



## Caregiver's Answers, Topics, and Helpful Information

In an effort to continually assist caregivers in their search for pertinent information regarding eldercare, our Family Caregiver Support Coordinator addresses topics of most frequently asked questions via Caregiver's Answers, Topics and Helpful Information (**CATHI**). Additionally, caregivers are also invited to e-mail individual questions to the Family Caregiver Support Coordinator at [caregiver2@senior-resources-guilford.org](mailto:caregiver2@senior-resources-guilford.org).

### **Caregiving While Working: What resources are available to me?**

An estimated 6 out of 10 Americans are taking care of a loved one age 50 or older. A great many are doing it while also trying to earn a living. If you're among those doing both, here are some helpful tips to help you balance caregiving and work.

#### **Human Resources**

- Ask your HR rep about company policies and programs to support caregivers. Many companies have a plan in place to help employees find community services, counseling, respite care, legal and financial assistance, and caregiver support groups. Others offer caregiving leave or flexible work arrangements. Some employers may not have a policy for employees who are also caregivers, but they may be open to the idea.
- Employee assistance or your loved one's insurance carrier might cover visits with a therapist specializing in caretaking or family issues. Sometimes one small thing can be a big help.
- Be prepared: Even within the same company, different managers may be more, or less, supportive.

#### **Talk to Your Manager/ Supervisor**

If you work for a small company with no HR department, make an appointment with your boss. Be upfront about your caregiving responsibilities from the start. Most bosses value good employees and will work to keep them.

- Don't go in with the idea that there is a single answer

- Present solutions that won't cost the company money or time.
- Flextime and telecommuting are accepted practices in many offices.
- Employers may be more likely to agree if you suggest a trial period that could be continued if successful.
- Be ready to compromise. A flexible schedule might not be possible, but your company may be willing to change your schedule, let you work from home one day a week, or pay for respite care when you travel for work.
- If your supervisor lets you work from home, make sure you are always accessible by phone and email. Respond quickly.
- Attend meetings from home by conference call or Skype. If Skyping, find a quiet room where you won't be interrupted, and dress as you would at the office.
- Check in regularly to make sure the arrangement is working for all sides.

## **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**

Under the Family and Medical Leave Act, eligible workers are entitled to unpaid leave for up to 12 weeks per year without losing job security or health benefits, to care for a spouse, child or parent who has a serious health condition.

- Companies that employ fewer than 50 people are exempt from FMLA.
- To qualify, you must have worked for the company for at least 1,250 hours in the last 12 months. Check with your HR department to see if you qualify. The company is required by law to tell you your rights under FMLA and, if you qualify, offer you leave. Employers may not threaten you or make your work life difficult because you requested a leave.
- You may take the 12 weeks of leave all at once or in pieces — for example, three days twice a month when a parent is receiving chemotherapy. When your leave is up, you must return to work to protect your job.
- Under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), employees taking time off to care for a disabled parent or spouse are entitled to the same treatment as coworkers who take time off to care for disabled children.
- The ADA also gives you protection if you lose your job or are harassed.
- Some states have laws similar, but not identical, to the federal FMLA. They may provide different benefits.

\*If no law applies, your employer is not required to give you time off or make any accommodations.

## **Look Close to Home**

Investigate and participate in your local caregiving community. An adult day care program/ respite care site is good for socialization and structure, and has activities designed to maintain or strengthen skills. It may help you to talk to others who are facing the same issues.

## **Plan Appointments**

Minimize the time you take away from your job. Schedule your loved one's doctor and therapy appointments early in the morning or at the end of the day.

## **Stay Organized**

Manage your time efficiently. Set priorities. Tackle the most important items first. When you are stretched between two obligations, it's easy to forget something.

## **Show Appreciation to Coworkers**

Assume your coworkers may be pitching in to assist with the workload when you're not in the office. Thank them now, and — when you are able — volunteer to help coworkers who are facing similar situations.

*The information in this article was adapted from AARP Family Caregivers, Caregiving While Working, 2017.*

***\*If you would like to join our mailing list to learn more about programs and services available to you contact our Family Caregiver Support Coordinator at [caregiver2@senior-resources-guilford.org](mailto:caregiver2@senior-resources-guilford.org)***

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For referrals to community organizations in Guilford County that assist older adults and caregivers, contact Senior Resources of Guilford's SeniorLine at (336) 884-6981 in High Point, all other areas (336) 333-6981 or the Caregiver Support Coordinator, at (336) 373-4816 in Greensboro or (336) 883-3586 in High Point.

