



HOW A GERIATRIC CARE MANAGER CAN HELP

“As a widow living alone, my health problems began interfering with my ability to handle many personal care needs. Without the help of a geriatric care manager I wouldn’t have been able to continue living on my own”

— Marilyn, 83 years old

Geriatric care managers (GCMs) are professionals helping older adults needing assistance to continue to live in their communities. These specialists have expertise in assisting older adults facing challenges related to every day living. The challenges may range from coping with unexpected or long-term health problems to feeling lonely and isolated. It can be overwhelming to determine what kind of help is needed to improve one’s life circumstances, where to find helpful services, and how to coordinate and pay for them. Older adults often find that the involvement of a GCM improves everyday living, making life easier and less stressful.

What is a Geriatric Care Manager?

You are not alone if you are not familiar with the term Geriatric Care Manager (GCM). Even though the profession is growing rapidly, many older adults and their families are still unaware that GCMs can be a supportive care option. GCMs are often used when family or friends are unable to help with some or all of the assistance needed to care for older adults. These needs may include personal care, household tasks, and managing complex health, financial, legal, family or psychiatric issues. The GCM’s goal is to ensure you receive the best possible care in order to maintain a comfortable, safe, and independent lifestyle. A GCM is trained to determine an older person’s needs and locate, plan, and supervise care.

A GCM typically has advanced training and a license in gerontology, social work, nursing, and/or counseling and may have experience in client advocacy, long-term care, and/or psychotherapy. While there are no licensing requirements for GCMs, there are certification programs. Geriatric Care Managers often have a large network of other geriatric professionals with whom they collaborate, such as physicians, social workers, nurses, psychologists, elder-law attorneys, and financial advisors. GCMs also have access to specialized geriatric resources in their communities.

Why Might I Need A Geriatric Care Manager?

You may find it helpful to use a Geriatric Care Manager if:

- You experience feelings of being overwhelmed with everyday tasks such as housecleaning, cooking, doing laundry, paying bills, managing medications and completing insurance paperwork.
- Your family members or friends are not available to provide the type or amount of help you need.
- Your family members do not live near you and would like to hire a GCM to do the things they wish they could do for you.
- You prefer not to involve family and/or friends in your care needs.
- You do not have anyone in your life to help you at this time. This could be due to many reasons, including loss of a loved one, having moved to a new location, or because a person who was helping you can no longer do so.
- You experience a change in health status, whether temporary, like a broken ankle, or permanent, such as Parkinson's disease.
- You have a desire for peace of mind to know there is someone to call who can respond immediately should a crisis occur.
- You need someone to help you interview, check references and background of potential care providers who will be helping you in your home.
- You would like to move to an assisted living facility or nursing home, but cannot explore these options on your own.

What Services Do Geriatric Care Managers Offer?

Geriatric Care Managers can help you in a wide variety of areas ranging from coordinating caregiver services to helping you manage medications to paying your bills. The services match your individual needs depending on your circumstances. Services that a geriatric care manager often can arrange, coordinate, and monitor include:

- Secure, screen and monitor health care and service providers (e. g. housekeepers, home health aides, household repair persons, meal delivery service, etc.)
- Communicate and be a liaison with physician, family and others.
- Coordinate medical care and advocate for you in hospital settings.

- Assist with adherence to prescription medications, e.g., organize and document prescription medication and instruct on proper administration. (This service is most frequently available when the GCM is a nurse.)
- Review financial issues and provide money management services.
- Review legal issues and assist with wills, power of attorney, guardianship, etc., and provide referral to geriatric experts such as elder care attorneys or financial advisors.
- Organize insurance forms and procedures and apply for appropriate benefits/entitlements.
- Recommend and arrange social services or activities that promote physical and emotional well-being (i.e. social, recreational and intellectual activities).
- Coordinate modifications to the home for safety purposes.
- Provide face-to-face visits and/or phone support.
- Conduct crisis management and intervention.
- Provide counseling and emotional support for such things as depression, anxiety, or grief from loss.
- Provide family counseling.
- Assist with change in living arrangements and monitor new living situation.

At the first visit with you, which is done in your home, the GCM will conduct an assessment of your situation and how well you are managing day to day. This usually includes an evaluation of your physical, psychological, mental and social functioning, as well as of your financial resources. It may also include a consultation with physicians. An example may include the following: “Are you able to shop for food and prepare your own meals?” “If not, who helps you?” “Is this help providing you with enough assistance for nutritious meals?” “If not, would it be helpful to arrange for a meal delivered to your home?” A GCM uses the information gathered to develop a detailed action plan for you. Then, the Geriatric Care Manager, you, your loved ones, or a combination of involved persons can coordinate and monitor the services you receive. A care plan also includes regular reassessments and allows for changes as your needs change.

How Should I Evaluate a Geriatric Care Manager?

