

Who Provides Long-Term Care?

When independence is limited because of a chronic illness, many individuals find themselves requiring additional assistance. Depending upon the level of assistance required, care may be administered at home, in the community or within a facility.

Receiving care at home

When determining the appropriate plan of care, physicians often look to the client's home as the preferred location. Not only is it familiar to the patient, but it also promotes emotional well-being for the entire family.

The most common providers of home care are family and friends. However, their assistance is not always available on a 24 hours a day basis. When extensive care is required, the family may decide to hire third-party home health care providers.

Home health care providers can be divided into two main categories, and are typically provided through home health care agencies, or by qualified and independent care providers. Some examples include:

- ***Professional Home Health Care Providers-*** registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, licensed vocational nurses, occupational therapists, physical therapists and speech therapists, or
- ***Personal Home Health Care Providers -*** licensed social workers and nurses' aides.

To assist those families whose adult children work during the day, and may be unable to provide ongoing care, adult day care facilities* may be a practical alternative. Designed to promote social interaction while meeting the health care needs of long-term care recipients, adult day care offers caregivers the time necessary to meet their own day-to-day responsibilities at home and at work.

Moving to a facility

Moving a loved one into a facility can be stressful and time consuming. Is it the right thing to do? Is it the right facility? How will the bills be paid? These questions are not easy to answer. To make an informed decision, it is important to know the choices of facilities available in your area.

Today, there are many types of facilities from which to choose; the levels of care available range from limited, or custodial, assistance to skilled nursing. The services and licensure needed by a facility is often determined by the state. However, some types of facilities may not be approved to do business in all states.

One type of facility is an alternate living facility.** These facilities are designed to meet a wide range of individual needs within a residential-type setting. A typical facility can accommodate anywhere from 5 to over 100 residents. Depending on an individual's needs, units may be adapted to facilitate physical activities like bathing and meal preparation.

Care delivered in nursing homes is also evolving. As the cost of hospitalization increases, many people complete their recovery in nursing homes. Nursing homes offer a less expensive alternative to some types of care and therapies formerly available only in a hospital. Some nursing home residents stay long enough to regain their independence and then return home. Others may find they continue to need assistance throughout the day and remain at the nursing home for extended periods of time.

*Also known adult day health care facilities, adult day care centers, and in Washington only adult day health care facilities.

** Also known as residential care facilities (California only) or assisted living facilities.