

FINDING THE CARE YOU NEED

While we all cherish our independence and do what we can to preserve and extend it, there of course comes a time. Many delay and deny, but it is clear that by giving up a little we may gain a lot – more time and energy to do more pleasurable things, easier access to places and people, and of course, greater security and safety in our home. In our hearts we know we'll all need help at some point. Over the next several articles I hope to put together something of a handbook dealing with the process of when and how to set up care in the home when that time comes. This is a very individual process, but there are some common issues to consider, including:

- What kind of help is needed (the job description)
- Finding appropriate help (pros and cons of private duty and agency care)
- Background checks
- Hiring, firings, supervising and legal issues
- Setting up care for a partner or spouse
- Cost and insurance issues
- Care managers and advocates

I opened up this discussion several months ago when the campus councils reviewed with me the Lathrop Caregiver Policy. This was established in response to a well-publicized case of a hired caregiver in a Lathrop Townhome misrepresenting their credentials and eventually abusing the resident family's trust. If you haven't yet, I urged you to review that original policy in your Resident Handbook. While the original intent of the policy was to help guide Lathrop residents toward safe and appropriate care, the general consensus was that it was overly restrictive and inhibited a resident's ability to secure caregiving services that matched their needs. Despite stated intentions and many years of effort, the plan for Lathrop to operate a cost effective care service for all residents was determined to be not viable. The Enhanced Program at The Inn can meet many of the care needs of those who choose to make that move, but even there, Lathrop residents may need to turn to the marketplace to keep themselves securely "aging in place" as the years progress. (It is assumed that Lathrop residents chose not to be part of the complete Life Plan programs that other Kendal Affiliates and such communities offer. The Lathrop board has cleared the way for the Kendal at Home affiliate to yet bring that option to Lathrop, but more on that when plans become clearer.)

Each resident has a unique set of variables to consider, in particular what role family might play in the actual caregiving duties, or more likely, in the process of setting up and supervising those services. Despite my title as "Care Coordinator," I am unable to make and maintain contractual decisions for individual residents, nor can Lathrop commit to securing the care for all residents while allowing residents the independence that lies at the heart of our community. I am certainly available to help individual residents and their families assess evolving needs for care, and I have helped direct many toward resources that have hopefully meet some of those needs. This multi-part series is intended to be a tool for all.

PRIVATE DUTY REFERRAL

The question of hiring Home Care Agency staff versus a private, individual caregiver is at that heart of this consideration. I will try to lay out the pros and cons around this choice, but as an interim step, I have put together a short list of private individuals, well known in the Lathrop Community, and have completed background checks such that I can provide referrals for those eager to engage help now. I also continue to provide a short list of Agencies and hope to readdress those agencies to allow for a more systematic comparison. If you have positive recommendations (or concerns) to share, please pass them along.