

Long Distance Caregiving Tips From Our Western Slope Caregivers

Many adult children feel guilty because they don't live near their elderly parents so they can provide the level of attention and care they feel their parents deserve. You are not alone. The National Institute on Aging estimates there may be as many as 7M people providing long distance care in the United States. Although our society is highly mobile, your own work and family commitments may make it impossible to live near your aging parents.

Long distance caregiving from afar can be complicated, but definitely not impossible. It takes organization, time and commitment on your part to effectively manage the situation. Here are a few long distance caregiving tips that may make it easier for both you and your loved one.

1. **In case of emergency.** Keep a list of your parent's doctors, dentist, local hospitals, neighbors and friends that you can contact in case of an emergency. Choose a good friend or trusted neighbor with a key to your parent's home, preferably someone you have met on one of your visits. Make a copy of the list for both you and your parents.
2. **Keep a list of all pertinent information including:**
 - a. Social security numbers
 - b. Health insurance information
 - c. Updated list of all medications
 - d. List of any allergies
 - e. Information on their pharmacy
 - f. Financial information, including all assets and debt, checking account and saving account numbers, and credit card information
 - g. Legal information, including wills, power of attorney, advanced directives, trusts, birth certificates, etc.
3. **Keep in touch** as often as possible. With the Internet, Skype, and texting, keeping in touch is easier than ever before. Carefully listen to their tone of voice. Pay attention to any signs of forgetfulness, confusion or stress that may indicate health or financial problems.
4. **Plan your travel.** However, you can only tell so much from a phone conversation. Nothing beats an in-person visit so you can see for yourself their health and home conditions. Schedule appointments in advance for their doctors or anyone else you need to see while you are there. Check their refrigerator and pantry so you get an idea of what they are eating. Inspect their home for possible safety hazards, including loose rugs, uneven stairs, etc.
5. **Choose the best caregivers and services for your parent's needs.** Despite your parent's desire to stay in their home, they may need some extra help. A homecare agency such as [FirstLight HomeCare of the Western Slope](#) can provide personal and companion care for a couple of hours/week or 24/7. Our caregivers keep in constant touch with you through our web-based [Client Access](#) program and continuous communication.

At FirstLight HomeCare of the Western Slope, we are your trusted eyes and ears for when you can't be there.

