

Why you should consider using support services

Most people find that support services can be of great benefit when caring for a family member or friend. Support services can:

- ▣ Help to maintain the independence, health and wellbeing of the person you care for.
- ▣ Help you to maintain your own health and wellbeing.
- ▣ Decrease the pressure and stress you may feel at times, by ensuring you have time for social and other activities.
- ▣ Complement or supplement the help that family or friends offer.
- ▣ Allow you to spend quality time with the person you care for.
- ▣ Help you to keep on caring.

*"When I started using support services,
I couldn't believe how different I felt. I got my wings back!"*

Using support services can be difficult at first

Despite the benefits of using support services, people are often reluctant to start using them. This may be because you:

- ▣ Don't know what services are available or how to access them.
- ▣ Fear being seen as 'failing your duty or obligation'.
- ▣ Want to protect the dignity of the person you care for.
- ▣ Don't know how to raise the issue with the person you care for.
- ▣ Are respecting the wishes of the person you care for, who is reluctant to accept support services.

Using support services is not a sign of failure. Rather, it can help to maintain or improve the quality of life of the person you care for - it can also help you to continue caring.

Where to get information on support services

- ▣ [Commonwealth Carelink Centres](#) - 1800 052 222
Information on home care, personal care, delivered meals, centre-based activity groups or respite.
- ▣ The [local Aged Care Assessment Team](#) - ph: 1800 500 853 for contact details. Information and advice on the full range of community support services available in your area.
- ▣ The [Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre](#) - ph: 1800 242 636*
or Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre - ph: 1800 059 059*.
Information, support and advice for people caring for a family member or friend.
- ▣ The [Department of Veterans' Affairs](#) - ph: 133 254.
Information on support services for veterans and their carers.
- ▣ Organisations that provide condition-specific information and support - e.g. Alzheimer's Australia or the Cancer Council.

Don't expect one service provider to know everything. Keep asking until you get the answers you need.

*"Finding the right help is very 'hit and miss' in the beginning.
You just don't know what's out there."*



How to get started with support services

- ▣ Find out which services are available in your area.
- ▣ Ask family members or friends whether they could help with some tasks on a regular basis.
- ▣ Talk to the person you care for about the benefits of receiving help from services and family members. Negotiate if you need to.
- ▣ Refer yourself or the person you care for to the services you choose. A worker may then visit you to complete an assessment.
- ▣ Know that there may be a waiting list - don't be put off by this.
- ▣ If your situation changes or becomes more urgent, notify the support service - they may give your situation a higher priority.

Some people find that the person they care for remains unwilling to use support services. As long as this person has the capacity to make decisions for themselves (talk to their GP if unsure) they have the right to make this choice - even if there are some risks involved.

However, as a carer, you also have the right to choose whether or not you can continue to provide regular assistance. Being a carer involves giving consideration to your own needs and commitments too.

How to get the most out of using support services

People who have used support services give the following advice:

- ▣ Be honest and upfront about your needs. Don't be afraid to ask.
- ▣ Supplement the services you receive with regular assistance from family members or friends if possible.
- ▣ Find out what is within the boundaries of the worker's role, then you know what to expect and what you can ask for.
- ▣ The workers can be a wealth of information. Get helpful 'tips' on how other people use services to manage care at home.
- ▣ If the needs of the person you care for seem complex contact the Aged Care Assessment Service for specialist advice at no cost.

*"I had to learn to ask for help - I was so used to giving it instead!
It took time to get a handle on this."*

Further information:

- ▣ [Aged Care Assessment](#) - information sheet.
- ▣ [More information on community support services](#)

Contact the [Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre](#) on 1800 242 636* to request the above information sheet be sent to you - or to find out about other information sheets in this series.

*Free call except from mobile phones. Mobile calls at mobile rates.

We do our best to keep these links up to date, but the internet changes all the time. If you can no longer access any of the above resources, please go to our [Internet Troubleshooting Guide](#), or email us at website@carersvic.org.au