



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

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**NEW TOOL FOR CAREGIVERS FACING THE
LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY CONVERSATION**
“Caregiver Conversation Checklist” Offers Families Helpful Hints

(CHICAGO) May 20, 2008 – For many caregivers, one of the most difficult parts of placing a loved one in a long-term care facility can be initiating the conversation. Caregivers of loved ones with Alzheimer’s disease face even more challenges and sensitivities due to the nature of the disease and its complex symptoms.

The Alzheimer’s Association, which began as a caregiver support group in 1980, recently introduced CareSource, a new section on alz.org where caregivers can find useful tools for decision-making and care. Some of these tools include:

- **Senior Housing Finder** – The first free, nationwide dementia-specific senior housing database, powered by SNAPforSeniors®. This web-based tool allows users to search and screen senior housing options throughout the United States by location, facility name, license type, availability, care services and lifestyle amenities. It even allows users to view the dementia care levels a facility provides, consistent with the seven stages of Alzheimer’s disease progression.
- **NEW Caregiver Conversation Checklist** – A guide for families discussing housing options. This checklist offers families suggestions and tips for determining if long-term care is appropriate and explains how to broach the conversation in a healthy and productive manner.

“Long-term care facilities continue to improve, offering innovative features such as personalized environments and increasing positive interactions and relationships between staff and residents,” said Peter Reed, senior director of programs for the Alzheimer’s Association. “The Alzheimer’s Association offers tools such as the new Caregiver Conversation Checklist and Senior Housing Finder to aid and educate families throughout their caregiving journey.”

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Caregiver Conversation Checklist

Even under the most optimal at-home care circumstances, a long-term care facility may be able to offer a more safe and comfortable environment for someone with Alzheimer's disease. The following is a checklist of talking points and helpful hints to begin a series of relevant conversations with your loved ones.

1. Determine if it is time to talk about long-term care facilities.

Reasons to seek long-term care vary from person to person. In addition to potentially offering a more safe and comfortable environment, long-term care may be beneficial for the mental and physical health of the caregiver.

To ensure your loved one is able to contribute to his/her future, introduce alternate housing options as early as possible, even before necessary. Ask them questions about lifestyle or health-related challenges. Continue the conversation over time by sharing your observations and concerns.

2. Schedule a family meeting.

A family meeting can move the topic of long-term care to a more focused discussion that can lead to a plan. The following is a checklist for planning your family meeting:

- Determine who should be involved directly or indirectly in decision making. This may include extended family members, close friends or paid caregivers. Always include the person with Alzheimer's disease if he/she is capable of taking part in any decision making.
- Consider including an independent third party as a mediator. This could be a minister or other member of the clergy, a social worker or case manager.
- If necessary, find a neutral place to hold the meeting.
- Prepare an agenda to help you stay focused.

3. Continue to involve family.

The move to a long-term care facility is an immense transition for any family, so it's important to involve everyone close to the person with Alzheimer's disease.

- Reach out to family to secure their input and support. For example, share online information about long-term care facilities to get greater involvement and participation.
- If there are unequal expenditures of finances or time among family members, acknowledge the distribution of resources and discuss a strategy for achieving a balance that appeals to everyone.

4. Continue to engage the person with Alzheimer's disease.

- Have ongoing conversations on "good days" at times when your loved one is feeling best and there are few distractions.
- Introduce the idea of an overnight stay in a long-term care facility or an extended afternoon visit to get a feel for the various available options.

5. Begin researching long-term care options in your area.

- Go to Senior Housing Finder on alz.org to access the first free, nationwide dementia-specific senior housing database that provides information about what level of dementia care service the facility can support.
- Enter your city, state, zip, county or address and begin researching options by category of housing.
- View the listing details or contact the facility to ask questions and schedule a site visit.
- Check references from existing or prior residents or families.
- Contact your local Alzheimer's Association chapter.

“Optimally, the search for appropriate senior housing should begin early to find the right fit,” said Eve Stern, RN, MS, president of SNAPforSeniors. “Using the Senior Housing Finder, you can search for senior housing communities that fit your initial criteria and subscribe to those you may want to visit or watch for availability. You can also receive alerts and notifications about those facilities. It’s a convenient way to keep track of the housing option that fit your geographic, personal care or financial needs.”

For a full suite of online tools to assist families in assessing and navigating care decisions, visit www.alz.org and click “CareSource.” To find out more information about Alzheimer’s disease, call the Alzheimer’s Association’s 24/7, toll-free hotline at 800.272.3900.

The Alzheimer’s Association

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer’s disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer’s. For more information, visit www.alz.org.

About SNAPforSeniors®

SNAPforSeniors®, Inc. is a Seattle-based information company and developer of the most current and comprehensive web-based senior housing resource and listing service in the United States. This resource puts objective information about the nation's 60,000+ licensed senior housing facilities at the fingertips of consumers and their advocates. SNAPforSeniors combines advanced search tools with detailed information to connect seniors with the right housing options the first time. Through the Alliance Network Program, SNAPforSeniors licenses and private-labels its database and search tools to the websites of leading trusted sources, including the Alzheimer's Association and the Case Management Society of America. For more information, e-mail info@snapforseniors.com or call 1-206-575-0728.

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