

A through Z frequently used aging terms

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A

Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)

Activities usually performed for oneself in the course of a normal day including bathing, dressing, grooming, eating, walking, using the telephone, taking medications, and other personal care activities.

Administration on Aging

The Administration on Aging (AoA), an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is the official Federal agency dedicated to policy development, planning and the delivery of supportive home and community-based services to older persons and their caregivers. The AoA administers the Older Americans Act and works through the national aging network of State Units on Aging, Area Agencies on Aging, Tribal and Native organizations representing 300 American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal organizations, and two organizations serving Native Hawaiians, plus thousands of service providers, adult care centers, caregivers, and volunteers.

Adult Day Care

Adult Day Care Centers offer social, recreational and health-related services to individuals in a protective setting who cannot be left alone during the day because of health care and social need, confusion or disability.

Area Agency on Aging

Under the Older Americans Act, the Administration on Aging distributes funds for various aging programs through state agencies on aging which in turn fund local area agencies on aging. Area Agencies on Aging address the concerns of older Americans at the local level. They play an important role in identifying community and social service needs and assuring that social and nutritional supports are made available to older people in communities where they live. In most cases, Area Agencies on Aging do not provide direct services. Instead, they subcontract with other organizations to facilitate the provision of a full range of services for older people.

Assisted Living Facilities

A facility that provides a combination of housing and personalized health care in a professionally managed group-setting designed to respond to the individual needs of persons who require assistance with activities of daily living. The facility provides care to residents who cannot live independently, but who do not require 24 hour nursing care. Terminology varies from state to state, and a facility that is called an Assisted Living

Facility in one state might be called other things in other states, i.e. a Residential Care Facility (RCF), Board and Care Home, a Domiciliary Care Facility, an Adult Care Home, or a Community-Based Care Facility.

Assisted Technology

Assistive technology is any service or tool that helps the elderly or disabled do the activities they have always done but must now do differently. These tools are also sometimes called “adaptive devices.” Such technology may be something as simple as a walker to make moving around easier or an amplification device to make sounds easier to hear (for talking on the telephone or watching television, for instance).

C

Care or Case Management

Case managers work with family members and older adults to assess, arrange and evaluate supportive efforts of seniors and their families to remain independent.

Caregiver

A generic term referring to a person, either paid or voluntary, who helps an older person with the activities of daily living, health care, financial matters, guidance, companionship and social interaction. A caregiver can provide more than one aspect of care. Most often the term refers to a family member or friend who aids the older person.

Chore Service

Chore service is available to persons who are physically unable to perform tasks, such as heavy cleaning, minor repair or yard work, and unable to secure assistance from family or friends nor have the means to pay privately.

Congregate Meals

These meal programs provide older individuals with free or low cost , nutritionally sound meals served five days a week in easily accessible locations. Besides promoting better health through improved nutrition, meal programs provide daily activities and socialization for participants which help reduce the isolation of old age.

E

Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is a term referring to any knowing, intentional, or negligent act by a caregiver or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult. The specificity of laws varies from state to state, but broadly defined, abuse may be physical, emotional, sexual, exploitation, neglect, and abandonment.

Elder Abuse Prevention Programs

Allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation of senior citizens are investigated by highly trained protective service specialists. Intervention is provided in instances of substantiated elder abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Energy Assistance

These programs can provide low-income elderly homeowners and renters with funds to help pay home utility and heating costs. Eligibility requirements may vary from state to state.

F

Friendly Visitors and Telephone Reassurance

These programs, which have different titles in different communities, provide regular personal or telephone contact for older persons who are homebound or live alone. Usually a volunteer provides the service. Besides developing friendships, perhaps a more important aspect of these programs is the volunteer's ability to identify needs of the individual as they occur and notify those who can help.

G

Geriatric Care Managers

Geriatric Care Managers specifically trained in geriatric care management, and provide case management services on a fee-for-service basis to individual clients.

Guardian

An individual appointed by a court of law to manage a person's financial and/or personal affairs because the court has found that the person is not competent to manage his or her own affairs. A conservator is similarly appointed, but only for financial affairs.

Guardianship

The process in which an individual is appointed by a court of law to manage a person's financial and/or personal affairs because the person is not able to or is not competent to manage his/her own affairs.

