacts

Have a list of all the important names and phone numbers of key contacts related to the care of the person with dementia. This list could include:

- Personal contacts: Those persons that should be contacted in case of emergency and those who support you, e.g., relatives and/or friends. It would be a good idea to list the relationship that person has with the person who has dementia.
- Professional contacts: The health care team involved in the person's care e.g., doctor, case manager, home care worker(s), pharmacist, etc.
- Legal and financial information: Names of lawyers, accountants, and banking information. Include the contact names for Power of Attorney for Personal Care and Power of Attorney for Property.

Create a fact sheet of pertinent health information

- List all the current medications and dosages that the person with dementia has been prescribed so that emergency workers have that information available in the event of illness or injury.
- Provide any information specific to the person with dementia that could trigger any challenging behaviours that an outsider may need to know in an emergency.
- Write down any special health care needs that someone would need to know right away about the person. For example: needs a walker, blind in right eye, allergies, and limited use of right arm. There is a sample of a form that you could use to capture all this information within the booklet "*Handbook for Caregivers"* www.**fraserhealth**.ca/media/**HandbookForCaregivers**.pdf

Household information to have on hand

- Names of companies and contact information for water, electricity, heat, cable, and telephone, as well as well as the place where paid and/or unpaid bills are kept.
- Provide contact information for companies that provide household maintenance such as for the furnace, car, etc.

Planning ahead

Have all documentation in order so that it is accessible. For instance:

- A list of assets along with numbers of bank and financial accounts, and insurance policies. Originals of documents such as a will or a power of attorney should be kept in a safety deposit box or at an attorney's office. But it's a good idea to keep copies at home.
- Titles and deeds to property and vehicles also are important pieces of information to have handy.
- Make sure someone knows the location of the safety deposit box and keys, as well as the location of the documents at home.

A sample checklist to assist you in gathering important legal and financial information is, "*Getting Your Legal and Financial House in Order"* www.champlaindementianetwork.org/uploads/Resources/legfine2011.pdf

There are things that all of us can and should do to be ready for an emergency. No one can truly prepare for a crisis. However, advance planning and communication will go a long way to help decrease stress and anxiety.

This Fact Sheet is provided courtesy of the Alzheimer Society of Ottawa and Renfrew County

Further information on this topic

Visit the following websites:

- www.caregiverstress.com/home-care/planning/planning-better-prepare-families/
- Handbook for Caregivers: www.fraserhealth.ca/media/HandbookForCaregivers.pdf
- Getting your Legal and Financial House in Order: www.champlaindementia.org

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