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PHS-COMMUNITY SERVICES SYSTEM IS A DIVISION OF PIMA HEALTH SYSTEM, PIMA COUNTY

Community Services System Caregiver “Community Link”

Strategies for working with Hospital Discharge Planners

(Family Caregiver Alliance-2008)

So, what happens when the hospital stay is over? We’ve all heard about the late Friday afternoon discharge from the hospital. You have been there every day, talking to the nurses about the patient’s condition and needs. Suddenly, you are told they are going home this afternoon. There has been no discussion about what the home care needs are and what you need to know in order to care for them. You spent many hours at the hospital, overseeing care and offering support. By time the discharge from the hospital comes around, you might be more tired than ever-and you might be scared that you won’t know how to provide care now.

What can you do under these circumstances? First, it is important to be an advocate not only for the patient but also for yourself. Be aware that there is an appeal process available if you feel the patient is being discharged too soon. Write down your questions and make sure you get answers before taking anyone home.

The first set of questions is about the illness:

- What is it and what should you expect in terms of recovery?
- What should you watch out for?
- Will you get home care and will a nurse or therapist come to your home to see that the patient is doing OK?
- How do you get help-for advice about care, danger signs, a phone number for someone to talk to, follow-up appointments?
- Have you been given information either verbally or in writing that you understand and can refer to?

The second set of questions is about treatment and care:

- What medicine should be taken and when? (continued on page 5)

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Special points of interest:

- *COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS*
- *CLASS AND GROUP SCHEDULES*
- *SUPPORT LETTER*
- *NEW YEAR REFLECTION*

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH INSURANCE COMPANIES

BE PREPARED: Before you call an insurance company, write down the list of questions you have so you can handle everything in one phone call.

GATHER YOUR INFORMATION: Be prepared to give the person you talk with your name and relationship to the recipient, birth date, policy number, and the explanation of benefits.

TAKE NOTES: Take notes about your phone conversations, including the name of the insurance representative, the date of the call and the information you were given.

BE CLEAR AND CONCISE: State clearly and briefly what your question or concern is, what you need and what you expect.

BE PATIENT: Health insurance issues can be frustrating and time consuming. Accept that you will need to spend a certain amount of time navigating through automated telephone menus and messages, waiting on hold and waiting for the claims process to be completed.

BE CONSIDERATE: Most insurance personnel want to do their jobs well. Thank them when they have been helpful, and speak to them kindly, assume they are there to help you.

FOLLOW THROUGH: If the insurance company asks you to do something or to send additional information, do it right away. This will help them get any bills paid.

Keep in mind that billing office personnel and insurance claims representatives are there to serve you. You are the customer, be assertive. You should expect to be treated with respect and consideration, have your concerns clarified, have your questions answered, and be informed of any steps you need to take to move things along.

Both articles excerpted from *Communicating Effectively with Healthcare Providers* National Family Caregivers Association

HOW TO COMMUNICATE DURING A CRISIS

When your care recipient is in a medical crisis, your ability to observe symptoms carefully and report accurately might be, quite literally, life-saving. But that is a time when it may be difficult to function clearly. Here is a list that will help you remember what to look for during a crisis. You may want to read it ahead of time, and then tuck a copy away for later.

- What time did the problem start?
 - What were they doing before the problem started?
 - Do you know or suspect what might have caused the problem?
 - What was the first symptom that you notice?
 - What other symptoms or complaints do you remember?
 - Did the symptoms come on abruptly or gradually?
 - Were they given any medication or medical treatment just before the problem started?
 - Did the patient say anything about how they felt when the problem started?
 - Is there a history of this type of problem?
 - What did you do to try to help between the problem and the time you arrived at the ER?
- Call 911—If the person you are caring for:
- Is unconscious
 - Has unexplained chest pain
 - Is having trouble breathing
 - Has no pulse
 - Is bleeding severely
 - Has a severe headache/slurred speech

PRACTICAL SKILLS CLASSES FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS

JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2009

Please pre-register by calling 243-8374. There is no charge to attend.

(Funded by the Older Americans Act through Pima Council on Aging)



All classes to be held at: TMC-Senior Services, El Dorado Campus, 1400 N. Wilmot Road, 1st floor classroom and Senior Resource Center, unless noted.