H

Home and Community-Based Services

A variety of supportive services delivered in community settings or in an older person's home are designed to help older persons remain living at home and avoid institutionalization.

Home Delivered Meals

Sometimes referred to as "meals on wheels," home delivered meals are hot and nutritious meals delivered to homebound persons who are unable to prepare their own meals and have no outside assistance.

Home Health Care

Home health care is recognized as an increasingly important alternative to hospitalization or care in a nursing home for patients who do not need 24-hour day professional supervision. Many people find it possible to remain at home for the entire duration of their illness or at least to shorten their hospital stay. In many cases readmission to the hospital can be prevented or delayed. A variety of health services are provided in a home health care program in the patient's home, under the direction of a physician.

Home Modification

Adaptation and/or renovation to the living environment intended to increase ease of use, safety, security and independence. There are some local, state, Federal and volunteer programs that provide special grants, loans and other assistance for home remodeling, repair and modification.

Homemaker Service

Homemaker service is extended to individuals who are unable to perform day-to-day household duties and have no one available to assist them. Services include light housekeeping, laundry, limited personal care, grocery shopping, meal preparation, and shopping assistance.

Hospice

Usually a combination of at-home and hospital care of the terminally ill that combines medical and social services. It is designed to help both the patient and the family. Hospice care emphasizes pain control, symptom management, and emotional support rather than life-sustaining equipment.

I

Information and Referral

Information Specialists are available to provide assistance and linkage to available services and resources.

J - L

Legal Assistance

Legal advice and representation is available to persons aged 60 and over for certain types of legal matters including government program benefits, tenant rights, and consumer problems.

Long Term Care

A general term that describes a range of medical, nursing, custodial, social, and community services designed to help people with chronic health impairments or forms of dementia.

Long Term Care Insurance

This type of insurance policy is designed to cover long term care expenses in a facility or at home.

Long Term Care Ombudsman

Long term care ombudsmen, state and local, work cooperatively with nursing homes and board and care facilities to improve the quality of life for residents. They serve as patient's rights advocates, investigating and negotiating resolutions to concerns voiced by residents in matters of resident services and care.

M

Medicaid

Medicaid is a health benefit program administered by States for people with low incomes who meet other eligibility requirements. The health insurance program is financed by the federal and state governments. Medicaid may also pay for nursing home care if the individual's income and assets are within certain limits.

Medicare

The national health insurance program for eligible people 65 and older and some disabled individuals. Part A covers hospital costs. Part B covers doctor bills and other medical costs.

Medigap

Medigap is designed specifically to supplement and complement Medicare's benefits by filling in some of the gaps of Medicare coverage. Medigap insurance policies are non-group policies that may pay for Medicare deductibles, prescription drugs, or other services not covered by Medicare.

N -Q

R

Respite Care

The provision of short-term relief (respite) to families caring for their frail elders offers tremendous potential for maintaining dependent persons in the least restrictive environment. Respite services encompass traditional home-based care, as well as adult day health, skilled nursing, home health aide and short term institutional care. Respite can vary in time from part of a day to several weeks.

S

Senior Centers

A vital link in the service delivery network which older persons may avail themselves of, senior centers are functioning as meal sites, screening clinics, recreational centers, social service agency branch offices, mental health counseling clinics, older worker employment agencies, volunteer coordinating centers, and community meeting halls. The significance of senior centers cannot be underestimated for they provide a sense of belonging, offer the opportunity to meet old acquaintances and make new friends, and encourage individuals to pursue activities of personal interest and involvement in the community.

State Agencies on Aging

The Older Americans Act mandates that each state have a state agency on aging which is part of state government. The State Agency on Aging is the designated focal point within the state government responsible for administering a complex service system designed to complement and support other human service systems in meeting the needs of the elderly.

State Health Insurance Information Counseling and Assistance Programs

Known as SHIP, this program is comprised of 53 state programs and nearly 15,000 trained volunteers who offer unbiased, one on one counseling to assist Medicare beneficiaries understand their health insurance benefits and options.

T

Transportation

Programs that provide door-to-door transportation for people who may be elderly or disabled, who do not have private transportation and who are unable to utilize public transportation to meet their needs.

U -Z