

Five Reasons to Hire a Geriatric Care Manager

By Attorney Maria Baler

As an elder law attorney, I often refer clients to geriatric care managers to assist them with the non-legal aspects of planning for current or future care needs. When I discuss the role of a geriatric care manager (GCM) with my clients, many of them are unfamiliar with this profession. GCMs are an important member of the team of advisers that elders and their family members should call upon when an elder begins to need care or assistance.

Here are five ways a geriatric care manager can help:

- 1. You or your spouse needs assistance finding resources to help you stay in your home and maintain independence.** Many elders prefer to remain in their home as they age. There may come a time when staying at home requires outside assistance with certain tasks such as housekeeping, cooking, bathing, dressing, grocery shopping, and transportation. A GCM can help elders and their families evaluate the type of help needed to allow an elder to remain in her home, and then help the elder and her family locate and implement that assistance.
- 2. You have decided that it is time to leave your home, but you are not sure what type of senior living community is right for you.** There are many different types of senior living options. Elders move from their home for many different reasons – for a more social and collegial environment, to obtain needed care or assistance, or to be closer to family members. GCMs are familiar with the different types of housing options available and can help you weigh the pros and cons and decide what's right for you.
- 3. Your loved one is being discharged from a hospital or rehabilitation center and needs to move to a nursing home for a short- or long-term stay.** GCMs spend a lot of their time talking with nursing home staff and visiting facilities to check on their clients. They are familiar with the facilities in their communities and the strengths and weaknesses of each. One of the most valuable things a GCM can do is evaluate an elder's needs and make recommendations for nursing homes tailored to those needs. This is much more useful to a family than ratings on a website or the recommendation of a friend or neighbor, whose loved one may have had very different needs.
- 4. You are a child who lives far away from your parents.** GCMs fulfill a much needed role in assisting elders whose family members do not live nearby. A GCM can check in on the elder periodically and report back to the family about the elder's status. A GCM can accompany the elder to routine doctor's appointments or can be on call to accompany the elder to a hospital or emergency room if an unexpected crisis occurs. Following such appointments, a GCM can help implement next steps (i.e. medication supervision, further testing, etc.), and communicate with family

members and agencies to keep everyone on the same page. A GCM can monitor caregivers that assist the elder at home or in a facility and make changes as needed. In short, a GCM can be the eyes and ears of the family, providing monitoring, follow-up, and advocacy for an elder.

- 5. You or your family members need support and guidance.** When a family member needs care or assistance it is often a confusing and difficult time for the family. The person who needs assistance may not agree that assistance is needed. Family members may have limited time, resources, or expertise, or live too far away to provide regular assistance. The process of locating and maintaining caregivers or other assistance can be confusing and overwhelming to family members. A GCM can provide professional guidance in these areas, recommending appropriate services or housing options and helping the family implement those recommendations. GCMs can also provide emotional support to families and assist with complicated family dynamics and emotions around changing circumstances.

Geriatric care managers are a wonderful resource for professionals, their elderly clients, and family members of elders. GCMs can smooth the way through difficult transitions, find solutions and resources, and become a trusted advisor, both in crisis and everyday situations. To find a GCM near you, consult the Directory on the website of the New England Chapter of the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers at www.gcmnewengland.org.

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