



Wealth Management  
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# Life events: Ailing parent

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## Financial checklist

The illness of your parent will mean a change in your life. Your advisor can help you to understand the issues at stake and how they can be resolved to ensure that this difficult time can be dealt with as painlessly and efficiently as possible for the entire family. Take this opportunity to review the situation and consider asking your advisor the following questions:

- What are the implications if my parent is unable to make their own decisions?
- Who will be in control of my parent's finances?
- What are the sources of funding available to ease the financial burden?
- What are the implications for my parent's estate plans?
- What sort of living arrangements are available if my parent needs inhome assistance or needs to consider out-of-home care?
- How can I evaluate the sort of care that is available?
- Is there tax relief available if my parent is incapacitated?

## Institutional care

Your parent's illness may be such that they require some degree of fulltime care in a residential facility.

If it is decided that your parent cannot continue to live at home during their illness you will have to consider the out-of-home options, all of which will have different financial implications. As mentioned earlier, this will probably represent a significant change in your parent's life and it is very important that they are brought into the discussion and consulted if they are able, before any decisions are made. Other family members should also be consulted. The potential options are:

### Have your parent live in your home or the home of another child

This may appear to be an attractive option since your parent will have the benefit of continued close family contact. However, this decision needs to be carefully thought out and the various implications considered.

Some of the questions to ask are:

Does your parent want to do this?

1. What are the costs (renovations, additional living costs, etc.)?
2. How will the additional costs be shared?
3. What will be the effect on the current family situation?
4. What time commitment will be required from family members?

### **Institutional care for an ill parent**

Generally speaking there are three types of institutional care:

#### **1. Retirement or independent living**

This is where the individual is living in a retirement community but is able to take care of him/herself to a great degree and does not want the stress of taking care of a home and/or doing day-to-day chores such as cooking, laundry and cleaning. This arrangement also provides social interaction with other seniors and appropriate activities.

#### **2. Assisted-living care**

With this arrangement the individual not only will have the meals and other services that are provided under independent living but also some medical assistance such as bathing and supervision and/or delivery of medications.

#### **3. Skilled nursing facilities**

This is the highest degree of assistance and is appropriate for those individuals who need a high degree of skilled assistance and are not really able to take care of themselves. Some facilities have separate areas exclusively for those afflicted with Alzheimer's disease.

Not surprisingly, in the three options above, the independent living is the least expensive while the skilled nursing facilities are the most expensive, reflecting the degree of assistance required by the resident.

### **Finding a suitable care facility**

Given the large number of facilities available across the country, this will require some research. It is assumed that your parent will want to stay in their own community so a local search is the best way to begin. The internet can certainly be of assistance as well as talking to friends and local medical professionals.

Once some potential facilities have been identified, do a web search. Visit the facility's website to get a feel for what they do and how they do it. A web search may also bring up independent comments and observations from others.

You might also contact associations such as the Canadian Association of Retired People (CARP) who may have some information about the care facility.

A personal visit to the facility is extremely important. Once it has been determined what sort of care your parent requires, a checklist (below) should be completed to ensure that the individual will be getting the care that they need. Some approaches to take are:

- Make an appointment to have a tour;
- Consider dropping by unannounced at a subsequent time. With a scheduled appointment it is assumed that the facility staff will be 'putting their best foot forward' and the impression given may not be indicative of the day-to-day situation.