

Caring



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Mae Carpenter, Commissioner Dept. of Senior Programs & Services



Andy Spano

A Message from the County Executive

Surviving the Storm

Weathering a Nor'easter or hurricane isn't easy for anyone – but storms and power outages present special challenges for caregivers who may be faced with juggling responsibilities in two homes. That's why planning ahead for storm season is so important for caregivers.

We all saw the severe damage the Nor'easter left in our county. If a hurricane or tropical storm hits Westchester, the situation could be far worse. Unfortunately, experts say there is a very high chance of an above-normal hurricane season from now through November, with an expected seven to ten hurricanes likely forming in the Atlantic Ocean.

I hope that caregivers like you will find a new Westchester County video helpful as you make plans for yourself and the family members or older friends who rely on you.

The video, which can be accessed from our website – www.westchestergov.com -- tells residents how they can prepare their homes for the devastation of hurricanes and tropical storms. It offers information on advance planning, packing supplies and figuring out where you and loved ones can stay if there is a need to evacuate.

To view the video, go to the "Services" section on the drop down menus and look for "Keeping Safe," or go directly to www.westchestergov.com/keepingsafe.htm.

The video can be viewed online at <http://www.westchestergov.com/>.

From this same section, web visitors may also access a new online tool – the hurricane evacuation zone finder -- that shows coastal areas that may need to be evacuated if a major storm comes our way. You can enter your care-recipient's address and community to find out if he or she is in an evacuation area.

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From the Deputy Commissioner Diane Booker

Asking for Help

Caregiving is a tough job. Caregivers are dedicated individuals who have made the commitment to help their loved ones –but sometimes they are the ones who need help.

Whether you are taking your Mom to the doctor once a month, preparing supper a few days a week or providing personal care 24/7, you may need help to get the job done. Many caregivers receive no outside help, and are heading for a physical and emotional burnout. They feel they have to do it all themselves and should be able to handle the job; if they can't, they feel guilty.

Caregivers need to recognize they cannot do it all alone. It is hard to keep all those balls up in the air; eventually some are going to come crashing to the ground. When caregivers become too stressed or tired, they get depressed, suffer from stress-related illnesses and set the stage for abuse of their care-receiver either through neglect or verbal and physical abuse.

The first step is to clearly define the help that you need.

Sit down in a quiet place and make a complete list of all the tasks you do for your loved one. Include personal care, such as bathing, dressing, and brushing teeth and errands such as grocery shopping, going to the pharmacy, and going to the cleaners. Be as specific as possible. List tasks that you do occasionally also, such as take your Mom to the beauty parlor. List tasks even if you know you can not delegate them. This gives you and others complete information of what you do. Group them into categories such as personal care, meals, shopping & errands, etc. You may be surprised to find out how much you

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From the Deputy Commissioner *Cont'd from page 1*

really do and how much you really need help. When you write everything down, you may find there are more tasks that others can do for you than you first thought. Your list may look something like this:

Personal Care & Meals

Showering

Dressing

Cooking meals

Laundry

Shopping & Errands

Supermarket – weekly shopping

Dry Cleaner

Pharmacy

Post office

Library – for books, tapes, videos

Doctor visits

Internist

Cardiologist

Podiatrist

Optometrist

Now, mark those you feel you and only you must do,

Home Maintenance

Vacuuming

Mopping

Mowing the lawn

Gardening

Misc.

Walking the dog

twice a day

Bringing Mom to

senior center or the

beauty salon

such as showering and dressing your loved one. The tasks that remain are the ones you are going to try to get help with.

Don't forget to ask for respite for yourself, so you can take a break and care for your own needs. Ask a friend to come and stay with your loved one while you go out and do something just for yourself. If you have children in the home, friends and family can help you by driving the children to school, sports and after school activities, and even help with homework.

The next step is to make a list of possible sources of that help. When caregivers are asked who can help them, many caregivers say there is no one. But when asked to write down all the people they know, caregivers are surprised by how many people they actually know who could be possible sources of help. These include;

Family

Friends

Neighbors

Cont'd on next page

Visit a Caregiver Resource Center Caregiver Resource Service Centers provide advice, information and services to assist caregivers in their role of caring for an elderly family member. Our five Full Service Centers are staffed by professionals who can provide direct services and referrals. Please call to make an appointment at any of the following centers:

Westchester County
Department of Senior
Programs and Services
9 So. 1st. Ave., 10th Floor,
Mt. Vernon, NY 10550
(914) 813-6300

Northern County Senior Services
1974 Commerce St., 3rd. Floor,
Yorktown Heights, NY 10598
(914) 245-9167

