

How to find your new carer role in residential care

Caring changes - it doesn't cease

Many carers choose to continue their caring role when their family member is admitted to residential care. However the nature of this caring role may change considerably. Sometimes this has to do with:

- ▣ The level of care your family member now needs.
- ▣ The role you wish to have in the care of your family member.
- ▣ The time you have available.
- ▣ Your own health issues and personal constraints.
- ▣ The opportunities available to become involved at the facility.

Roles that carers have in residential care

Working out your carer role will take time, as what came naturally at home may now feel a little awkward. Perhaps take on only a few roles or tasks initially, so that you can test things. Then when you become more confident or comfortable you may choose to take on more.

Here is a list of roles that carers may have in residential care:

- ▣ Historian - knowledge keeper & sharer of information.
- ▣ Personal care helper - e.g. helping with feeding or walking.
- ▣ Recreational assistant - e.g. through outings or via activities.
- ▣ Financial/legal supporter - e.g. Power of Attorney or bill payer.
- ▣ Shopper - e.g. helping with purchasing personal items.
- ▣ Emotional supporter - comforting your family member.
- ▣ Volunteer - helping out at the facility.
- ▣ Advocate/care guardian - speaking up for your family member.

Carer roles in residential care are quite varied. Some carers wish to have a very active role, while others choose to step back a little. Once developed, your role will be unique - based on the level of involvement you choose and the opportunities available.

*"Speaking up for Ray is my most important job.
I'm nice about it, but I make sure he gets what he needs."*

How to get involved in the personal care of your family member

Some carers choose to continue helping their family member with their personal care needs. This might include:

- ▣ dressing
- ▣ grooming
- ▣ eating
- ▣ therapy (exercises).
- ▣ walking

While the staff can provide all care required, helping with this may give you more one-on-one time, closeness and intimacy. It may also be a way of monitoring your family member's condition and identifying concerns or issues as they arise. For some carers it is a way of helping the staff and freeing up their time, which is often appreciated.



Your role in personal care will need to be negotiated. This has to do with rules and regulations you may not be aware of, like the facility's 'duty of care' to your family member or occupational health and safety rules that relate to carers too. Often compromise is needed. Here are some suggestions for negotiating your role:

- ☒ Talk to a senior staff member about the role you'd like to have.
- ☒ Use care plan meetings to discuss this further.
- ☒ If unclear about the facility's concerns, ask for more information.
- ☒ Look for ways around the difficulties - ask for suggestions.
- ☒ Talk to your family member's GP - gain their support.

If possible ask your family member what their wishes are. What would they like you to help them with? You may be surprised to learn that they now prefer your help with walking and exercises as opposed to dressing and grooming. Asking first is good advice.

How to get out and about together

Many carers like to spend time with their family member out of the facility. This is a great opportunity for time alone together. It can also be used to help your family member stay in touch with family, friends and 'life' outside of the facility. Here are a few suggestions:

- ☒ Go to the local shops or out for lunch.
- ☒ Organise day or overnight visits to home, or to stay with family.
- ☒ Go shopping or to appointments.
- ☒ Go to church, clubs or groups together.
- ☒ Continue activities you enjoy like going to the beach or the footy.

"I choose to spend my time with Mum doing things that she really enjoys. We both look forward to the outings."

For those in wheelchairs or with difficulty walking, outings can require more thought. Talk to the staff about what you'd like to do - they may have the answer to your problem.

Carers make the following helpful suggestions:

- ☒ Ask family to help with the physical demands of an outing.
- ☒ Borrow a wheelchair from the facility - they are required to have enough wheelchairs to make this possible.
- ☒ Book a maxi-taxi - they can transport people in wheelchairs.
- ☒ Apply for a [multi-purpose taxi card](#) to save on taxi fares.
- ☒ Talk to other carers - they offer great advice.

Further information:

- ☒ [More opportunities for carers in residential care](#) - information sheet.

Contact the [Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre](#) on 1800 242 636* to request the above information sheet be sent to you - or to find out about other information sheets in this series.

*Free call except from mobile phones. Mobile calls at mobile rates.

We do our best to keep these links up to date, but the internet changes all the time. If you can no longer access any of the above resources, please go to our [Internet Troubleshooting Guide](#), or email us at website@carersvic.org.au