

Don't forget to make a back up plan!

How and why to make a back up plan

When caring for a family member or friend, a back up plan is essential.

Back up plans are made in advance and can be used when unexpected situations occur. They provide you and the person you care for with reassurance that there will be people to step in who will have instructions to guide them. The needs, preferences and wishes of the person you care for will be known and considered.

A back up plan could be put into action if:

- ▣ The person being cared for is involved in an emergency.
- ▣ The carer is taken ill, needs surgery or medical treatment.
- ▣ Essential support provided by family members is no longer available - e.g. family must move interstate.
- ▣ Essential support services are withdrawn - e.g. the needs of the person being cared for cause concern about risk to staff.
- ▣ Unexpected circumstances force the carer to take leave - e.g. a family emergency interstate.
- ▣ Suddenly the carer is unable to provide care due to ill health or death.

*"It's easier to go day-to-day than think about the 'what if'.
I had to force myself to make a plan - gosh I was glad I had."*

How to create a back up plan

1. Obtain a free copy of the Emergency Care Kit by contacting the [Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre](#) on 1800 242 636*. A Carer Support Kit will be sent to you that includes the Emergency Care Kit.
2. Think about the best people to be your emergency contacts - ask them if they are prepared to take on this role. They will need to understand what this commitment involves as well as the needs and wishes of you and your family member, in case they need to act on your behalf.
3. Complete the Emergency Care Kit. This includes health information about your family member, the care required, medications and a list of regular support services received. There is also room to record the expectations you have for the person who steps into the carer role.
4. Once complete, give a copy to the people who have agreed to be your emergency contacts. Keep the original in a safe but visible place - perhaps by the phone. Don't forget to update it annually or sooner if the details change.

Other things you need to think about

Most carers prefer not to consider the possibility that the person they care for will outlive them. If this does happen, members of your family may be left floundering, wondering what they need to do for the person you've cared for and how best to support them.

While it may be difficult to think about your own mortality, making forward plans for the person you care for is necessary. This is particularly important if your family member does not have the capacity to make decisions for themselves or to adequately communicate their wishes.

Make plans as soon as possible to avoid unnecessary stress, confusion and uncertainty. If the



person you care for is still able to make their own decisions (check with their GP if unsure), they can document their wishes by completing an advance directive or an Enduring Power of Guardianship. Enduring Power of Attorney (Financial and Medical) are also important to consider.

More information on this is available in the information sheets listed below. Remember that for your family member's wishes to be followed, they must document these themselves. You cannot do this for them - early planning is essential.

Pre-arranged funerals also provide carers and the person they care for with confidence and reassurance that their wishes will be fulfilled. This can provide peace of mind at a difficult time.

By taking time to talk with the person you care for and other members of your family about forward plans, you can rest assured that your wishes and those of your family member will be clear to others.

Further information:

- ▣ [Financial and legal considerations - Part 1](#): Enduring Powers of Attorney/Guardianship - information sheet.
- ▣ [Take Control. A Guide to Powers of Attorney and Guardianship](#) - Contact the Office of the Public Advocate on 1300 309 337 to receive a free copy.

Contact the [Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre](#) on 1800 242 636* to request that the above information sheets 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