



POWER OF PLANNING: CAREGIVERS

About **1 in 5 adults** in the U.S. – around 53 million people – are caregivers. Anyone helping another person with daily tasks over time is a caregiver. If you're acting as someone's Power of Attorney (POA) agent, you're in a caregiving role.

Providing care is an act of love and caring for someone else starts with caring for yourself, too.

Caring for Caregivers

- Join support groups or Memory Cafés
- Talk with professionals, friends, and family
- Sleep, eat well, and stay active
- Don't isolate—social connection is essential!
- Keep up with your own health care
- Take breaks! Respite care is available
- Get your own advance planning documents (like POAs) in order

Prioritize your needs! You can't pour from an empty cup.



What is a Memory Café?

A Memory Cafe is a welcoming place where people living with dementia and their caregivers can relax, connect, and enjoy activities together in a safe social setting.

Sources of Support

- Family and friends – make a list of tasks you need help with
- Paid caregivers (private or state-funded)
- Adult day centers and respite care through Aging Services

Balancing Work with Caregiving? Ask about:

- FMLA or Intermittent FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act)
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)

Three Golden Rules for Communicating with Someone Living with Dementia

- 1. Don't ask direct questions** – Try **yes/no** or simple choice questions. Open ended questions can be confusing.
- 2. Listen and learn** – When do they communicate best? Notice the times and situations when they are most at ease.
- 3. Don't argue or correct** – Let them share. Past memories can bring comfort. Being reminded of their memory loss can cause shame.

People with dementia experience the world differently. Small changes in how we talk can help them feel safer and more at ease.

These tips come from the Contented Dementia Trust. More caregiver resources at: www.contenteddementiatruster.org

"Your attitude and actions can have a powerful effect on life with a person living with dementia. Before you act, remember to recognize that **the person living with dementia is not a problem.** The person has a medical condition causing problems."

– Pat Snyder, Dementia Action Alliance

Support & Guides:

- **IL Family Caregiver Coalition:** illinoisfamilycaregiver.org
- **IL Cognitive Resource Network:** ilbrainhealth.org/living-with-dementia/support-groups
- **Memory Café Directory:** dfamerica.org/memory-cafe-directory
- **Next Steps in Care Guide:** nextstepincare.org/Caregiver_Home
- **AgeOptions Caregiver Training:** ageoptions-caregivers.com



POWER OF PLANNING: WHAT CAREGIVERS NEED TO KNOW

Being a caregiver isn't easy—but you're not alone. Knowing the basics helps you be prepared!

What is a Power of Attorney (POA) Agent?

If someone has named you their Power of Attorney (POA) Agent, they've legally trusted you to help make decisions on their behalf – if or when they need help. This is an important relationship, built on trust and clear understanding.

A POA becomes active when:

- The principal chooses to start it immediately, or
- A doctor says they can't make their own decisions, or
- A specific condition or event in the POA document happens (a "trigger").

You don't have to accept the role or act as someone's agent.

If you're not ready or able, let your loved one know so they can choose someone else.

Your Legal Duties as POA Agent

You have a legal obligation to act in your loved one's **best interest**, not based on your own preferences. This is called a **fiduciary duty**.

Talk early—**before there's a crisis**—about your loved one's wishes for:

- Medical care
- Living arrangements
- Financial decisions
- End-of-life care

Even if the POA is active, try to include your loved one in care decisions whenever you can.

Health Care POA Agent - You can:

- Accept or decline treatments
- Choose doctors or care facilities
- View medical records
- Speak to providers on their behalf

Tip: Scan or take a photo of the POA-HC. Illinois accepts digital copies.

Property/Financial POA Agent - You can:

- Pay bills, rent, or mortgage (with their funds)
- Communicate with banks and creditors
- Manage pension or income

Keep receipts and records! It's your duty to track financial decisions.

Social Security Note: You may need to apply as a Representative Payee. Contact SSA to learn more.

Caregiver Tip: Don't forget to make your own POAs, too! Planning ahead is for everyone.

Visit www.illinoislegalaid.org/power-planning to make your own POAs for free.

Resources:

Alzheimer's Association

(800) 272-3900 - 24/7, 200+ languages
(Dial 711 for TRS)
alz.org/help-support/caregiving

Alzheimer's Foundation

(866) 232-8484 | Text: (646) 586-5283
(Text in 90 languages)
Available 9 am-9 pm ET, 7 days/week
alzfdn.org/caregiving-resources

IL Dept. on Aging Senior Helpline

(800) 252-8966 | ilaging.illinois.gov/programs/caregiver/caregiver-links.html

Our society has a fundamental obligation to guarantee justice for all of its members. For over 40 years, **Center for Disability & Elder Law** has been providing free legal services to low-income residents of Cook County, Illinois and expanding access to justice to persons marginalized by poverty, age and/or disability, since it was created by the Chicago Bar Foundation in 1984.

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