In evaluating whether or not to hire a GCM, you must feel confident that this professional is capable and experienced. You must also be able to trust this person since he or she will have access to personal documents and intimate information about you. You can expect a GCM to be on time and be someone who can provide the agreed upon and proper level of care, someone who will be respectful to you and your home, and someone who is sensitive to your needs and concerns.

Some key questions to consider are:

- Am I comfortable talking with this Geriatric Care Manager? Does he or she listen to and understand me?
- What credentials does the Geriatric Care Manager have that qualify him or her to coordinate my care (e.g. certification, courses, training)?
- How long has he or she been a Geriatric Care Manager?
- Does the Geriatric Care Manager specialize in a particular area (e.g. memory loss) reflecting the kind of experience I need?
- When is the Geriatric Care Manager available?
- How quickly can this Geriatric Care Manager respond to my needs?
- Does the Geriatric Care Manager have positive references from previous clients or employers?
- If I am unable to make decisions due to a health crisis or for any other reason, can I trust this Geriatric Care Manager to represent my wishes e.g., contact important people in my life, pay my bills?

If you have any concerns about the quality of care or type of service you may receive from a potential Geriatric Care Manager (or from someone who is currently providing care to you), you should never keep the concerns to yourself. *Trust your instincts.* Discuss your concerns with someone with whom you are comfortable. This person might be a family member, a friend, or your health care provider. If you are uncomfortable, you should consider terminating the relationship and interviewing for another Geriatric Care Manager.

How Much Do Geriatric Care Managers Cost?

A Geriatric Care Manager's fees vary depending on the work setting (private practice, public agency or private non-profit agency).

Private geriatric care management can be a valuable option for older persons and their families who can afford such services. Remember, you may only need geriatric care services intermittently after an initial care plan is in place. Private GCM's fees can range from \$50-\$200 per hour depending on where you live, what services you need, and whether additional initial assessment fees need to be charged. Most GCMs will also charge for out-of-pocket expenses. These may include charges for mileage, care giving supplies, long distance telephone calls, and other similar costs. It is important that you understand in writing the GCM's billing rates and exactly what services will be provided.

Some communities offer low-cost or no-cost case management or care coordination services through senior service organizations or non-profit community based care programs. Your local Area Agency on Aging (which can be found through the Eldercare Locator in the resource section of this handout) can direct you to specific organizations offering these low or no-cost services.

Neither Medicare nor Medicaid covers the cost of geriatric care management fees. However, some long-term care insurance policies cover geriatric care management services. Some insurance companies, employers, and health plans are beginning to offer care management services. It is worth checking with your insurance plans and employers to see if care management is an available benefit.

How Do I Find a Geriatric Care Manger?

The National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Manager's Web site (listed in the resource section at the end of this handout) is a good place to start when looking for a GCM. This Association's Web site includes a searchable directory of professional Geriatric Care Managers by geographic area. To obtain a list of local referrals, you may want to check with local agencies, such as your local Area Agency on Aging (which can be found through the Eldercare Locator in the resource section of this handout), senior centers, non-profit organizations like the Alzheimer's Association, an elder law attorney, or your health care provider.

Where to Get Help

National Resources

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). This national non-profit organization provides a series of articles about the emerging field of long-term care specialists called Geriatric Care Managers (GCM).

Tips are available on how to find and hire a GCM, the costs involved, and the possible pitfalls of this type of service. These articles can be found at AARP Bulletin Online.

Phone: 1-888-687-2277.

Web site: www.aarp.org/bulletin/yourlife/a2003-06-26-caremanagers.html

Eldercare Locator. This public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging connects older Americans and their caregivers with information on care managers and provides referrals to state and local area agencies on aging and community-based organizations. Phone: 1-800-677-1116.

Web site: www.eldercare.gov/Eldercare/Public/Home.asp

National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers

(NAPGCM). This non-profit organization site will answer all your questions about Geriatric Care Managers (GCMs) including how to find one, the benefits of using one, what to do once you have found a care manager, and ways to make using one a positive experience. This organization has also established a code of ethics and standards of practice that each member-practitioner must follow. An online resource for locating GCMs in your area is also available from this site.

[delete bullet] Phone: 1-520-881-8008. Web site: www.caremanager.org

Family Caregiver Alliance. This non-profit education and advocacy organization addresses the needs of families and friends who provide long-term care at home. They also offer free publications, including the “Handbook for Long-Distance Caregivers” from their site that includes information on care managers.

Phone: 1-800-445-8106. Web site: www.caregiver.org

New York City Resources

New York City Department for the Aging. This agency addresses the needs of elderly residents of New York City and should be able to direct you to the community based services that are available to address long term care planning needs, including care managers. Phone: 1-212-442-1000. Web site: www.nyc.gov/html/dfta