



To families struggling with the needs of aging relatives, the geriatric care manager can be a godsend. This emerging breed of specialist can assess a senior's physical, social, and financial needs and stitch together a patchwork of services to address them.

BusinessWeek, "Sometimes You Need an Ace," By Susan Garland, July 12, 2004.

What is a Geriatric Care Manager?

A Geriatric Care Manager is a health and human services professional, such as a gerontologist, social worker, counselor, or nurse, with a specialized body of knowledge and experience related to aging and elder care issues. A Professional Geriatric Care Manager (PGCM) is a geriatric care manager who is a member of GCM and has committed to adhering to the GCM Pledge of Ethics and Standards of Practice. The PGCM assists older adults and persons with disabilities in attaining their maximum functional potential. The PGCM strives to respect the autonomy of the individual and delivers care-coordination and support services with sensitivity to preserve the dignity and respect of each individual. In addition, the PGCM is an experienced guide and resource for families of older adults and others with chronic needs.

Do I Really Need a Geriatric Care Manager?

Before making the effort, step back a moment and try to determine whether you actually have a problem in which a professional geriatric care manager needs to be involved. Do you have the time, inclination, and skills to manage the problems yourself? If you are not sure, ask your clergy, your doctor, a social worker, your financial advisor or a trusted friend to help you decide if an elder care expert may be helpful in this situation. Enlisting the support of other family members to consult a professional is a good way to build consensus on the solutions. Other questions that you may wish to consider are:

- Are the problems that you or your loved ones are facing becoming larger and more complex than you can comfortably manage?
- Are other demands and responsibilities now so great that you are not able to provide the desired level of supervision and attention to your loved one's problems?
- There are many places to find a care manager in your city or state. The Web site, www.caremanager.org, includes a searchable directory of professional geriatric care managers who belong to GCM. You may also want to check with local agencies or hospitals to obtain a list of local referrals. Health professionals and elder law attorneys are other excellent referral sources.

For additional information or if you have any compliments or concerns about care management services, please contact:

National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers (GCM)

1604 N. Country Club Road
Tucson, Arizona 85716-3102
(520) 881-8008

www.caremanager.org

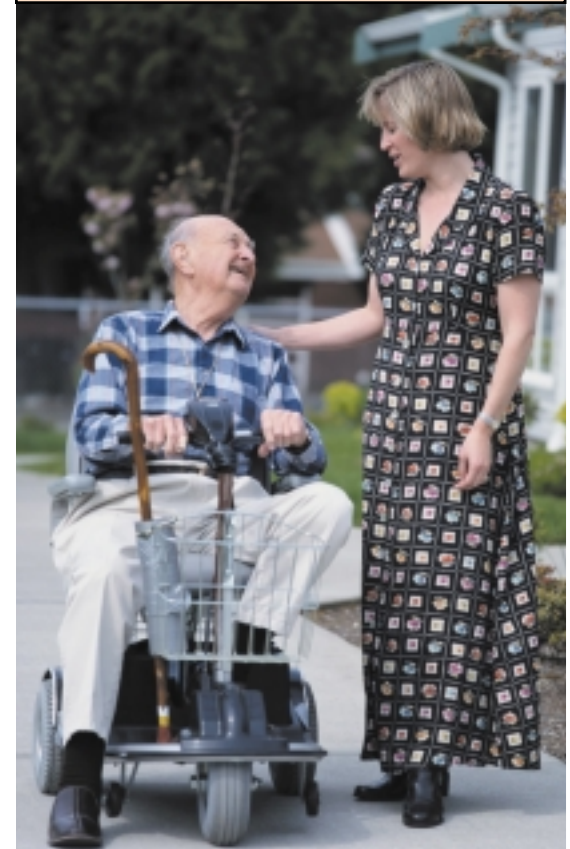
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Questions & Answers When Looking for a Professional Geriatric Care Manager



Questions To Ask When Looking For a Geriatric Care Manager

People calling themselves care managers have many different backgrounds. Very few states have licensing for these professionals; however, many are licensed in their state in other fields. The professional organization (GCM) recognizes the following certifications as being a "Certified Care Manager": CMC, CMM, C-ASWCM and C-SWCM. These require testing and continuing education. It is important for the wise consumer to ask questions. Some of these include:

- Are you a member of the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers?
- Are you certified as a care manager? Do you hold other professional licenses or certifications?
- How long have you been providing care management services?
- Are you available for emergencies?
- Does your company also provide home care services?
- How will you communicate information to me?
- Can you provide me with references?

