



How can I provide meaningful support from a distance?

When family members live far away from the person with care needs, it may be challenging to determine how to provide meaningful care and support. Too often, in these situations, all of the care and support falls on the shoulders of one primary care partner who lives close. Here are some tips and ideas to help provide meaningful care and support even when you live far away from the person with care needs.

1 Gathering information

When there's a new diagnosis, a new medication, or a new therapy option, you can volunteer to gather information in order to help the person with care needs and the primary care partner make medical decisions. For example, you can "research" healthcare providers, insurance options, local services, or support groups.

2 Scheduling appointments and organizing a calendar

It can take a good deal of time to schedule healthcare provider appointments and manage the calendar of the person with care needs. By setting up and utilizing an online family calendar, you can help the person with care needs and primary care partner coordinate all the complex things that go along with care and support. Offer to make calls, schedule appointments, and add events to the family calendar.

3 Online shopping

Grocery store delivery and online shopping options make assisting with shopping easier than ever. Consider taking care of weekly grocery shopping online and scheduling a delivery or pick up at a time that is convenient for the person with care needs and/or the primary care partner. These days, shipping is available for almost any item that might be needed.

4 Filling mail order prescriptions

Similar to online shopping, most insurance companies provide an option for mail order prescriptions. Sometimes, by using this option, you can get 90-day refills instead of just 30-day quantities. Volunteering to set up the mail order feature and managing that process can be a real time-saver for the person with care needs and primary care partner.

5 Providing financial assistance

If you are able, you can contribute money toward items to help the person with care needs or lighten the load for the primary care partner. For example, you could cover - or share the cost of - a housekeeper, someone to mow grass or shovel snow, transportation expenses (gas, bus passes, auto maintenance, auto insurance premium), or health care expenses (prescription co-pays, Medicare supplement premium).

6 Assisting with financial management

Even if you are not able to contribute money, you can assist with managing the finances of the person with care needs and/or the primary care partner. Helping to set up online and/or automatic bill payments may help relieve some stress and worry.

7 Calling, writing, or video visiting regularly

It's common for persons with care needs and primary care partners to feel isolated. Even when it's not feasible to visit in-person regularly, make it a habit to call or write often. Sending an email, dropping a card in the mail, or sending a small gift can help them feel cared for and supported. There's also more opportunity than ever to utilize technology for remote visits. Schedule time to Zoom or FaceTime with your family member.

8 Keeping everyone informed

If you have multiple people involved in the care and support arrangement, keeping everyone up-to-date can feel like a full-time job! Inevitably, someone forgets to pass along a piece of information, or there is miscommunication about who is going to share information with others. You can minimize these problems by helping to schedule regular family meetings or initiating and managing family communication through email, text, or a telephone calls.

Although it may be more challenging to provide meaningful care and support when you live at a distance from the person with care needs and the primary care partner, it's not impossible, and it can be helpful and rewarding for all involved.

To learn more and to access our tools and resources for caregiving families, visit the Our Family, Our Way website at www.MiamiOH.edu/ScrippsAging/OFOW