ElderServe
170 Hamilton Ave.(at the Lighthouse)
White Plains, N.Y. 10605
(914) 683-7530

Yonkers Office for the Aging
2 Park Ave., Yonkers, NY 10701
(914) 377-6822

Alzheimers Association
785 Mamaroneck Ave.
White Plains, N.Y. 10605
(914) 428-1919

Resource Centers You can find literature, Internet resources, videos and other information on caregiving in designated sections at the following local libraries:

Greenburgh Public Library
300 Tarrytown Road
(914) 993-1600

Ossining Public Library
53 Croton Ave.
(914) 941-2416

Rye Free Reading Room
1061 Boston Post Road
(914) 967-0480

Somers Library
Route 139, Reis Park
(914) 232-5717

Katonah Village Library
26 Bedford Road
(914) 232-3508

Field Library -Peekskill
4 Nelson Ave.
(914) 737-1212

Scarsdale Public Library
54 Olmstead Road
(914)722-1300

Warner Library- Tarrytown
121 N. Broadway
(914) 631-7734

New Rochelle Library
One Library Plaza, 3rd. Fl.
(914) 632-7878

Port Chester Library
1 Haseco Ave.
(914) 939-6710

John C. Hart Memorial Library
1130 Main Street, Shrub Oak
(914)245-5262

White Plains Library
100 Martine Ave.
(914) 422-1400

**Caring
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Members of faith-based organizations
Members of service organizations and clubs, such as Rotary, Lion's club
Employee assistance counselor

Even long distance family members can help by making regular phone calls, giving financial support, making phone calls to agencies or doing Internet research for you regarding services available.

Many times when we think of people we can ask to help us we think only of women, who traditionally are the caregivers. But don't overlook the men! Men can mow a lawn, fix a leaky faucet, move furniture, take items to the recycle center, and maybe even install a hold bar in the shower. You won't know until you ask.

Most caregivers need help, but unfortunately, they don't ask for it. They struggle along doing the best they can. Sometimes caregivers don't ask for help because they feel no one can do it as well as they can. This may be true, but someone else may be able to get the job done -- even if it is not done exactly as you would have done it.

Asking for help is hard sometimes. Just as it takes courage to be a caregiver, it takes courage to ask for help. Don't be embarrassed to ask. Everyone needs help at some point in their lives.

How to ask

You may start by saying something like: "Sue, I am finding it difficult to do all I need to take care of my Mom. I really could use some help. I especially need someone to sit with her Wednesday afternoon for two hours while I do the grocery shopping and run some errands. Do you think you would be able to help me out in this way?"

If they cannot stay with your Mom, you could next ask if they could help with the shopping and errands you need done. More often than not, when you make a very specific request, that person will try to accommodate you or do something else for you.

It is important to remember that it is "OK" for someone to say no. They may be having a difficult time in their lives and cannot take on another responsibility. You never know, there may be a time in the future when they can help.

You may want to enlist a friend to act as a coordinator for you. Some people are natural advocates, and if there is someone like that in your life, it would be wise to use them. Provide them with all the

details on the help you need, so they can be prepared when they make the calls.

If it is formal help you need, be prepared before you call agencies. Have a pad and pen ready by the phone and take notes during the conversation. Be polite, introduce yourself, and ask for the person's name. It is important to find out about services, as there may be services your loved one and you may be eligible for.

Be prepared when friends offer to help. Keep a list of those errands you need help with in your purse and when someone offers, you will be able to give them a choice of things they can do for you. By giving someone a choice of specific tasks they can do, it is more likely they will offer to do at least one of them. When someone has helped, remember to express your sincere appreciation.

It is important for the caregiver to ask for emotional support also. Get help if you feel overwhelmed, depressed or angry a lot of the time. Talk to a clergyman, friend, or counselor. A good way to gain emotional support is by attending a caregiver support group. A support group reduces isolation and provides comfort. It is also a place where people are sharing many of the same feelings and situations you are going through. Studies show that having close social ties reduces depression; enhances one's health and increases resilience when faced with the challenges of life.

Remember, the Family Caregiver Support Program of the Westchester Department of Senior Programs and Services is here to help. The program provides free information on all aspects of caregiving, on services for caregivers and seniors, and can help in obtaining those services. Caregiver counselors can review your caregiving situation and provide guidance about your options. The program is a vital link to support services such as respite, home care, nutrition sites, home delivered meals, support groups and adult day care centers. Most of all we can provide hints and encouragement on how you can take care of yourself. This enables you to experience a good quality of life and protects your health. When you are feeling good and are healthy, you can provide the best care for your loved one. It is important to know that you are not alone, there is help available.

