

DESERT SAGE



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www.ConsumerDirectOnline.net

Caregiver Advocacy

Consumer Direct Personal Care *Consumer Advisory Committee* met on June 9th to discuss recent Medicaid budget cuts and salary reductions for Caregivers. In general, budget cuts result in decreased hours of service authorized for Members and the impact that salary reductions have on the lives of Caregivers.

Attendees were concerned about future budget cuts and the long-term effect on the quality of caregiving. It was agreed that Members should have a voice in the state's health care budget and the impact that the budget has on home health services. Some of the Committee's thoughts are:

Confront Senators with their promises about healthcare and the final results:

1. We need to get a game plan together and have a goal;
2. We need to be able to handle advocacy and work together to advocate so organizations like AHCCCS will think twice about another budget cut;
3. Involve outside constituents to get involved, for example, church communities, neighborhood associations, etc.

The Committee considered venues for encouraging Members to contact decision-makers in Arizona.

The Advisory Committee decided to begin working now on the following actions:

- ◆ Contact ADA offices for advice, (Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA, is a federal law that protects disabled persons);
- ◆ Consider state healthcare models such as Mass Health in Massachusetts which pays up to \$15.00 an hour for caregivers;
- ◆ One of our Member has a Radio program on KVOI

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Caregiver of the Quarter

Rose Beverly has been a Caregiver with Consumer Direct since October 2008. Rose has an extensive background as a Certified Nursing Assistant in senior care facilities and hospice care, as well as private duty healthcare. Her specialty has been caring for the elderly with Alzheimer's disease.



Caregiver Rose Beverly

Rose came to Consumer Direct through the ALTCS program to care for her husband and father in her home. Rose maintains an active interest in continuing healthcare education and is presently working on a counseling degree in Ministry. She is an Ordained Minister and is active in her non-denominational Church.

Each Quarter, Consumer Direct will honor special caregivers with this award and a \$25 gift certificate. At the end of the year we will also honor one of these quarterly winners as Caregiver of the Year. Fax, mail, or phone in your nominations to the Consumer Direct office.

Improvements We Can Live With

by Russ Copeland

Most of our homes are designed to work well for younger folks who can still leap stairs in a single bound. But when we have physical or health-related limitations, our homes may contain serious barriers to our safety and our independence. The house we depend on can make living with a disability much easier or much harder, depending on the building's features and design.

When we purchased our home, we were more interested in the mountain view than whether or not we may need wheelchair access. But when our daughter had an accident and needed to recover from knee surgery for several weeks, we discovered—to our dismay—that all of our bedrooms and bathrooms were inaccessible.

The doorways were too narrow and a wheelchair could not make the turn from our hallway into the other rooms. Our daughter got through it by using her crutches or transferring to a rolling office chair than could make it around the corner, but for several long weeks caring for her was harder and riskier than it needed to be. Since then we have hosted several people that could have benefited from a more accessible home and making access improvements are now high on the list.

Few residential homes come with extra safety and accessible features. So, like us, you may need to add them. Installing non-slip mats and tub chairs in the bathroom is relatively easy while tackling more complex projects such as permanent ramps or widening doorways or converting a tub to a walk-in shower may call for professional construction and installation.

Following are some common home access improvements you may want to review or consider depending on your budget, your do-it-yourself abilities and your needs:



Most household accidents happen in the bathroom where wet, slippery surfaces are common. Adding improvements like grab bars and shower seats can help prevent nasty falls and serious injuries.

Bathroom Safety

- ◆ Handheld showerheads
- ◆ Chairs or seats for the bathtub or shower
- ◆ Grab bars
- ◆ Non-slip safety treads and bath mats
- ◆ Elevated toilet seats

Kitchen

- ◆ A countertop microwave
- ◆ Stove with controls on the front, rather than the top
- ◆ Leg room under counters and sinks for wheelchairs
- ◆ Extended handles on faucets
- ◆ Custom cabinets for easier access

Entry/Exit

- ◆ Wide doorways (32"-36")
- ◆ Levers instead of round door knobs
- ◆ Ramps and handrails
- ◆ Automatic door openers
- ◆ Pocket doors
- ◆ Platform lifts
- ◆ Adding more concrete patios or walkways

Accessibility improvements can result in a safer place to live and provide better access for everyone. Some features will also provide a

safer workplace for a caregiver and can reduce the chances of work-related injuries.

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Organizing and Managing Medications

My father stared at the several pills the nurse had given him a moment earlier. “Hey, wait a minute, this is not right!” he called out as she was leaving the room. “What’s wrong, sir?” “I’m not sure, but these pills are just not right.” he said. Then after a long pause he announced, “I know... I should have only one of the red ones, not two.”



Patients may be taking several medications for different conditions, outpacing their ability to remember and monitor them all. If your medications are becoming difficult to manage, if you are missing doses or forgetting if you took a particular medicine, it is important to get organized so you receive the full benefit of your medicine and do not make a potentially serious mistake.

Make a List of All Current Medications

You can start with a simple yellow pad and pencil, or create a list on your computer. If you are compiling a list for someone else, the list may contain confidential medical information that is protected by law and you want to only record and share the information with the patient’s permission. Record all medications including prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, herbal supplements or vitamins in the list.

Gather all your medications together and record:

- Start Date/End Date**
- Name of Medication**
- Dosage and Frequency**
- Dosage Times**
- Expiration Date**
- # of Refills**
- Pharmacy (where filled)**
- Prescribing Doctor**

Leave a section at the bottom to note any drug allergies, side effects or other notes about a particular medication you may notice. Just making the list can be an eye-opener and you may realize you are not taking some of your medications properly like you thought you were.

The list should be reviewed by your doctor and pharmacist periodically. It may prevent them from inadvertently prescribing some incompatible medications.

Consider a Pill Dispenser

Pill dispensers can be a great way to organize medications. They are inexpensive and readily available at



pharmacies and stores. Dispensers make it easier to see if a dosage has already been taken or has been accidentally skipped. Like all medications, pill boxes should be stored in a dark and dry place and not left out where children or pets can get to them.

Sadly, up to 25% of hospital and nursing home admissions can be attributed to a failure to take prescription medications as directed. One of the reasons my dad landed himself back in the hospital was that he was no longer able to remember the details of all his prescription medications.

When the nurse double-checked my dad’s medicines, she reported, “According to your doctor you are supposed to have one red one in the morning, one in the afternoon, and two red ones at bed time to get you through the night.”

Once my dad was straightened out, it was clear we had narrowly avoided another mistake by keeping and checking a good medication list.





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DESERT SAGE

July 2011

Get Paid on Time!

- 1) Time Sheets need to be submitted on time.
- 2) Please review your time sheets for accuracy; errors will delay your pay.
- 3) We recommend Direct Deposit.
- 4) Stay current with all caregiver requirements; CPR, First Aid, TB and continuing education.

Please help us get your money to you on time!

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The Voice, 10:30AM broadcasting on Sundays from 4:30-5:50PM Two Caregivers from our Committee will be interviewed on upcoming programs regarding Arizona state healthcare. Consumer Direct's Program Manager will be interviewed on the program on July 10th.

The next *Consumer Advisory Committee* meeting will

be held on *July 14, 2011 at 1:00PM*. Consumer Direct Members and Caregivers are encouraged to attend. We will be discussing the composition of letters that Members can mail to legislators and other strategies to move advocacy forward.