

## What is Long-Term Care Planning?

Long-term care is the term used to describe the range of care-related services and supports a person will need over a long period of time. According to the National Clearinghouse for Long-Term Care Information, 70% of Americans age 65 and older will require some type of long-term care services during their lifetime; more than 40% will require nursing home care.

Long-term care needs are often defined by an individual's need for assistance with activities of daily living (ADLs): eating, bathing, dressing, toileting, transferring, and continence. However, long-term care can also include assistance with instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs): housework, meal preparation, medication management, shopping, money management, pet care, and emergency response (such as fire or storm response). Typically, long-term care is needed when an individual faces a chronic illness.

### Why Plan for Long-term Care?

The costs relating to long-term care can quickly add up: In Virginia, the average annual cost for assisted living is \$45,000; nursing home care averages \$6,000 monthly, and home health care averages \$17 per hour. Understanding long-term care options and discussing how to pay for them prior to needing care will allow an individual to effectively plan. Too often, choices about long-term care are made during crisis (hospitalization or sudden illness), when decisions are borne of necessity and availability. If care options are explored prior to crisis, the individual in need of care can have a voice in the decision-making.

### Types of Long-Term Care

#### FAMILY SUPPORT

The most common form of long-term care services involves *informal care* in the form of family support. Often family members will assist with cooking, cleaning, hygiene, medication management, dressing, transportation to doctor's appointments, and other tasks that have become difficult for the individual to perform due to age or illness.

The advantage of informal care is that it is extremely flexible and can easily be tailored to the needs of the individual. It is often inexpensive to patients and allows them to remain in a familiar home setting.

However, family support can be extremely costly in ways that many do not consider. Many family caregivers will take time off from work to assist loved ones. This costs the caregiver financially in terms of lost time at work, lost ability to contribute to retirement plans, and lost opportunities for promotion. This is often referred to as a "negative inheritance." More importantly, there is significant added stress on the caregiver in terms of caring for their loved one as well as maintaining their own job and family obligations.

#### COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Community support services include programs such as Meals on Wheels, Lifeline or Life Alert systems, Medication Management machines, and transportation services available through local senior service agencies. Community support services are appropriate for individuals who remain largely able to perform their own personal care and housekeeping yet require minimal monitoring to ensure safety.

Community support services are paid for out-of-pocket by the care recipient, but fees are often based on a sliding scale and are minimal compared to family support or home health care. They may also be combined with other services described herein to allow for a complete plan.

#### HOME HEALTH CARE

Home health care involves either privately paid care provider or a home health care agency evaluating the individual's needs, then providing a professional in-home service provider (*formal care*) to meet those needs. The services of the professional caregiver can include the same services as a family caregiver such as light housework, cooking, shopping, transportation to appointments, socialization, hygiene assistance, etc.

The advantages of home health care include the ability to stay in a familiar setting, personalized and professional service, and a reduced burden on family. There is also a preventative element to home health care. Early and constant care can prevent a situation that precipitates a crisis and more serious illness.

Home health care may be paid for by a long-term care insurance policy or the individual's own funds. There are also some Medicaid Community Based Care benefits which may be used to pay for in-home care and the Veteran's Aid & Attendance benefit can be used to assist with paying for home health care.

### **PROGRAM OF ALL-INCLUSIVE CARE FOR THE ELDERLY (PACE)**

PACE is the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly. The individual can be transported to the PACE facility and will participate in PACE activities and will have all of their medical care needs met during the daytime. However, at the end of the day, the individual will return to their home. PACE requires that an individual need assistance with their activities of daily living. Due to the design of the program, no overnight support is included; therefore, it is often necessary to combine PACE services with others described within this report.

The PACE program allows an individual to remain primarily in a familiar setting while having daily care needs met. PACE can be paid for with the individual's funds, VA Aid & Attendance, or Medicaid.

### **ASSISTED LIVING**

Assisted Living Facilities offer several levels of care, from independent living to assistance with activities such as medication management and personal care. Assisted living facilities offer meals, housekeeping, and transportation, as well as a number of opportunities for the individual to socialize and be entertained. Assisted living also eliminates the burden of maintaining a house. Typically, assisted living facilities are appropriate for individuals who need assistance with activities of daily living. Secured memory care units may also be available to individuals with dementia-related illness. Memory Care staff receive specialized training in memory and behavior issues; Memory Care units offer programs and

services designed for those experiencing cognitive decline.

Assisted Living costs can be paid for with an individual's own funds, long-term care insurance or the VA Aid & Attendance benefit.

### **NURSING CARE**

Nursing care is typically provided in a nursing facility. Care provided can be intense and is designed for individuals who need substantial assistance with their activities of daily living. Nursing care provides the advantage of 24-hour trained professional medical professionals. Nursing care also offers opportunities for individuals to socialize, and minimizes the burden of maintaining a separate home.

Nursing care can be very expensive; however, some minimal nursing care may be covered by traditional Medicare and Medicare supplemental insurance. An individual's own funds, long-term care insurance, VA Aid & Attendance, and Medicaid may also be used to cover the expense of nursing care.

### **Learn More**

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Virginia Beach | 277 Bendix Road, Suite 400 | Virginia Beach, Virginia 23452  
Olde Towne Portsmouth | 355 Crawford Street, Suite 720 | Portsmouth, Virginia 23704  
Elizabeth City | 905 West Church Street | Elizabeth City, North Carolina 27909

757.452.6200 | F: 757.452.6201 | [www.OastTaylor.com](http://www.OastTaylor.com)

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