

The
Northern Berkshire
Family Caregiver
Resource Guide



Northern Berkshire Community Coalition

413-663-7588

There are only four kinds of people in the world — those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers and those who will need caregivers.

—Rosalynn Carter

Caring for an ill loved one can be both one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences in life. The variety of conditions for which care can be provided by a spouse, family member, or friend can range from short-term, minor illnesses to chronic diseases from congenital conditions to terminal illness.

The caregiving role can come to one over time, such as when a loved one gradually ages and becomes feeble or suddenly, such as when a loved one gets an unexpected cancer diagnosis.

Similarly, the range of care provided also varies depending upon the situation. Many caregivers provide direct medical care to their loved ones, but those whose service includes shopping, cooking, household chores, transportation to medical appointments, bill paying and companionship are also caregivers. Caregivers may also find themselves in the role of advocating for a loved one with medical personnel.

If you find yourself caring for a loved one, you may feel isolated and lonely — maybe even invisible — but you are not alone. According to one survey, there are 65.7 million family caregivers in the United States today. One third of these are men.

As the U.S. population ages and hospitals treat more people on an out-patient basis, the number of family caregivers will only increase.

While it can be deeply satisfying at times, caregiving can also be very stressful. Caregivers need to take care of themselves, too, both physically and emotionally. You can't take care of someone else if you run yourself into the ground. Make sure you eat well and get as much sleep as you can. Take time for yourself. Attend to your spiritual needs. Seek out support.

When taking care of an ill loved one, your focus tends to be on the sick person and not on yourself. You may feel guilt because you don't feel you are helping enough; or you may even feel guilty because you are not the

one who is sick. If you feel this way, be easy on yourself. You are striving to do your best, and you can't be everything for everyone.

When taking care of someone who is seriously or terminally ill, it's important to realize that emotions such as grief, guilt, anger and sadness are normal. Sadness and grief are related but also different. You may be feeling the loss of things you value greatly. This might be your loved one's health. Or perhaps the life you had before your loved one's illness. It's normal to grieve when a loved one is seriously ill, but if you are sad for a period of several weeks and it interferes with your life, you may be clinically depressed. If this is the case, consider seeking help.

In addition, you may find yourself getting angry at times, whether at yourself, others or the person for whom you are caring. This may be because your loved one is ill; it may be because of fear or stress or panic. Try to think about what is making you feel this way — knowing the cause might help. A helpful way to cope is to concentrate on things you can control, both for your loved one and for yourself.

Indeed, you'll find it is both beneficial and personally satisfying to find ways to give your loved one the most control over her or his life as possible.

This can include helping the ill person access the best medical information on which to base their care. If you attend medical appointments with your loved one, write down questions the patient and you have ahead of time. Take a pad and pencil or, if you are not a good notetaker, ask the doctor or other health professional if you can record the appointment.

Let the health professional know how home life is for both the patient and for the caregiver, including symptoms and/or difficulties that aren't apparent at the doctor's office. Increasing communication can help the patient, caregivers and medical personnel work together more effectively as a team.

Especially when the caregiver role has come upon someone suddenly, he or she may be unaware of local resources that can help. The following is a list of a variety of resources that may be of help to caregivers, including support groups.

Don't be afraid to ask for help — it may well be the best thing for your loved one, yourself and your family.

Organization Address/Phone/ Website	Service Provided	Eligibility	Payment Options
Northern Berkshire Community Coalition 61 Main Street #218 North Adams, MA 01247 413-663-7588 www.nbcoalition.org	We address dif- ficult questions about caregiving by getting these questions out to our caregiving workgroup	All are eligible	No pay- ment for informa- tion and referral services
United Cerebral Palsy Association of Berkshire County, PO Box 934, 420 Cur- ran Highway North Adams, MA 01247, 664-9345 Erin Cote ecote@ucpbershire.org	Social opportuni- ties, respite, as- sistive technology and skills training for individuals with disabilities	Adults and children with physical and developmental disabilities	
First Congregational Church of Williamstown 906 Main St. Williamstown, MA 01247 458-9882 Carrie Bail pastor@ firstchurchwilliamstown.org	Our Koinonia group reaches out to members and friends of the congregation in need. Deacon's resource for caregivers within the church	Anyone who wants to be part of church fellowship	Free
BFAIR 771 South Church St. North Adams, MA 01247 413-664-9382 Rich Weisenflue www.bfair.org	Day, vocational, residential, clinical and individual and family supports for people with developmental disabilities and autism; case management and social/rec services for people with acquired brain injuries	Referrals from DDS, MRC and DOE	State and school contracts; private pay

Organization Address/Phone Website	Service Provided	Eligibility	Payment Options
VNA & Hospice of Northern Berkshire Inc. 535 Curran High- way, North Adams, MA 01247 413-664-4536 www.nbhealth.org	We provide skilled home health services (nursing, physical therapy, speech & language therapy, medical, social services) and hospice services to eligible resi- dents. Alzheimer's and dementia information and support group for family/friends and caregivers Stroke sup- port group for family members and caregivers	All are eligible	Medicare, Mass Health and most private insur- ances. Sliding fees are available

Organization/ Address/Phone Website	Service Provided	Eligibility	Payment Options
Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Amy Shrock 413-445-4136, ext. 14 www.berkshirechildren.org	Support group for grandparents raising grand- children, meets monthly (child care, meals)	All are eligible	Free
Amedisys Home Health Care, 7 North St., Pittsfield, MA 01201; 413-236-8500 www.amedisys.com	Skilled nurs- ing; home health aides. Physical, occupational and speech therapy Medical social workers Specialized programs for wound care, diabetes, rehab services, cardiac care, COPD, and behavioral health Specialized nursing services	All are eligible	Medicare
At Home TLC, Inc. 46 Stoneybrook Drive, Clarksburg, MA 01247 athometlc@gmail.com	Home health assistants, skilled nursing Light housekeep- ing, transporta- tion. In-house supply services	All are eligible	Private pay Assistance with insurance filings