UNDERSTANDING THE AGING PROCESS - Discussion on normal aging, emotional and body system changes and common medical conditions. **WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7TH, (1-3PM)**

DEALING WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS - Understanding and responding to angry, demanding and resistant behavior, excessive complaining, depression and behaviors associated with cognitive impairment. **THURSDAY, JANUARY 15TH, (10AM-NOON)**

MANAGING MEDICATIONS - Pharmaceutical drugs and their side effects, possible reactions, how to handle mistakes, and special issues for older adults. **WEDNESDAY, JAN. 21ST (1-3PM)**

GET OFF THE ROAD! (GIVING UP THE CAR KEYS) - Tools and techniques to get the cognitively impaired person to stop driving. Includes a look at some transportation options.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 29TH (10AM-NOON)

ACCIDENT PREVENTION AND HOUSEHOLD SAFETY - Preventing falls, safe use of wheelchairs, fire risk evaluation, and responding to emergencies.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11TH (1-3PM)

SAFE SEX AND SENIORS - Raising awareness of HIV and STD risk for sexually active seniors. The topic is presented with sensitivity and humor. **THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12TH (10AM-NOON)**

INFECTION CONTROL - Reducing the spread of infections, disinfecting the home, use of gloves and sterile technique. **WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25TH (1-3PM)**

IN GREEN VALLEY+++THE CARE AND FEEDING OF CAREGIVERS - How to balance self-care with the care of your loved one; coping skills, stress reduction techniques, learning to ask for help, resources for family caregivers. **WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25TH (1:30-3:30PM)** **Class will be held at Casa de Esperanza, Community Room, 780 S. Park Centre Avenue, GREEN VALLEY**

NEW 8-WEEK CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS
STARTING IN JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2009

There is no charge to attend, but pre-registration is necessary.
 Call 243-8352.

(Please note that the start dates below are projected and subject to change.)

Central	10:00 am**	Tuesday	2/10/2009
Green Valley	10:00 am**	Wednesday	1/07/2009
Northwest	10:00am	Thursday	2/05/2009
Oro Valley	1:30 pm	Wednesday	2/04/2009
South (en español llame al - 243-8379)	** Adult Day Care Available.		

SERVICES IS SPANISH: For information about support groups and counseling in Spanish, or our Spanish language newsletter, please call Sonya Valentin at 243-8379.

JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2009 MONTHLY ONGOING GROUPS

(Open to family caregivers who have *completed* the 8-week group)

Please call 243-8378 to let us know you're coming

one day prior to the meeting date each month—thanks!

Central/East daytime: Last Monday of each month (1— 2:30 pm); 1/26 & 2/23

Central/East evening: 1st Wednesday of each month (6— 7:30 pm); 1/7 & 2/4

Green Valley: 3rd Wednesday of each month (1— 2:30 pm); 1/21 & 2/18

Oro Valley: 1st Tuesday of each month (Noon— 1:30 pm); 1/6 & 2/3

West/Tucson Estates: Last Tuesday of each month (9—10:30 am); 1/27 & 2/24

*Additional Support Groups and information from our
Community Partners:*

*Alzheimer's Association Desert Southwest Chapter
322-6601*

*Pima Council on Aging
790-7262*

*Sunstone Cancer Support Centers
749-1928*

*TMC-Senior Services Healthy Living Connections
324-1960*

*For your copy of the Pima County Resource Guide of
Community Partners please call 243-8352.*

New Support Group Location

University of Arizona Student Union Building

JANUARY 14 & 28

FEBRUARY 11 & 25

Noon—1:00pm

Call Mara at 243-8378 for more information

~ **RESPIRE CARE** ~

Remember that our Respite Program can help you get the help you need! **In-home** respite workers can give you a much needed break one or two days a week; or schedule a **temporary facility stay** for your loved one. Please call **790-7262** for more information.

DEAR CAREGIVERS:

Communication is your door to health, wealth, relationships, and all that is good in life. Some people I know who do not have the ability to speak are wonderful communicators. The loss of one or two senses certainly can impair communication, but it does not have to hinder the message. Good communication is the ability to receive and transmit information or a message. This newsletter has given you some tips and suggestions on how to communicate with your healthcare professional. Tips we

can all use in our day to day lives. As a caregiver, you have many chances to communicate not only for yourself, but the one you care for. The key is to be direct, clear, and responsive. Know what your expectations are and don't be afraid to speak directly and firmly to get what you expect. Often as caregivers we accept the information from medical professionals without question. This is the time to move forward and be assertive to get what you need and expect.

*Sincerely, Mara,
Sonya, Carol & ED*

Strategies for working with Hospital Discharge Planners

(continued from page 1)

- What side effects should you be looking for; how do you help the patient transfer from bed/chair to standing?
- What do you do if they fall (particularly when you are holding him/her)?
- What medical equipment does the patient need, e.g., a hospital bed, commode, walker and how do you use them?
- Will someone come to your home and do an assessment to see if you need home modifications?

