

Holiday Visits May Expose Truths About Aging Parents: 10 Signs They May Need Help

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Driftwood, Texas (PRWeb) January 7, 2007 -- Visiting aging parents over the holidays may have brought attention that assistance is needed. But determining what type, and locating needed services, can be a daunting task.

"There are many senior housing options and home care services available for families to tap into these days" said Cheryl Culbertson, owner and founder of the Texas based Internet site Elder Options of Texas. "The problem is not knowing what senior services exist and how to locate them." Moving to an assisted living facility or nursing home isn't always the answer."

There are 10 warning signs that may indicate they need assistance.

1. Mail and bills are left to pile up. The simple act of opening and filing mail becomes overwhelming. Managing a checking account can also become too much for a parent to handle.
2. The house is cluttered or unkempt. This is especially troubling if a parent has always been neat and orderly.
3. Food in the refrigerator is uneaten or spoiled. Shopping, cooking, and cleaning become too much trouble. A parent might eat just enough to get by, but suffer nutritionally. Losing weight can be another sign that a parent is not eating a nutritious diet.
4. Signs of scorching on the bottoms of pots and pans. A result of short-term memory loss, this is a dangerous sign that parents are forgetting about pots left on the stove, causing a fire hazard, and threatening both the individual's and the surrounding neighbor's safety.
5. The parent wears the same clothing over and over again and has other personal hygiene issues. Doing laundry has become physically challenging, particularly if the washing machine is in the basement. Or there may be a fear of falling in the tub or shower.
6. Missed doctor's appointments. Sometimes this is simply a product of not having transportation and not knowing how to access ride options.
7. Repeated phone calls at odd hours. When a parent telephones friends or family at odd hours, it may be a sign of memory loss, or a cry for help-- a sign of depression or isolation. Arranging for a daily check-in phone call, a regular volunteer visitor, or getting involved with a local senior center, could make all the difference.
8. Forgetting to take medication. A sign of short-term memory loss or depression, this isn't just a quality of life issue, but a real risk factor.
9. Inappropriate behavior, clothing or speech. You may hear about this from a neighbor, someone who has noticed that your parent is not dressing appropriately for

the weather, for instance. That's a sign that he or she might be confused.

10. Symptoms of depression. A frequent problem for many older people, who feel isolated and alone, like a prisoner in their own homes, depression causes marked changes in behavior and routine. Feelings of hopelessness, lack of interest in once pleasurable activities, crying, listlessness, and not wanting to get dressed can all be indications of a problem.

Once adult children decide that a parent needs assistance, the next step is determining what kind. The following are a few options to consider:

1) Geriatric Care Managers - These highly trained professionals can assist in determining the appropriate type of care. They are generally licensed nurses or social workers that specialize in geriatrics. To locate a care manager contact the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers.

2) Emergency Response Devices - Almost 5,000 seniors die from falls in the home. Investing in a home emergency response device can offer everyone peace of mind.

3) Non-Medical In-Home Care - Services range from companionship, light housekeeping, grocery shopping, meal preparation, bill paying, and transportation to appointments. Assistance with bathing, dressing, grooming, and toileting are also provided. Most are bonded and insured and perform multiple background checks on caregivers.

4) Tax Credit Senior Apartment Communities - Unlike most publicly subsidized housing programs designed to assist the elderly, the housing tax credit program does not provide tenants with governmental rent subsidies, but rather provides for a more affordable monthly rental rate. The advertised term "affordable" is the term to look for. Income restrictions apply.

5) Residential Care Assisted Living Homes - Offer a more home-like setting than nursing homes. They typically provide meals, laundry, housekeeping, medication supervision, assistance with activities of daily living (for most types) and an activity program. Other amenities such as transportation may also be offered in some facilities.

7) Elder Law Attorneys - Elder law spans and encompasses elder care planning issues, estate planning, long-term care needs, planning for incapacity and other needs. Attorneys are members of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys.

8) Respite Care / Spousal Care Giving - Respite care provides time off for family members who care for someone who is ill, injured or frail. Caregivers face many challenges. Contact the National Respite Care Locator for assistance. The Well Spouse Association is a non-profit organization that also offers support for spousal caregivers.

Ensure your parents needs are being met by knowing what to look for, who to call, and how to locate needed services.