

Caregiving and the Church

Care Partner Tool Kit

One can find care partners or caregivers within any congregation or faith community. They might be taking care of a child with a disability, a family member with cancer, an aging parent, a spouse with dementia, or a friend. Many also feel the responsibility of taking care of frail parents at the same time as they are raising a child with physical challenges. They might be helping a family member who is affected with mental illness or addiction. Whether their caregiving is temporary after surgery or an injury, or long term for someone with Parkinson's or Down Syndrome there is a lot your faith community can do to support them.

Here are some suggestions of way to be supportive as a faith community:

- Offer your building space for a support group. Many organizations like the Alzheimer's Association are looking for places to hold one of their support groups or it could be just a general support group for all caregivers; a safe place for them to meet with people who face the same challenges they do.
- Start a support group for care partners. (see the [How to Guide Quicksheet](#) in this [Care Partner Tool Kit](#))
- Send caregivers/care partners an encouraging note. Consider forming a "card writing" group that meets monthly to prepare and send cards to caregivers and the partners they are caring for. Or ask a Senior who may not be able to come to events but who is looking for a way to support others to write notes.
- Put caregivers/care partners on your prayer list—not just the person who is sick. Let them know they and the ones with whom they care are being prayed for.
- Offer respite to care partners who are spending many hours in hospitals so their loved ones will not feel alone.
- Offer respite care to care partners who need a break from the person they are caring for to go to the grocery store, get their hair done or just have a change of scenery. Even one hour of respite can mean a lot to someone.
- LISTEN. This can be as simple as a phone call, email, or text- it does not always need to be in person. Knowing that someone is listening to you who is neutral about your situation can be a huge help.
- Offer to go to where the care partner is to just simply be with them whether it is at home, hospital, or a facility like a nursing home.

- Take small thoughtful gifts like magazines, healthy snacks, books, or their favorite food. You would be surprised how welcome the smallest thing can be.
- Consider starting a meal train to help a care partner who is taking care of their loved one who has just come from the hospital and will be convalescing at their home.
- Ask your congregation to start a lending closet of small medical equipment like walkers and canes to lend to care partners and their cares.
- Help care partners by offering to provide transportation for their loved ones to regular doctor's appointments, pharmacies, physical therapy, and occupational therapy.
- Support a care partner by helping create a care team of people organized by a deacon or faith leader so that there is a group of people to take on different roles. This is extremely helpful for families who live out of town and the care receiver is part of our faith community/congregation.
- Place regular articles in your church newsletter about services/resources that can benefit persons who are caregiving.
- Share inspirational devotions in bulletins or newsletters specifically geared for care partners.
- Offer to bring a caregiver's care partner to church services and activities.
- Serve as translator with service professionals if a language barrier exists (or locate one).
- Link the care partner to the National Family Caregivers Association (NFCA), a service organization not disease or age specific, for resource materials, advisory support, and advocacy: www.nfcacares.org or 1-800-896-3650.
- Link people to the local Area Agency on Aging through the U.S. Administration on Aging Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116 or www.aoa.gov. Click on Elders and Families, then NFCSP for information on the National Family Caregiver Support Program which provides services, counseling, caregiver training and respite care.
- Share the additional resources in this [Care Partner Tool Kit](#) with members of your faith community or ministry partners including the Resource Roadmap full of website links and books.

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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