Care managers do not specialize in all areas. When a care manager says he/she practices "care management," find out which matters he/she handles. You will want to hire someone who regularly handles clients in the area of your concern.

Care managers who primarily work with older adults bring more to their practice than an expertise in geriatrics. They bring knowledge of aging issues that allow them and their staff to overcome the myths relating to aging and to focus on the problems at hand. At the same time, they will bring an experience of working with resources in your community. They are more aware of real life problems, health and otherwise, that emerge as persons age and what tools are available to address them. They are tied into a formal or informal system of social workers, nurses, psychologists, elder law attorneys advocates, and other elder care professionals who may be of assistance to you.

Once You Have Found a Care Manager

When you have found an appropriate care manager, there will most likely be an on-site assessment. During the assessment, you will be asked to give the care manager an overview of the reason you are seeking help and introduce all the parties involved. Be sure to organize and bring all the information needed.

After you have explained your situation, ask:

- What resources will it take to resolve this situation?
- Are there any alternative courses of action?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative?
- Who will be working with you?
- How many professionals may be involved? What about off-hours and back up?
- How are fees computed?
- How is travel time and mileage handled?
- How are services terminated?

Ask Questions First

Ask lots of questions before choosing your care manager. Start with the initial phone call. Is the call professionally answered? If you leave a message, is it returned promptly? Of course, this is an indication of the kind of professional relationship you can expect. In addition to the above questions, you should also ask:

- What are the primary services provided by this agency/business?
- What other services does this agency/business provide?
- How many care managers are there in this agency/business?
- Is there a fee for the initial consultation and if so, how much is it?
- Given the nature of your problem, what information should you bring with you to the initial consultation?
- Should other family members/friends/caregivers come to the initial consultation?
- What will the initial consultation include?

The answers to your questions will assist you in determining whether that particular care manager and agency/business has the

qualifications important to you for a successful relationship. If you have a specific issue that requires immediate attention, be sure to inform the care manager of this during the initial telephone conversation.

Discussing Fees

There are many different ways of charging fees and each care manager will choose to work differently. You will also want to know how often he/she bills. Some care managers bill weekly, some bill monthly, some bill upon completion of work. Ask about these matters at the initial conference and ask for them in writing, so there will be no surprises. If you don't understand, ask again. If you need clarification, say so. It is very important that you feel comfortable in this area.

In addition to fees, most care managers will charge for out-of-pocket expenses. Out-of-pocket expenses may include charges for mileage, caregiving supplies, long distance telephone calls, and other such costs. Find out if there will be any other incidental costs. Note: There may also be additional fees if outside professionals are called into the case. It is imperative that the care manager receives approval to bring others in before the situation arises, if at all possible.

Be sure to discuss and make sure you have all questions answered before proceeding with an agreement for services. You should expect a written agreement including fees before the commencement of services.

Get It in Writing

Once you decide to hire the care manager, ask that your arrangement be put in writing. The writing can be a letter or a formal contract. It should spell out what services the care manager will perform for you and what the fee and expense arrangements will be. REMEMBER— even if your agreement remains oral and is not put into writing, you have made a contract and are responsible for all charges for work done by the care manager and his/her staff.

Make It a Good Experience

A positive and open relationship between a care manager and a client is important to successful outcomes. The key to getting there is communication. The communication starts with asking the kinds of questions contained in this document. Use the answers to the questions as a

guide not only to the care manager's qualifications, but also as a way of determining whether you can comfortably work with this person. If your concerns are not responded to professionally and personally, if you don't like the answers to your questions, if you don't like the care manager's reaction to being asked all your questions, or if you simply do not feel relaxed with this particular person, **DO NOT HIRE THAT PERSON**. Only if you are satisfied with the care manager you have hired from the very start will you trust him or her to do the best job for you. Only if you have established a relationship of open communication will you be able to resolve any difficulties that may arise between the two of you. If you take the time to make sure you are happy and compatible right at the beginning, you can make this a productive experience giving you peace of mind and your family member the highest quality of life possible. You will thank yourself, and your care manager will thank you.

Sharing the caring allows you to have more time for loving and enjoying each other. Professional Geriatric Care Managers relieve the burden, so families can focus on what is really important.

