



Senior Series

A partnership between Ohio State University Extension
and Ohio Aging Network professionals



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Aging Jargon

When preparing for your own care or the care of an aging family member, having adequate information about programs and services for older adults is important. The first step toward making informed decisions is understanding the language used by the professionals one is interacting with. The fields of gerontology (the study of the social aspects of aging) and geriatrics (the study of health related aspects of aging) are complex and often bewildering. Many different terms and acronyms are used that can confuse older adults and their family members. In fact, these terms can be confusing to professionals in both fields as well!

This fact sheet is designed to highlight some of the more

common words individuals might encounter when planning or caring for an older adult. It is not intended to be a complete list; however, it is a good start in helping you familiarize yourself with words you might be hearing on a regular basis.

Glossary of Terms

Activities of Daily Living (ADL)—basic personal activities, which include bathing, eating, dressing, mobility, transferring from bed to chair, and using the toilet.

Acute—a condition of short and sharp course. Opposite of chronic.

Advance Care Planning—a process that assists individuals and their loved ones in clarifying decisions

about future medical treatment. This involves conversations over time about an individual's current state of health, goals, values, and preferences. The goal of these discussions is the creation of a plan that includes specific end-of-life decisions that is understood by all participants (family, extended family, medical providers). As part of this process, the completion of Advance Directive documents helps communicate the plan to all concerned when the individual is unable to do so himself or herself.

Adult Day Services—programs offering social and recreational activities, supervision, health services, and meals in a protective setting for older adults with physical or cognitive disabilities.

Advance Directive—a legal document in which people give others instructions about their preferences with regard to health care decisions in case they become incapacitated in some way. Two types of advance directives are a living will and a durable power-of-attorney for health care.

Area Agency on Aging (AAA)—regional organizations that oversee programs serving elders

(12 total in Ohio). Provide information and referral services and also typically serve as PASSPORT Administrative Agencies.

Caregiver—a family member, friend, professional, or paraprofessional providing care to an individual in need of assistance.

Care/Case Management (CM)—Care/case managers assess clients' needs, create service plans, and coordinate and monitor services. Typically care/case managers are nurses or social workers. Care/case management offers a single point of entry to the aging services network.

Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)—formerly called Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA). This branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is responsible for administering the Medicare program.

Chronic—a medical condition of long duration, denoting a disease of slow progress and long continuance.

Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC)—a retirement community that offers multiple levels of care (independent living, assisted

living, skilled nursing care) housed in different areas of the same campus and that gives residents the opportunity to remain in the same community if their needs change. Provides residential services (meals, housekeeping, laundry), social and recreational services, health care services, personal care, and nursing care. Requires payment of a monthly fee and possibly a large lump-sum entrance fee.

Custodial Care—care that does not require specialized training or services. Assistance with activities of daily living, as well as with self-administration of medications and preparing special diets. Examples: help in walking, eating, and taking medicine. These may be referred to as Activities of Daily Living (ADL).

Dementia—a term that describes a group of diseases (including Alzheimer’s disease) that are characterized by memory loss and other declines in mental functioning.

Durable Power of Attorney (DPOA)—a document that names a person who will act as someone’s agent and who will make decisions on their behalf, if they are incapacitated. The power

of attorney can be restricted to a specific area (such as health care) or can cover broad decision-making responsibilities. Consult an attorney for more details.

Durable Medical Equipment/ Home Medical Equipment (DME/HME)—equipment that enables independent functioning, such as walkers, wheelchairs, oxygen, lift chairs, etc.

Emergency Response Systems/ Personal Response Systems (ERS/PRS)—also called lifelines or personal emergency response systems—a call button usually worn by an older individual that can be pushed to get help from family, friends, or emergency assistance in case of emergency.

Fee for Service—a method of charging for services rendered.

Guardianship—legal arrangement in which the court appoints a surrogate decision-maker to act on someone’s behalf because they are declared incompetent. May include guardianship of the person, estate (finances), or both. The guardian may or may not know this person, depending on the situation at the time of the appointment.

Health Maintenance Organization (HMO)—an organization that

provides a comprehensive range of health services including hospitalization, preventive care, and diagnosis. HMOs require members to use specific health care services (doctors, hospitals, etc.) in the HMO's "network." The HMO will pay less or nothing if members go outside the network.

Home Delivered Meals (HDM) or "Meals On Wheels" (MOW)—delivers nutritionally sound meals five or more days a week to those who cannot purchase their own groceries or prepare meals.

Home Health Aide (HHA)—a semi-skilled professional, often employed by a home health agency, who provides in-home assistance with activities of daily living (ADLs).

Home Health Care—includes a wide range of health-related services, such as assistance with medications, wound care, intravenous (IV) therapy, and help with basic needs, such as bathing, dressing, mobility, etc., which are delivered at a person's home.

Homemaker Services (HMKR)—help with light housekeeping, laundry, shopping, and meal preparation.

Hospice—services for the terminally ill provided in the home, a hospital, or a long-term care facility. Includes home health services, volunteer support, grief counseling, and pain management.

Intermediate Care Facility (ICF)—a health care facility that provides care and services to individuals who do not need skilled nursing care, but whose mental or physical condition requires more than custodial care and services in an institutional setting.

Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs)—household/independent living tasks that include using the telephone, taking medications, and money management.

Incontinence—loss of bladder control. Incontinence is not a disease, but a symptom of an underlying condition. Incontinence affects both men and women of all ages and is NOT a normal part of aging. Should be discussed with a health care provider.

