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Exploring New Caregiver Options [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 11/2012

Key Messages:

- Caring for a person with cancer involves many tasks, and many caregivers often need additional support.
- There are many options that caregivers can consider for help with both medical and non-medical caregiving responsibilities.

Providing care to a person with cancer is often an enormous responsibility, and it is common for caregivers to discover that they cannot physically or emotionally handle all of the necessary tasks on their own. If you feel overwhelmed, consider exploring other caregiving options. It is important to recognize that asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. By seeking assistance, you can make sure that the person with cancer continues to receive effective care and that you have time to take care of your own health and well-being.

Professional caregiving resources

Consider hiring medical or non-medical professionals who can help you provide high-quality care and/or help you manage various other responsibilities.

Medical professionals. These professionals, who may be associated with an agency or work independently, typically help with medical responsibilities that families are not able to perform or are not comfortable performing. Some health care providers, such as [registered oncology nurses](#) [3], can provide services, including wound care, chemotherapy administration, [hydration](#) [4] and [nutrition](#) [5] advice, and [pain management](#) [6]. Home health care aides can handle less complex medical issues, such as checking a patient's temperature and blood pressure.

Meanwhile, [physical therapists](#) [7] (health care professionals who treat conditions or injuries that affect a person's ability to move around) and occupational therapists (health care professionals who teach people ways to do daily tasks that have become difficult as a result of an illness or injury) can also provide assistance with [rehabilitation](#) [8].

Non-medical professionals. Home care aides (sometimes called companions or personal attendants) help a caregiver and the person for whom they are caring with everyday tasks, such

as bathing, grooming, cooking, cleaning, errands, and more. Talk with the patient's health insurance company about whether it covers any of these services, and take some time to explore all [home health care options](#) [9].

Community resources

Beyond medical and physical care, many communities have a wide range of resources available to caregivers, including:

Case management. Some organizations have trained case managers that work with you and the person with cancer to coordinate services, such as home care, transportation, and meals. Some case management services are free if the person meets certain eligibility requirements.

Legal aid. Local legal organizations may provide assistance with legal issues, such as [advance directives](#) [10]. An advance directive is a legally binding set of instructions that explains the medical treatment preferences that the person with cancer would want upheld if he or she became unable to make the decisions.

Financial assistance and counseling. Local agencies may be able to help you and the person with cancer manage financial issues related to cancer treatment. Find [financial resources](#) [11].

Food delivery. Some for-profit and nonprofit organizations deliver nutritious meals directly to a person's home. Talk with a social worker for more information.

Friends and family

Make a list of people within the patient's personal support system and identify who could best help with specific caregiving tasks. This list could include emergency contacts, close friends and relatives, neighbors, and members of a religious community. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Many people want to help provide care but aren't sure if it is wanted or needed. That's why it's important to specify the type of help you need, either when you are asked or when you are [delegating responsibilities](#) [12].

Hospice services

[Hospice care](#) [13] offers a full spectrum of physical, emotional, social, and spiritual support for people living with advanced cancer and their families. This type of care is typically provided in a patient's home, but it can also be provided in a hospital, an inpatient hospice facility, a nursing home, or other long-term care facilities.

Referrals

You can get referrals to agencies and community resources from the patient's doctor, oncology social worker, or nurse; members of local or online support groups; or state or county health agencies.

More Information

[How Caregivers Can Take Care of Themselves](#) [14]

[How an Oncology Social Worker Can Help](#) [15]

[The Cancer Legal Resource Center: Helping People Navigate Cancer-Related Legal Issues](#) [16]

[Caregiving](#) [17]

Additional Resources

[Family Caregiver Alliance: Community Care Options](#) [18]

Links:

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/caregiver-support/exploring-new-caregiver-options>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24396>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24702>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24985>

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24585>

[7] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24388>

[8] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25397>

[9] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25030>

[10] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25278>

[11] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25370>

[12] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25032>

[13] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25281>

[14] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25031>

[15] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24556>

[16] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24700>

[17] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25009>

[18] http://www.caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/content_node.jsp?nodeid=1992