Organization/ Address/Phone/ Website	Service Provided	Eligibility	Payment Options
Compassionate Care Home Health 1000 Massachusetts Ave., North Adams, MA 01247 413-664-6611 www.compassion- atecarehomehealth. org	Home care services ranging from assistant services, home health aides, certified nursing assistants and nursing care	All are eligible	Accepts private pay, longterm care, insurance, vet- erans benefits
Berkshire Children & Families McInerney Parent Services 48 Elizabeth St. Pittsfield, MA 01201 413-499-3556 Amy Shrock www.berkshirechildren.org	Parenting classes, support groups, Grandparents (KIN) raising grandchildren. Berkshire County House of Corrections (BHOC) parent- ing classes & child interacting visits. Family game night Parent/ Child playgroups.	All All Incarcerated women and their children All All	All services are free
American Cancer Society Laura Baran, 59 Bobala Road Holyoke, MA 01040 413-493-2100; 1-800-227-2345. 24/7 www.cancer.org	Information and support for cancer patients and their families/friends, including 24/7 cancer info call center — always speak to a live person Programs and services for cancer patients, including rides to treatment	All are eligible	All services are free

Organization/ Address/Phone/ Website	Service Provided	Eligibility	Payment Options
Elder Services of Berkshire County Inc. 66 Wendell Ave. Pittsfield, MA 01201 413-499-0524 www.ebsci.org	Offers a wide variety of programs to assist elders to remain in their homes. Including: Information and referral, home-care, housing programs, ombudsman services, SHINE health insurance counseling. Family Caregiver Support Program, for caregiver to someone over 60 or you are 60 caring for an adult with developmental or mental illness or a grandparent raising grandchildren.	For most programs individuals need to be 60 or older Call for more information	Call for information
Hospice Services of Western Mass. 66 West St., Suite L2 Pittsfield, MA 01201 Dennis C. Castella 413-442-0045 dcastella@ hospiceofwesternma.com	First Wednesday of the month, Grief Support meeting, 3 p.m. Third Wednesday of month - Care- givers support meeting, 3 p.m. Call for schedule of other meetings	Both meetings are open to the public	Free

Organization/ Address/Phone/ Website	Service Provided	Eligibility	Payment Options
Ecu-Health Care 71 Hospital Ave. North Adams, MA 01247 663-8711 www.ecuhealthcare.com	SHINE counselor on staff providing free information, counseling and assistance to help Medicare beneficiaries understand benefits, billing, claims, appeals and all available insurance options. We also help residents apply for all state health coverage programs.	All are eligible	Free
NAMI-BC National Alliance on Mental Health Illness, Berkshire County 33 East St., Rm. 417 Pittsfield, MA 01201 413-443-1666 namibc@namibc.org www.namibc.org	Support, education and advocacy programs to help families navigate the challenge of mental illness. Information for consumers, families, professionals and the general public.	All are eligible	All services and programs are free

Organization/ Address/ Phone/ Website	Service Provided	Eligibility	Payment Options
St. Vincent DePaul Society St. Elizabeth Parish, North Adams, MA 413-664-4835 www.svdpnb.com	Financial and other assistance for those in need, particularly for needs not met by social service network	All people are eligible	All services are provided at no cost
Veterans' Agents Adams, 743-8320; Cheshire, 743-1690; Clarksburg, 663-8624; Florida, 663-6353; North Adams, 662-3040; Savoy, 743-4183; Williamstown, 458-4106.	Help with veteran-related questions and problems, includ- ing health care	Veterans and their families	Call for information
VA Outpatient Clinic 73 Eagle St. Pittsfield, MA 01210 413-499-2672	Medical and mental health services	All eligible vet- erans. Direct eligibility questions to En- rollment Coordi- nator: 413-582-3100	Call for information

National Web Sites

- The Johnson & Johnson Caregiver Initiative
<http://www.strengthforcaring.com>
- The National Family Caregivers Association:
<http://www.thefamilycaregiver.org>
- The National Alliance for Caregiving:
<http://www.caregiving.org/resources/>
- The American Cancer Society
http://www.cancer.org/docroot/mbc/mbc_2x_othereffects.asp
- National Cancer Institute
<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/coping/familyfriends>
- The National Institute on Aging
<http://www.nia.nih.gov/Alzheimers/Publications/CaringAD/>
- A United Hospital Fund Campaign
<http://www.nextstepincare.org/>
- The Alzheimer's Association
<http://www.ALZ.org>
- Compare nursing homes
<http://www.medicare.gov>

Recent books about caregiving

- “A Family Caregiver Speaks Up: ‘It Doesn’t Have to Be This Hard’” by Suzanne Mintz (Capital Books, \$15). The president of the National Family Caregivers Association offers expert advice on how caregivers need to believe in themselves, protect their health, and reach out for help.
- “Always on Call” by Carol Levine (Vanderbilt Univ. Press, \$25). A realistic book by a woman who cared for her husband for 17 years.
- “Share the Care” by Cappy Capossela and Sheila Warnock (Fireside, \$15). A how-to book on building a caregiving team of friends, family, neighbors and co-workers.
- “They’re Your Parents, Too!” by Francine Russo (Bantam, \$26). Information for adult children taking care of aging parents.
- “Elder Rage” by Jacqueline Marcell (Impressive Press, \$25). Caring for a loved one with dementia.

Copying supported by Elder Services of Berkshire County