Living Will—a document that states a person's preferences for future medical decisions including the withholding or

withdrawing of life-sustaining treatments such as artificial nutrition and hydration or the use of equipment such as ventilators and respirators.

Long-Term Care (LTC)—range of medical and/or social services designed to help people who have disabilities or chronic care needs. Services may be short-term or long-term and may be provided in a person’s home, in the community, or in residential facilities (nursing homes, assisted living facilities).

Long-Term Care Ombudsman—a representative responsible for investigating patient complaints about long-term care. Ohio has 12 regional LTC ombudsman offices. The central ombudsman is located at the Ohio Department of Aging (1-800-282-1206). “Citizen’s Representative” who protects a person’s rights through advocacy, providing information, and encouraging institutions and agencies to respect citizens’ rights.

Managed Care—a health care plan in which monthly premiums are paid for a complete package of services through an HMO (Health Maintenance

Organization) or similar type of provider.

Medicaid—federal and state funded program of medical assistance to low-income individuals of all ages. There are income eligibility requirements for Medicaid. Contact local Department of Jobs and Family Services for more information.

Medicare—federal health insurance program for persons age 65 and over (and certain disabled persons under age 65). Consists of several parts: Part A (hospital insurance); Part B (optional medical insurance which covers physicians’ services and outpatient care in part and which requires beneficiaries to pay a monthly premium); and Part D (Medicare prescription drug coverage—an insurance that covers brand and generic prescription drugs at participating pharmacies, voluntary program MUST sign up for).

Medigap—insurance supplement to Medicare that is designed to fill in the “gaps” left by Medicare (such as copayments). May pay for some limited long-term care expenses, depending on the benefits package purchased.

Mental Health—has to do with how you feel about yourself, how you feel about others, and how you are able to meet and handle the demands of life. It describes the ability to balance problems with appropriate coping skills.

Nursing Home (NH)—a place where patients reside who need medical or personal assistance. Nursing homes may be called Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs), Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs), or Custodial Care Facilities (CCFs). Not all nursing homes are Medicare approved facilities.

Ohio Department of Aging (ODA)—state agency that oversees aging services programs (including PASSPORT) within Ohio.

Ohio Senior Health Insurance Information Program (OSHIIP)—program sponsored by the Ohio Department of Insurance that provides free information and advice about health insurance, including Medicare, Medicaid, Medigap, long-term care, and other health insurance. To find local OSHIIP center in your area, call 1-800-686-1578.

Older Americans Act (OAA)—federal law enacted in 1965 to provide money for programs and direction for a multitude of services designed to enrich the lives of senior citizens.

PASSPORT—Ohio's home and community-based long-term care service program for low-income persons age 60 and over. Call your local Area Agency on Agency for more information.

Peer Review Organization

(PRO)—group paid by the federal government to review hospital treatment of Medicare patients. A patient has the right to appeal to a PRO if there is a question about care or length of stay.

Personal Care Assistance/Home Health Aide (PCA/HHA)—

nonmedical services to assist older persons in the home such as bathing, dressing, cooking, cleaning, laundry, and running errands.

Power of Attorney (POA)—a legal document that gives another person (usually a spouse, other relative, or friend) the power to act on your behalf. In order to grant a power of attorney, you must be competent, and you do

not lose the legal right to act on your own behalf.

Provider—individual or organization that provides health care or long-term care services (for example, doctors, hospital, physical therapists, home health aides, and more).

Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB)—a state program that uses Medicaid money to pay the Medicare deductibles and copayments for persons whose income is low enough to qualify. Qualifying income is above the poverty level. Contact local Department of Jobs and Family Services for eligibility information.

Respite Care—service in which trained professionals or volunteers come into the home or provide short-term care at a nursing facility (from a few hours to a few days) for an older person to allow caregivers some time away from their caregiving role. Adult day service may be another way to provide “respite.”

Senior Companion—adults age 60 and over who provide companionship to older adults with special needs. Companions volunteer 20 hours per week.

Stipend and travel expenses are provided (companions must meet income guidelines.)

Skilled Care—“higher level” of care (such as injections, catheterization, and dressing changes) provided by trained medical professionals, including nurses, doctors, and physical therapists.

Social Security Administration (SSA)—a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, responsible for determining the Medicare eligibility and enrollment process.

Specified Low Income Medicare Beneficiary (SLMB)—state program that uses Medicaid money to pay the Medicare Part B premium for person whose income is low enough to qualify. Qualifying income is above the poverty level. Contact County Department of Jobs and Family Services.

Spend Down—Medicaid financial eligibility requirements are strict and may require beneficiaries to spend down/use up assets or income until they reach eligibility level.

Support Groups—groups of people who share a common bond (for

example, caregivers) who come together on a regular basis to share problems and experiences. May be sponsored by social service agencies, senior centers, religious organizations, as well as organizations such as the Alzheimer's Association.

Telephone Reassurance—program in which volunteers or paid staff call homebound elders on a regular basis to provide contact, support, and companionship.

Title III Services—services provided to individuals age 60 and older funded under Title III of the Older Americans Act. Services include congregate and home-delivered meals,

supportive services (for example, transportation, information and referral, legal assistance), in-home services (for example, homemaker services, personal care, chore services), and health promotion disease prevention services (for example, health screenings, exercise programs). Contact your local Area Agency on Aging to see what services may be available in your area.

Source

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