All you have to do is ask!
Call the Family Caregiver Support Program at 245-9167

Message from the County Executive

Cont'd from page 1

For caregivers, storm planning carries special considerations. Caregivers helping a loved one with a condition that affects mobility, judgment or other functions must try to devise plans that accommodate those needs.

Experts tell me that caregivers can plan ahead in different ways.

First, evaluate your care-recipient's special needs. You may want to speak with his or her physician to learn about any special instructions regarding hurricanes and other storms. You may need to gather information about any medical devices, such as pacemakers and oxygen tanks, in use. You should know, for example, if wheelchairs and other devices can fit in the trunk of a car that might be used in an evacuation.

The Westchester video, which features Anthony W. Sutton, our Department of Emergency Services commissioner, also provides information on developing a disaster plan for your family.

Disaster Plan

A disaster plan should outline what each member of your family needs to do in an emergency. Every family member should know whom to call and where to go before a hurricane strikes.

To prepare for weathering a storm at home, people with disabilities – like everyone else – should prepare a disaster supply kit, containing the items they need to survive. The kit should include bottled water, canned food, flashlights, radios and batteries. Other important supplies may include extra batteries for hearing aids or electric wheelchairs and extra prescription medications. They should also contain cash, credit cards and any important documents in waterproof containers. Gas tanks should be kept at least half full in case of an evacuation.

Caregivers may have to accept that they could be separated from elderly loved ones during a bad storm. Try to set up a support network of family, friends, neighbors or staff of social agencies. You'll need a plan to communicate between you and the team – and trust them to be able to provide help before or after a storm.

Your plan should take into account the following:

- Special equipment for feeding or respiration;
- Wheelchairs and walkers that are needed;
- Needs of any service animals;
- Special foods and snacks;
- Equipment for personal care such as a shower bench,; incontinence supplies;
- Regular medical treatments, such as dialysis;
- Backup for electricity-dependent equipment.

As part of your plan, caregivers should consider writing a detailed description of the person's individual needs, including their daily routine and how to help them deal with stress.

Our video also explains the importance of following instructions from local officials. If a hurricane is forecast, the county will establish ongoing communications with local officials. Together, they will determine what protective actions residents should take.

For more information on preparing for hurricanes, visit

www.fema.gov/hazard/hurricane/hu_season.shtm
www.nhc.noaa.gov/HAW2/english/prepare/supply_kit.shtml
www.redcross.org/static/file_cont207_lang0_94.pdf
www.hurricanes.noaa.gov/
www.nod.org/emergency
(or call the National Organization on Disability at (202) 293-5960 (voice) or (202)293-5968 (TTY))

“Me Time” for Caregivers

- Get outdoors, get outdoors, get outdoors!
- Visit your local farmers market
- Go to a local park
- Check Calendar of Events in paper on town or county website, www.westchestergov.com
- Turn off the TV, turn on the radio and listen to music you enjoy
- Watch the sunrise or sunset
- Buy a lightly fragranced powder to keep you feeling fresh in humid weather
- Buy a floppy, straw hat
- Pick up travel brochures in a travel agency, even if you can not go now it is fun to plan a dream vacation for the future

“Me Time” for Caregivers (cont’d)

- Treat yourself to an ice cream cone, iced coffee or an exotic flavored ice tea
- Make fruit smoothies with fresh fruit
- Go on a picnic
- Sit under a shade tree
- Go to an fall festival, eat new foods and browse the stalls
- Go to a museum on a Sunday
- Take a ride on the Taconic and enjoy the fall leaves
- Buy a pumpkin

Upcoming Events for Caregivers

Sept. 19, from 2 to 4 p.m.

The Woodlands at Ardsley
1017 Saw Mill River Road, Ardsley

“Planning ahead for an Elderly Loved One – What You Need to Know”

A panel of experts in the aging field will share helpful information for caregivers including support services, Alzheimer’s information, advance directives and planning for long term care.

Light refreshments will be served

Please RSVP 914-693-7700

Oct. 10, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Phelps Memorial Hospital Center (Main Lobby)
701 North Broadway, Sleepy Hollow

“The Family Caregiver Support Program”

Free information and the opportunity to talk to caregiving experts on all aspects of caregiving including services available to Westchester County residents.

Nov. 13, from 7 to 8 p.m.

Phelps Memorial Hospital Center
701 North Broadway, Sleepy Hollow

“Who is Taking Care of the Caregiver?”

Information on the support services of the Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services’ Family Caregiver Support Program.



