

Tips on Finding Information for Family Caregivers

Finding information, services, resources, and sources of support for your family member and yourself can be quite overwhelming. Here are some tips that can make the search faster, easier, and a little less frustrating.

- **Ask someone else to help.** Friends and family will often ask you if there is anything that they can do to help. Looking for information and resources is an ideal task to ask someone else to help with.
- **If you can, use the Internet.** The Internet is an easy and quick way to obtain information. One caveat: information on the Internet is variable and sometimes inaccurate. It is important, therefore, not to rely on one site alone. Also, is the sponsoring organization a reputable and reliable source of information? What is its financial stake, if any, in the information provided? When was the website last updated?
- **Be sure to use *both* the Internet and the telephone to obtain information.** New information is always available and things might have changed since they were posted on a website. It's a good idea to verify information by calling the agency and talking with one of its representatives.
- **Before you call an agency, write down specific questions to ask the agency representative, and be as concrete and detailed as possible.** Take advantage of the fact that there is actually someone on the line to talk to you. If you find this person helpful, get his or her name and ask to speak with him or her if you need to call again.
- **Many agencies will send you information that overlaps with or repeats information you have already received from other organizations.** If you obtain a good list of places to call for help, therefore, do not look for other lists until you have exhausted your current one.
- **Expect a delay in receiving information you have requested.** Make sure you let the agency know that you need the information as soon as possible, and ask for information over the phone until you receive materials in the mail. If you have not received anything within two weeks, chances are you never will. Do not hesitate to call back and request the information again. Usually, a second request receives prompt attention.

- **If you have to leave a message when you phone an organization, be sure to call again.** Many agencies that help caregivers are too small to have someone always available to answer the phone. Leave a message, but be sure to call again if you have not heard back in a few days.
- **Be creative.** Many of the services offered by even the largest agencies do not serve everybody. Create your own personal resource network. This could include contacting community-based agencies to find out what kinds of support services are available in your area. It could involve contacting your local grocery or drugstore to make special arrangements for home delivery of food, medications, or other items. You might consider contacting local businesses, boys and girls clubs, or schools to find out if they have special volunteer programs that might be of assistance. Being creative could also include speaking with government representatives for help, support, and referrals to services.
- **BE PERSISTENT.** No matter how much you may want to, do not give up. You may have to go through several series of phone calls, letters, agencies, programs, and institutions to get what you need.