

HELPING ELDERLY LOVED ONES RECEIVE RESIDENTIAL CARE

by Ventura County Supervisor Linda Parks, February 2011

At some point many of us become involved in helping an elderly loved one find care. There are so many issues that swirl around transitioning someone who has been independent and healthy and taking care of themselves into a living situation where they receive care from someone else. For seniors who can stay home, there are in-home health and care services. This is the preferred option by a vast majority of senior citizens because it is the least disruptive to their lifestyle, and is certainly less expensive than moving into an assisted living facility.

However, for seniors who find their health waning to the degree that they need to move from their home, there can be a sense of vulnerability and even depression as a result of the change and loss of independence. Having a support system to ease the transition can make a big positive difference.

For those who want to assist an elderly person transition into an assisted living situation, understanding all that it entails can be overwhelming. It can be all the more challenging if an ailing senior denies the need for assistance. Determining finances, residential choices, health needs and who is there to help can be difficult, time consuming and stressful. While we may have set out how we want to deal with our end of life choices, how many of us have set out a path for assisted living if we become infirm?

Whether it is moving in with family or friends who can provide care, or moving into a board and care home, a graduated care facility, an assisted living facility, or a nursing home, one thing is for sure--it will be a major change in lifestyle and one that can be eased by investing some time at the front end looking at resources and options. For an elderly person who is not well and living alone, time is no friend. There can be serious health effects from waiting too long to move into a living situation where care is provided.

Instead of waiting until a crisis forces a hurried decision, we can talk with our elderly loved ones about their finances and desired living arrangements, and see if there are sufficient resources to cover the optimal choice. Are there thousands of dollars a month available for a long-term care facility, if that is the choice? Does the facility offer different levels of care so another move may not be necessary if there is a decline in health? How much will be covered by Social Security, pension benefits, veteran benefits, Medi-Cal, private insurance, and which assisted living arrangement fits that budget?

If an elderly loved one's mental faculties have deteriorated so they are not of sound mind, how do you find out if they have money in the bank, and how can their funds be accessed to pay their bills? By discussing finances and assisted living arrangements in advance, answers to these important questions can make a difficult time a bit easier.

One important consideration in selecting a residential care facility is whether there is someone nearby who will visit. Approximately sixty percent of elderly persons in nursing homes have outlived their family and friends or have no family or friends who ever visit. Having someone on

the outside looking in on them and checking on their welfare can make a huge difference in their well being.

Below are some of the many resources and contact information that senior citizens and their families and friends can access for making the transition from independent living to assisted care living. With baby boomers turning 65 at the rate of one every ten seconds, it may just be a matter of time before we need to take on this important responsibility.

Ventura County Area Agency on Aging (805-477-7300) can assist with questions about insurance, healthcare, and Medi-Cal through its Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP). It can also provide resources on a variety of other senior issues.

Ombudsmen of Ventura County: (805) 656-1986 provides resources and assistance for seniors needing long-term care services in Ventura County.

In-Home-Support Services (805-654-3206) provides information on how to receive in-home care for seniors.

The Ventura County Human Services Agency (805-477-5323) can help direct seniors towards resources within Ventura County's Adult and Family Services Department.

Behavioral Health Department Older Adult System (805-981-5400) can provide services for seniors regarding mental health issues.

Alzheimer's Association in Ventura County (805-484-6028) has resources for those suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

Senior Concerns (805-497-0189) provides seniors with information on finances and affordable options to support persons in later in life.

Ventura County Public Guardian (805-654-3141) offers a safety net to help those needing care who do not have resources or a system of care to help them.

www.seniorsforliving.com – a website that offers comparative research on senior housing across the nation.

www.venturacountyseiorliving.com is a comprehensive website with information about senior living, health care professionals, senior care facilities, and educational and support programs in Ventura County.