An Answer to Your Questions

Ask Mary Edgar-Herrera about caregiving

Q. I am a full time caregiver to my dad who lives with us and suffers from dementia. My family and I are planning a Walt Disney World vacation this year. I don’t think he would enjoy the trip and I also feel I need to get away from the situation, reconnect to my kids, and recharge my battery. I feel guilty about leaving home and I know I cannot leave him alone. Any suggestions?

A. A. Sounds like you are headed for a well deserved vacation! Go and enjoy the time spent with your family. Respite services may be the solution to your program. Respite provides temporary substitute care to an elderly homebound person allowing the caregiver some necessary time off. Respite can be a few hours in the home or several days in an assisted living, skilled nursing home or hospital setting. In your situation, you may want to look into respite services where you father can go and stay for the week. He would be in a safe environment, care and meals would be provided. Another option is having a 24 hour home health care worker stay with your father. For a booklet on respite services and for more information, call the Family Caregiver Support Program.

If you have any questions about caregiving, send it to Mary Edgar-Herrera at the Department of Senior Programs and Services, 1974 Commerce St., Room 209, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598, or e-mail her at mle5@westchestergov.com. Ms. Edgar-Herrera will answer questions of general interest and can withhold your name if requested.

In Brief *Tips and services*

Fighting depression

Seniors have one of the highest risks for depression. Some 22,000 seniors over the age of 60 will be affected in our county alone this year. Are you one of them? As in younger adults, clinical depression may be precipitated by adverse life events, including poor health, loss of friends or loved ones, loss of physical functioning or loss of self-esteem related to aging.

Depression is not a normal part of aging, however, the process of aging can be lonely and increase one's vulnerability. In addition, medications for other health-related problems can also trigger depression.

Because men are not diagnosed as easily and are less likely to reach out for help, they have a higher incidence of suicide. Men also tend to have less social supports in their life and are therefore at greater risk for isolation and loneliness.

Improved recognition of depression in the later years can help an individual enjoy that time of life and feel more fulfilled. Depression should not be tolerated as part of the expectations of aging. With the proper treatment, an individual will have more energy to pursue areas of interest and more desire to have social connections.

For free information or referrals for treatment, call the Depression Support Network at (914) 995-5236.

New legislation database

A searchable online database of caregiving-related legislation is now available on www.caregiver.org. Developed by the National Center on Caregiving at FCA, the database will be updated monthly. The resource includes a wide range of federal and state legislation related to family caregiving.

Bills can be searched by state or according to the policy strategy used to support family caregivers, such as tax incentives, Medicaid policies, and respite assistance.

More than 100 bills with provisions to help family caregivers were introduced at the federal and state levels in the last three years. Five of the 26 federal bills introduced in the 109th Congress (2005-2006) were enacted into law. Out of the 32 states that introduced 78 caregiving bills between 2004 and 2006, one out of four states (13) enacted 16 bills into law.

Visit the Federal and State Legislation section of FCA's website today.

Website upgraded

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) has launched a more user-friendly BenefitsCheckup website. The site is a free and confidential online service that helps seniors determine what benefits they qualify for and how to claim them. The upgraded website "has more consistent navigation to help seniors, families and other users find what they are looking for faster and easier; including applying for Medicare Part D's Extra Help, or finding and enrolling in... many other Federal, state, local and private benefit programs."

HHS launches new website

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Aging (AoA); the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS); and the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) recently launched a new website, the National Clearinghouse for Long-Term Care Information. It provides information about long-term care

planning, services and financing options, and tools to help people begin the planning process.

Let us contact you in an emergency

Westchester County is expanding its communication system to allow the public to be contacted directly in case of a large-scale emergency.

We can use e-mail, text messaging, and/or phone messages to provide information to you before, during, or after a major storm or other disaster. This information might include updates about emergency conditions, what to do, where to go, etc.

This added effort is intended to supplement — not replace — information you will receive from television, radio, and other sources. It should not replace individual and family emergency planning.

VA benefit can help

The Department of Veterans Affairs wants caregivers to know about an under-used, special monthly pension benefit called Aid and Attendance.

This benefit can aid wartime veterans and surviving spouses who have in-home care or who live in nursing-homes or assisted-living facilities. To qualify, claimants must be incapable of self support and in need of regular personal assistance.

Additional information and assistance in applying for the Aid and Attendance benefit may be obtained by calling 1-800-827-1000. Information is also available on the Internet at www.va.gov or from any local veterans' service organization.

Join the Mailing List

If you would like to be on our mailing list for future issues of Caring, please call 245-2094.