

Puzzled by Your Care Receiver's Refusal of Services?¹

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Sometimes your care receiver refuses the help or services that you have worked hard to identify. To a caregiver who is trying to balance caregiving with other responsibilities, this may feel like the care receiver is being stubborn or difficult. Perhaps if you can get to the root of the problem, you can resolve the refusal issue and get on with your balancing act. Take a few minutes to answer the following questions.

Is your care receiver...

- Concerned about cost?
- Denying that there is a problem?
- Convinced the help is welfare?
- Fearful of strangers in the house?
- Expecting YOU or a family member to “do it”?
- Afraid of losing control?
- Overwhelmed by the application process?

Is Your Care Receiver Concerned About Cost?

Money is a big concern for most of us, particularly people living on a fixed income or struggling to pay the bills. Older adults are often concerned about running out of money. Explore different ways to pay for services.

When inquiring about a service, ask about fees and how they are paid. Ask if there is any financial support through government services or community resources.

In some families, adult children who live far away or are otherwise unable to provide direct care are willing to accept the financial responsibility for a service. This may allow them to feel more involved in the care of their loved one.

Is Your Care Receiver Denying That There Is a Problem?

It is difficult to admit that we are no longer able to do the things we once took for granted. Accepting help may reinforce the fear of aging. It can be a

1. This document is FCS2259, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, IFAS, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611. First published: November 2006. Reviewed: September 2008. Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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challenge to convince your care receiver that he or she needs additional help.

Is Your Care Receiver Convinced the Help is Welfare?

Older adults often possess a strong sense of independence and self-reliance, accompanied by a reluctance to accept help. Many attach a stigma to government assistance, relating it to welfare. They may simply not understand that the agency is not welfare and that they will be paying (even if on a sliding scale) for the help they receive.

Is Your Care Receiver Fearful of Strangers in the House?

People who need care often feel vulnerable. They worry that someone may come in and steal from them or somehow harm them. Describe the screening process you are using to protect them. If possible, use a service or agency that a friend of theirs has been happy with.

Is Your Care Receiver Expecting YOU or a Family Member to “Do It”?

“I raised you. Now it's your turn to take care of me.” Whether this is spoken or simply implied, the guilt caregivers feel is real. Maybe this expectation was more realistic in earlier times when women's responsibilities were limited to family care. Times have changed, though, and many caregivers are employed outside the home. If there are medical issues, you may not have the skills or training needed to provide the care required. This discussion may be difficult, but it may be necessary.

Is Your Care Receiver Afraid of Losing Control?

An important part of being an adult is having control over one's own life. Giving up any control can be difficult. Often older adults may be afraid of a "snowball effect." ("If I give up control in this area, what comes next?") Yet in some circumstances, giving up control in one area of life may lead to more independence in the long run.

Is Your Care Receiver Overwhelmed by the Application Process?

This concern is often justifiable. The application form may seem complicated, and the process can take a long time. The forms may be written in small print and may ask for personal information, particularly about income, that care receivers are not anxious to share. There are at least two options. You and your care receiver can complete the form together, or you can ask a representative from the agency to sit down with you and/or your care receiver to complete the form.

While there may be other reasons the care receiver refuses help, these are the most common ones. It will take time to uncover the real reasons someone doesn't want help. But once this has been resolved, you will be able to access many services that will help both your care receiver and you, the caregiver.

For More Information

This is one of six publications in a series on caregiving and aging. The other publications in this series are:

FCS 2257: Long-Term Care: Places to Call Home (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FY869>)

FCS 2258: Caregiver's Contacts: How to Get the Help You Need (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FY870>)

FCS 2260: Balancing Work and Caregiving: Tips for Employees (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FY872>)

FCS 2261: Balancing Work and Caregiving: A Guide for Employers (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FY873>)

FCS 2262: Final Wishes: End-of-Life Decisions (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FY874>)