

# OANHSS NEWS

*A publication for friends and families of Ontario's seniors*

## Help is available



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Recently, while driving home from work, I caught a radio talk show that had a 10-minute segment on caregiving. Many people from across the city phoned in to discuss their situations.

One comment from a health care professional grabbed my attention. He said that until he started training to become a personal support worker, he "didn't even know what a Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) was."

I immediately wondered how many other callers weren't aware of this vital government-funded community resource. Of the people who weren't aware, how many would know of the range of other caregiving support resources, both public and private, available in their communities?

Fortunately, resources are available in almost every community. The challenge sometimes is to find them. Every caregiver, if they haven't done so, should contact their local CCAC and have their needs assessed. Caregivers should also connect with disease-specific associations and organizations (such as the Alzheimer Society of Ontario) for more support. And they should see what other resources are available.

Finding these support sources may take time and effort, but it can save a lot of stress and prevent further health problems in the long run. In the world of care, a little help certainly goes a long way.

Access the "We're here for you" section on the OANHSS home page at [www.oanhss.org](http://www.oanhss.org) for links to helpful resources.

## The caregiving journey, part two of a series



## Take control of eldercare

"Caregiving isn't like retirement planning," says Bob Spence, owner of an eldercare consulting service in Toronto. "It's not something that people think about until they absolutely need to." In fact, most family caregivers often only seek help when they are burned out and looking for assistance.

Fortunately, help is available. The challenge, however, lies in that many family members don't know where to begin to find support. "When it comes to providing good care, the trick is finding an access point—the people who have the maps that can help you," says Spence.

### Navigating the system

Those who can help caregivers navigate the system can be found in many places, but the best place to start is with the local Community Care Access Centre (CCAC), a government-funded agency that provides information about home and community support services. CCACs also determine eligibility for government-funded services, including long term care homes. And the service, funded by the government, is provided free. (see Resources at end of article.)

"We respond to any call for help," says Cathy Szabo, Executive Director of the Central CCAC, one of 14 that provide services to Ontario residents. Upon contacting their local CCAC, a caregiver will be visited by a case

manager/care coordinator who will conduct an in-home assessment to determine the level of help needed and develop a service plan.

Gail Carlin, Director of Senior Services, Region of Waterloo, is familiar with the help that a CCAC can offer. Her mother, who lives in another city and has dementia, needed assistance to safely live in her own home. "My siblings and I started with the CCAC, which assigned a case manager who provided an assessment and gave us direction. We also arranged for a psychogeriatric assessment through mom's family physician to determine what other help mom needed."

### Finding the right support

Caregivers can access several care options through the CCAC and other resources. These options, which help older adults live as independently as possible, can be divided into two broad categories: (1) home and community support services, which include visiting health care professionals, personal care, homemaking and community support, and (2) residential care, which includes supportive housing, retirement homes, and long term care homes. The first option helps older adults stay in their own home, and the second one helps people live in a place that provides the level of support they need.

Choosing the right support depends, of course, on each person's situation. Some

caregivers use a combination of home and community services to help their loved one stay in their own house. Others help the older adult find a place with on-site assistance and opportunities for social interaction. Finding what works best for a specific situation depends on the care receiver's needs, preferences, support network, eligibility and finances.

For in-home care, The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) defines four categories of support services: visiting health professionals, personal care and support, homemaking, and community support services. These services can be funded by various sources such as the government, private insurance or benefit plans, or they can be paid for by an older adult or their family. And help can be delivered by family and friends, volunteers or volunteer organizations, commercial agencies, and community centres. Caregivers often find solutions to their situation by mixing different sources of support and funding.

#### Taking the time

"Support is available," says Carlin, "But it does take some time to research and to find out what services exist." Carlin started with the CCAC to learn about the resources in her mother's community. She then followed up with the services. As well, she found a few additional resources in her mother's city via the Internet and then followed up with each provider by phone to learn more, including the cost of their services and whether or not they had waiting lists.

Caregivers can also hire an eldercare/geriatric care manager, a professional (such as a social worker, occupational therapist, or nurse) whose role is to help older adults and family members in making care-related decisions. Audrey Miller, Managing Director of Elder Caring Inc., mentions these professionals act "as guides and advocates." Eldercare managers provide a variety of services, including health and wellness needs assessments, in-home safety assessments, and advice on services

and accommodations. They also help families come together to make appropriate plans, help older adults navigate the health care system, and provide monitoring services for caregivers who live a distance from their parent.

Eldercare managers are not covered by the MOHLTC, so caregivers do have to pay for their services. Caregivers who do hire a manager will find they aren't limited by the constraints of the public system. "Elder care managers often have fewer clients than a CCAC case manager, so they are able to provide answers and respond more quickly. And many offer flexible hours and are available to meet on holidays, evenings or weekends," says Miller. In some cases, a caregiver's private extended health care plan may cover some of the fees associated with hiring an elder care manager. And some companies, through the human resources department or an employee assistance plan, may provide support.

Caregivers can find elder care managers through their local CCAC, family physician, or through the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers (See Resources below).

People caring for an aging parent can also turn to many other community resources provided by both for-profit and not-for-profit providers. For example, community mental health and addictions services, found in the local phone book, may be of assistance. Family service associations and other community senior services at the municipal level, and, in larger cities, regional geriatric programs can also offer help.

#### Connecting with services

"When it comes to providing care, it's important to not get too overwhelmed," suggests Carlin. Part of not becoming overwhelmed is looking for and connecting with the wealth of community resources available to caregivers. It may take some time and effort, but the support provided will not only reduce the stress associated with caring for an older adult but also improve their quality of life.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING?

#### Dining in good company

St. Matthew's Bracondale House's congregate dining program is unique. Both residents of Bracondale's seniors' housing building and seniors from the community can take part.

The program is run by staff member Todd Hazelton and chef Margaret Welsh who, with the help of volunteers, each week plan and prepare daily lunch-time meals and four nourishing evening meals. The communal dining experience allows Bracondale residents to enjoy a hot meal and the pleasant company of older adults from their community.

#### A day away

In Thunder Bay, St. Joseph's Care Group's Alzheimer Day Program, located in

the beautiful Manor House, provides clients with a safe, comfortable atmosphere to spend the day and offers



caregivers with needed respite.

The program gives individuals with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia an opportunity to socialize and participate in recreational and leisure activities.

#### Support when you need it

With only 20 beds, North Renfrew LTC Services may be a smaller home, but it certainly provides a model level of care. The organization has what Administrator Kim Rodgers refers to as an "open door" policy: any caregiver from the community can walk into the facility at any time and she or he will be helped to find the resources they need. North Renfrew is connected to or provides a number of helpful services, including Meals on Wheels, local and long-distance transportation, an adult day service, diner's club, supportive care apartments, respite care and more.

#### Need help? Here are a few websites you'll want to visit:

Ontario Association of Non-Profit  
Homes and Services for Seniors  
[www.oanhss.org](http://www.oanhss.org)

Ontario Community Care Access Centres  
[www.ccac-ont.ca](http://www.ccac-ont.ca)

National Association of  
Professional Geriatric Care Managers  
[www.caremanager.org](http://www.caremanager.org)

Regional Geriatric Programs of Ontario  
<http://rgps.on.ca>



The Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors (OANHSS) represents not-for-profit providers of care, housing and services for seniors in the province of Ontario, serving over 140,000 people every year.

For more information, contact OANHSS at 7050 Weston Rd., Suite 700, Woodbridge, ON L4L 8G7 Tel: 905-851-8821 Fax: 905-851-0744 or visit [www.oanhss.org](http://www.oanhss.org)