

Ask a Care Manager

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I recently was widowed and now live alone. My adult children are pressuring me to move. They feel now that I'm alone that I need to be closer to them or in an assisted living facility. I don't want to move but am feeling vulnerable just now. What should I do?

It's a big adjustment losing your spouse and living alone. Most experts recommend widowed persons wait six months to a year before making any major decisions. Are there tasks that your spouse did that you cannot do such as driving or fixing meals? If so, look for an alternative solution such as riding the bus, calling Dial a Ride, teaming up with friends, hiring someone to drive you or someone to come in several days a week to prepare meals that you can warm up. This will give you the help you need and the time you need to decide what changes are to be made. Your children are worried about you and grieving the loss of their parent but the decisions you make are yours to make when you're ready.

I have a limited income and worry about how I can live independently once I can no longer drive. What options are open to me when I can no longer be at home?

There are some government sponsored programs that are specifically designed to help those people who are considered low income. Social services agencies within each county can tell you what you qualify for. If you don't qualify for these programs, you may want to sit down with a professional geriatric care manager and explore how best to maintain your independence. This is called a Family Meeting where the care manager goes over with you all the available programs in your community, how much things cost, eligibility criteria and makes recommendations to you on how to plan your future. To find a care manager in your area, look at the National Association of Professional Geriatric Managers at www.caremanager.org.

I have been receiving services through a public program. I am not eligible for more services due to funding cuts. The services were just a few hours a week but helped me remain at home. Without this help, I'm really worried about how I'll continue on my own. What should I do?

Keep in regular contact with the public agency that was helping you in case the funding is restored and you're again eligible. If you don't call, they may assume you've made other arrangements. If there is a waiting list, ask to be added. In the meantime, see what other resources are available in your community. You may have to pay someone to help a few hours a week but if your budget allows it, you will be able to remain at home and still be independent. Some agencies will help for three hours once a week. You can set the day and time for the person to come. This may be enough.

I know I need some help in my home but I like to do my own work although it takes me a long time. How should I start thinking about hiring someone to help me?

We all want to be independent and in charge forever. However, sometimes it's helpful to conserve our energy for important things. Think about what takes the most time and seems the most difficult. What would happen if you didn't have to do that task anymore? Now, you're ready to look for some help. Consider using an agency so you'll know you will have someone you trust and will be paid properly.

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