

# *Family Fact Sheet*

## **Caregiving: Putting Together a Care Team (Part 2 of 4)**

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As caregiving is such a monumental task, no one person can be expected to handle the situation alone. Truly, it takes a team of individuals, both professional and non-professional, to provide the support needed to care for another person. Putting together this “care team” is not as easy as it may sound. The following information will help you decide whom you need on your care team.

Health professionals should be key members of your care team. This means involving more than just a physician; health professionals include nurses, pharmacists, dentists, therapists and nutritionists, among others. With your care recipient’s permission, you should feel free to discuss health concerns with these professionals. Health professionals may want to have insight into the life and health of your care recipient, so you should be prepared to answer questions. Also, remember to ask questions. The health of your care recipient will be best served if discussions with health professionals are “active” conversations – both parties discussing issues.

Here are some tips to help you before, during and after your appointment with a health professional:

- Make a list of concerns. This will help you remember to address all issues.

- Update the health professional on any changes since the last visit. Make notes between visits so that you are sure to remember everything and take them with you to your visit.
- Be honest and stick to the point. Your health professional is only as good as the information he or she is provided.
- Share your point of view and ask questions. Remember that health professionals do not know everything.
- Take notes and/or ask for a written copy of recommendations.

A part of your healthcare team should also be someone who represents social services, such as home care, home delivered meals and financial support, among others. These professionals may help identify resources to aid in implementing the recommendations of your health professionals. A social services professional may also be able to help you locate other members of the community who should be included on your care team. An excellent place to start looking for help in the social services arena is your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA). In Texas, you may find the nearest AAA by calling 800.252.9240 or <http://www.tdoa.state.tx.us/Services/AAALocatorMap.htm> on the internet. Some AAAs in Texas have caregiver specialists who may best assist you with your questions – be sure to ask when you call if your AAA employs such a person.

While it is important to include professionals in your caregiving, you should not overlook the value of using other family members to help you. Service professionals certainly have a deep interest in your care recipient but it often pales in comparison to the interest that a family member may have. You and your family should discuss the strengths, weaknesses and individual ability of each other concerning the care of your loved one. A plan should then be devised to best approach the caregiving situation, taking into consideration what contributions may be made by the group in addition to those that may be made individually. If the group of caregivers plans an approach to the caregiving situation in advance where tasks and responsibilities are pre-assigned, there is less likelihood that strife will emerge later. If other family members are unable or reluctant to be a part of your care team, you may choose to request financial support in lieu of hands-on help.

Always remember that there is a job for everyone – you do not need to do it all. You should be ever searching for someone or some group who may help you provide the best care possible for your care recipient in addition to helping provide for your self-care. Your role as a caregiver will also include being a coordinator of services and team leader for your care team.