Third, where do you find help in the community:

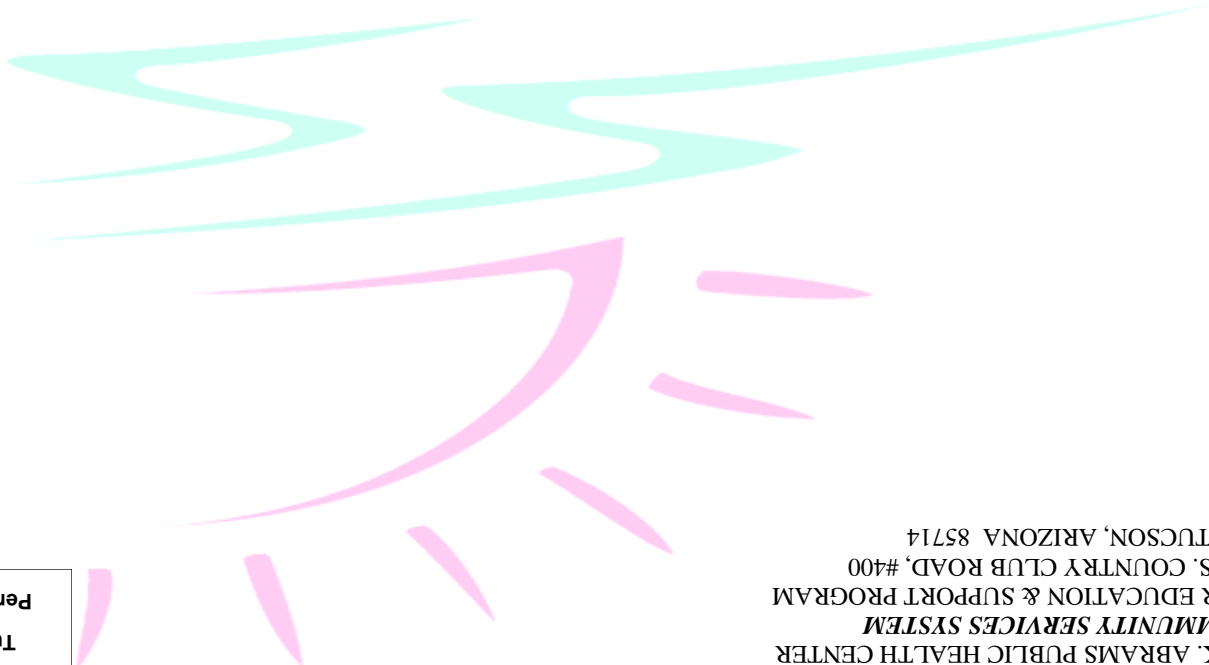
- What agencies are available to help you, with, say, transportation or meals?
- What is adult day care or respite and how do you find out about it?
- What public benefits are you eligible for, such as In-Home Supportive Services?
- Where do you start to look for such care (make sure you get specific referrals, not just a resource guide)?
- Whom can you call to help with these referrals or if you have trouble connecting with an agency?

And finally, you need to have the discharge planner address your needs as a caregiver. This means that they should assess your ability to do the required tasks:

- Have they trained you in transfer skills?
- Do you know how to turn someone in bed so they don't get a bedsore?
- Do you know how to help someone swallow a pill or give an injection safely?
- Does the patient require help at night and if so, how will you get enough sleep?
- What medical conditions and limitations do you have that make providing this care difficult?

Most importantly, don't be afraid to be assertive in getting your concerns addressed before the discharge from the hospital and your loved one comes home.

**If you or someone you know would like to be added or deleted from our mailing list, please call: 243-8352



PHS
Pima Health System

HERBERT K. ABRAMS PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER
COMMUNITY SERVICES SYSTEM
CAREGIVER EDUCATION & SUPPORT PROGRAM
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TIME FOR NEW BEGINNINGS. . . . Taylor Addison, Blue Mountain Arts

This is a time for reflection as well as celebration.
As you look back on the past year and all that has taken place in your life,
Remember each experience for the good that has come of it and for the
knowledge you have gained.
Remember the efforts you have made and the goals you have reached.
Remember the love you have shared and the happiness you have brought.
Remember the laughter, the joy, the hard work, and the tears.
And as you reflect on the past year, also be thinking of the new one to
come.
Because most importantly, this is a time of new beginnings and the
celebration of life.