

Geriatric Care Management—Questions and Answers

What is Geriatric Care Management?

A *geriatric care manager* may be a social worker, nurse, gerontologist, counselor, or other professional. Geriatric care management (GCM) provides assistance for you and your loved one in finding resources, making decisions, and managing stress. GCM provides “one stop shopping” for care for you and your loved one. Geriatric Care Managers may also be members of the Aging Life Care Association (ALCA). These professionals must meet stringent education, experience and certification requirements and adhere to a strict Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.

Why would someone need Geriatric Care Management?

GCM is especially helpful for long distance caregivers but is helpful for anyone needing some extra guidance and help in caring for someone with dementia. GCM can help families and ill loved ones cope with complex issues and can help families and their loved ones with decisions connected to aging. This includes assistance in all aspects of long-term care, whether at home, in an assisted living facility, or in a nursing facility. If your loved one requires special services or changes occur in their health or life, then geriatric care management (GCM) may be helpful for you.

What do Geriatric Care Managers do? What services do they offer?

A geriatric care manager coordinates care and services to meet the full social, emotional, physical, and healthcare needs of your loved one. Geriatric Care Managers do not specialize in all areas so it is important to find out whether a specific care manager has experience in dealing with your specific needs.

Geriatric care managers might help in some of the following ways:

- **They conduct an in-person assessment.**

A thorough assessment allows the care manager to understand your needs, customize their plans, and perform services *specifically* to meet you and your loved one’s needs. Interview questions cover a range of issues relevant to your loved one’s health and living situation. These issues include everyday activities, nutritional status, safety, memory, depression, finances, insurance, health history, and more.

- **They make a care plan.**

A care plan includes the results of the assessment, recommendations, and referrals for local community options. The care manager will go into great depth in explaining some of the details of the plan, what led to the recommendations, and what you can expect. They will then help to prioritize the list.

- **They arrange services.**

Services will be tailored to the needs identified in the care plan. Some of the services offered and arranged by a geriatric care manager are: crisis intervention, counseling and support, consumer education and advocacy, money management, referrals, decisions regarding appropriate housing options, assistance with relocation of the older adult, advising families on power of attorney or guardianship issues, serving as a liaison to families at a distance, making sure things are going well, and alerting families to problems.

- **They monitor needs.**

Once services and arrangements are in place for your loved one, regular monitoring is important. There also should be frequent re-evaluations to make any necessary adjustments. The geriatric care manager needs to monitor your loved one’s capabilities and functions as time goes on. This will improve the *quality* of your loved one’s life, as well as your own.

How will I pay? Does Medicaid, Medicare, or health insurance cover geriatric care management services?

Services are billed privately on a fee-for-service basis. Check with the agency or private geriatric care manager as to whether or not a sliding scale fee can be established. Care management services provided by geriatric care managers are **not** covered in most policies and currently are **not** recognized as billable services by either Medicare or Medicaid, however, some long term care policies provide coverage. A geriatric care manager can outline the general cost of services in order to find the best way to provide affordable services for you and your loved one.

Questions to ask when talking with *Geriatric Care Management agencies*:

- Is the agency knowledgeable about dementia and associated care needs?
- How long has the agency been in business?
- How long has the agency been doing geriatric care management?
- Does the agency provide accredited, licensed clinical social workers, Masters level counselors, and/or gerontologists?
- Are the care managers certified? If yes, what are their certifications?
- Is this agency affiliated with a professional organization? If yes, which ones?
- Are references available upon request?
- What kind of supervision do you provide for your care managers?
- Does the agency have 24-hour availability, 365 days a year?
- Will you provide me with a list of all charges, such as phone calls, driving time, counseling, and case management?

Questions to ask when talking with an *independent Geriatric Care Manager*:

- Are you knowledgeable about dementia and associated care needs?
- What is your philosophy on independent living versus nursing home care? (We recommend that the geriatric care manager shares similar views on what is important to your loved one.)
- Are you a certified care manager?
- What are your professional credentials?
- Are you licensed in your profession?
- What professional organizations do you belong to?
- How long have you been providing care management services?
- Are you familiar with the area resources?
- Are you available for emergencies? Can I reach you easily?
- How do you communicate information to me?
- What are your fees? (These should be provided in writing to the responsible party prior to service.)
- Can you provide me with references?
- Do they carry personal liability insurance?

To find a Geriatric Care Manager:

- Call the Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline at 800.272.3900 or conduct a search by zip code through the Alzheimer's Association Community Resource Finder: www.alz.org/crf
- Conduct a search through the Aging Life Care Association website:
<http://www.aginglifecare.org/>
 - Midwest Chapter:
http://www.aginglifecare.org/ALCA/Regional_Chapters/Midwest_Chapter