



## **You and Your Aging Parent**

**A column by Miller's Social Services Coordinator, Linda Loen, LCSW. Linda is a licensed clinical social worker with over 20 years experience servicing the aging population. The column's goal is to provide help and support for the elderly and for those who care for the elderly.**

**Do you have a question about aging? Please email Mrs. Loen at [lmloen@emmci.org](mailto:lmloen@emmci.org), or write to her at Miller Memorial Community, 360 Broad Street, Meriden, CT 06450.**

**Question.** How can adult children take care of parents who live at a distance and still balance the needs of family members, especially those with children living at home?

### ***Mrs. Loen replies:***

It is estimated that 44 percent of all Americans provide some care to their aging parents and to their own children under 21. Caring for children and elderly parents is a nearly universal human experience and has been a need of people for centuries. But "The Sandwich Generation," is a new phrase. It was coined by Baby Boomers to describe their experience of being caught between the needs of two generations: their own children, and their aging parents.

Today, people who are 85 and older are the fastest growing segment of the population. More and more people are exercising their options to remain at home, or to live in a less restrictive level of care such as assisted living. Life care communities address patients' needs from the least intrusive level to the need for more skilled care.

But what happens when aging parents live some distance away and need some oversight by their own adult children?

Many older people want very much to maintain their independence and dignity, and they do not wish to be a burden on their adult children. Aging parents might not share details regarding their health

issues or their financial concerns with their children. There are ways, though, that adult children can help aging parents through health problems, financial difficulties, or just day-to-day oversight, even from a distance.

1. Adult children can stay in regular contact by phone with their parent, and remain up to date through neighbors or friends. Often, neighbors already have a “buddy system” in place that allows them to check on an aging neighbor and each other.
2. Adult children can also assign family roles among siblings to share responsibilities for legal, financial and medical issues.
3. Adult children can arrange by phone for grocery and meal deliveries through private and public sources such as Stop & Shop’s Peapod Program, meals-on-wheels, or delivery from a neighborhood grocery store. Adult children, who live close enough to visit, can also cook large casseroles, divide the casserole into sections, and freeze them for use at a later date.
4. Adult children can contract services for home maintenance through various programs offered in their towns.
5. Adult children can refer parents to senior centers, health care networks, and other organizations such as Connecticut Community Care, which does private care management, and the state’s Area Agency on Aging.

Finally, there are many useful new technologies that might help elders live independently. Motion detectors, and other devices, can be installed in the home and can log daily activities, like taking medications or monitor how much time is spent in bed. IBM has been developing a “smart shelf” that can monitor whether medications are being taken properly.

There are also some creative arrangements that rely on the web and a network of older adults and other adult children. “Caring from a Distance,” is an organization that matches caregivers in one city to an elder there, who can swap services for the care of their elders in another city. Connecticut Community Care also has connections with inter-state resources that will help an adult child care for a parent who is a long distance away.

Contacts with resources like these, and others, can be obtained from the web site: [www.cfad.org](http://www.cfad.org). Also check out our Resource Center.

All of these options can help adult children who are caregivers maintain contact with their elders without sacrificing the independence of their aging parents

For more information, or to pose a question, please write to Mrs. Loen via email.