

Care Partner Roles and Responsibilities

Care Partner Tool Kit

Have you ever pondered all that caregiving or being a care partner entails? Many people underestimate what is involved in providing compassionate care. People tend to think about the more tangible aspects of caregiving—the *tasks* involved—because those concerns are most often addressed in articles and literature.

According to the AARP statistics for 2020 nearly one in five (19%) Americans are providing unpaid care to an adult with health or functional needs and in the past 5 years the number of caregivers providing care to an adult or child with special needs has increased from 43.5 million to 53 million. Much of this care provided includes assistance with daily living activities such as: providing transportation, shopping for groceries or other essentials, housekeeping, managing finances, preparing meals, dispensing medications, and more. In addition to performing tasks, care partners also serve in many different roles or there may be multiple care partners each taking different roles.

Some of the more common roles include:

- **ADVISOR**- Offering recommendations to help a loved one identify potential challenges, talking about concerns, sharing information, and considering alternatives that may help to maximize his or her independence and quality of life.
- **ADVOCATE**- Looking out for a loved one's best interests as an authorized agent (e.g. [Power of Attorney](#), etc.). Ensuring the person you serve gets the information, care, support, and treatment he or she needs and deserves. This often includes the LEGAL role.
- **COORDINATOR**- Arranging for services, such as professional caregiving, physical therapy, yardwork, repairs, scheduling appointments, coordinating deliveries, helping facilitate end-of-life planning, and more.
- **EVALUATOR**- Assessing a loved one's ability to live independently, handle his or her own personal care, manage medications, operate a motor vehicle, and more. Also, identifying and evaluating appropriate programs and services that best match a care receiver's needs and wishes.
- **MEDIATOR**- Helping family members and others communicate with health care and social service providers, make decisions, and resolve issues in a positive and helpful manner.

- PROTECTOR- Taking charge when necessary to help ensure the safety and well-being of a loved one.
- PROVIDER- Providing assistance when a loved one is not able to care for him or herself due to physical or cognitive limitations. Assistance often addresses the following types of needs:
 - EMOTIONAL- Listening and responding to concerns, providing encouragement and moral support, and simply “being there” for someone.
 - FINANCIAL- Organizing bills, writing checks, balancing checkbooks, and providing money to help cover expenses.
 - PHYSICAL- Assisting with daily living activities, including personal care, household chores, meals, driving, etc.
 - SOCIAL- Maintaining regular contact and minimizing isolation and boredom through relationships and helping loved ones stay in the loop.
 - SPIRITUAL- Helping people find meaning and purpose in life, maintaining hope, coping, and finding peace through prayer, meditation, and cultural, and religious preferences.

Each of these roles is important and Care Partners need to think through who is taking each one and if there are ways to share with other family members or supportive people. Even when it is not thought through intentionally people naturally take on various roles or their loved one expects certain roles. And then there are sometimes care needs left unmet. In any case the fact remains that there are legal roles which need to be understood, including when different documents come into play or what happens if documents do not exist and so there is a question as to who has legal rights or access. There are nuances related to medical and financial decisions and this is often where difficulty and stress arises for families. You will want to know what your loved one’s wishes are and make sure they have the appropriate documents prepared and signed before they are needed.

As a Care Partner takes on the various roles it is important to make sure that you have support too, so consider looking for a Caregiver support group perhaps with your faith community, somewhere locally, or online. Additionally, often tele consultations and resources for caregiving are available to you the Care Partner as part of your work benefits package so check with your benefits provider.

Learn more about roles and find specific resources at <http://www.aarp.org/caregiving>, <http://www.caregiver.org/caregiver-resources/all-resources/>, <https://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Index.aspx>

This Quicksheet is part of the [Care Partner Tool Kit](#) where you can find additional Quicksheets on other Care Partner topics and a Resource Roadmap with websites and books. For additional resources, see the resource library page for the partners in this project [POAMN \(www.poamn.org\)](http://www.poamn.org) and [APCE \(www.apcenet.org\)](http://www.apcenet.org) or the [Office of Christian Formation \(www.pcusa.org/formation\)](http://www.pcusa.org/formation)

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