

HOME CARE OPTIONS: DEFINITIONS

Many seniors find that at one time or another, they require some assistance at home. Whether returning from the hospital, recovering from an illness, or having difficulty with a particular task, seniors and their families may consider having someone come into the home to assist them. There are different levels of help available – offering a range of health and home care services. These services may be provided free of charge to financially eligible seniors, paid for by health insurance or paid for privately.

The first question is what type of help is needed. Below are definitions for the various types of home health and home care services provided by each:

RN (Registered Nurse) – has at least two years of training and is licensed by the state. RNs can provide skilled nursing care such as wound care, providing injections or other medical needs. A physician (or primary care provider) usually orders this service.

LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) – has at least one year of training; is licensed; and is usually supervised by a RN.

CNA (Certified Nurse Assistant) – has a minimum number of hours of training. The CNA is supervised by a licensed nurse and may be able to perform certain nursing functions. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts registers CNAs.

HHA (Home Health Aide) – provides assistance with activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing, feeding and ambulation.

PC (Personal Care) Attendant – helps people with disabilities perform activities of daily living. Attendants (or Assistants) do not have any medical training.

Homemaker – helps with light housework, meal preparation, laundry, etc. Homemakers do not do personal care.¹

Friendly Visitor/Companion - provides company and companionship to people who are homebound. In many cases this is a volunteer position administered through a local home care agency, church or community group.

Geriatric Care Manager –are specialists in assisting older people and their families to assess the client's needs, develop a plan, assist with appointments, interviews, paperwork and make all preparations for needed in-home care or arrange for a transition to a facility. The average range for fees is \$80 - 125/hour. **Case Managers** work for agencies that provide a range of services to elders and assist clients in accessing services.

Your health care providers, including the hospital social worker or discharge planner, may be helpful in determining the type of care you may require. If the physician orders nursing care, your insurance should pay for this service. In addition, if you are receiving skilled services (nursing, physical therapy or occupational therapy) at home, your health insurance may also pay for a home health aide. It is important to ask your health care provider if these services will be covered by your insurance. Springwell [formerly West Suburban Elder Services] has income eligibility guidelines for many of their services, such as Personal Care/Homemaker. To see if you qualify, call (617) 926-4100.

For information about local service providers, call Kathy Laufer at (617) 796-1660.

¹ **Springwell [formerly West Suburban Elder Services]** can provide Homemaking/Personal Care services which combine the two functions.