

## L O N G - T E R M

## care

## What You Need to Know

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### **Assessment of Needs**

The array of services and options for a person needing long term care and/or the person's family is vast and confusing. There are many different types of care, levels of service, and many organizations offering various levels of support. All of this tends to make the journey in achieving the right mixture and scope of services very challenging and time consuming. At times, family members make decisions or give opinions that are based upon their own perceptions. Their decisions may result in placement that does not meet the needs of their loved one. Several changes may be necessary before the right scope and mixture of services and support is in place to correctly and safely care for the senior.

One of the ways that a family member can be assured of a more appropriate fit of services and care for his or her loved one, is through the use of an assessment and evaluation process. A provider or an individual agency can do an assessment.

The entire purpose of an assessment is to look at a person from a total picture viewpoint and to put together the right combination of care and resources, which will pinpoint and accurately serve the person's needs. Usually a health care worker with clinical skills (a nurse or social worker) completes the assessment. The professional looks at issues such as:

1. Medical condition
2. Self care ability in such areas as bathing, grooming, feeding and toileting
3. Self care ability in other areas such as cooking, laundry, housekeeping, phone use, medication management, and transportation
4. Sensory function: vision and hearing
5. Cognition / comprehension: judgment, insight, time tracking, and memory
6. Mobility

After the evaluation, which usually includes a personal visit with the individual and an evaluation of his/her current living environment and discussion with both the individual and family members, the assessor identifies resources for care and can mobilize the care resources. Usually the assessment includes an evaluation of the person's family support, financial situation, whether he/she has insurance or would qualify for government programs (Medicaid or Medicare) and private resources. After the development of a plan, the suggestions are shared with the family and client, and choices are made. The family can ask for assistance in arranging for services, relocation or liaison between the various health and service providers.

The goal in the evaluation process is to maximize the potential for a correct fit between services, resources and the individual's needs.