

Finding Local Help for an Aging Parent

(Your shortcut to “There has to be someone who does this, right?”)

Somewhere between “Mom probably shouldn’t be driving anymore” and “Who’s making sure Dad eats lunch?” it hits you: you need help. Real, local, someone-in-their-town help. If you’re not sure where to start, this one’s for you.

Good news: nearly every community in the U.S. has an office whose whole job is connecting older adults and their families to local support. **It’s called your Area Agency on Aging, or AAA.**

(And no, not the tow truck people. Confusing, we know.)

Your local AAA is basically the front desk for aging-related care and caregiver support in your community.

They can help you:

- Figure out what support exists nearby
- Understand what your loved one might qualify for
- Connect with real local services like meals, transportation, respite care, benefits help, and caregiver support

Sounds Promising. But What Can They Actually Help With?

Every area is different, but AAAs may connect you to help with:*

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| ☐ In-home care options | ☐ Caregiver training |
| ☐ Meal delivery programs | ☐ Benefits counseling |
| ☐ Transportation to appointments | ☐ Medicare or Medicaid guidance |
| ☐ Respite care | ☐ Local nonprofit or county programs |
| ☐ Adult day programs | ☐ Home safety updates, like grab bars or ramps |
| ☐ Caregiver support groups | |

*Not everything will be free. But a lot of it is subsidized or lower cost.

I'm Sold. Now How Do I Get the Help?

1. Find Your Local AAA

You could Google “AAA near me,” but you’ll mostly get tow trucks and travel deals. Instead, use the Eldercare Locator: a free, national directory of aging and caregiving services. Type in a ZIP code and it tells you which AAA serves that area and how to reach them. **Then you call that AAA directly.** (More on that in Step 3.)

Visit eldercare.acl.gov or call **1.800.677.1116**

Search by your loved one's ZIP code, not yours (unless you live in the same area). Services are usually based on where the person receiving care lives. (Probably not news to you. We're flagging it because when you're moving a million miles a minute, your fingers can type your own ZIP on autopilot.)

2. Before You Call, Have This Ready

Details about your loved one:

- ☐ Name
- ☐ Age
- ☐ ZIP code
- ☐ Living situation: alone, with you, with someone else, facility, etc.
- ☐ Main health concerns or diagnosis, if you know them
- ☐ Insurance: Medicare, Medicaid, VA benefits, long-term care insurance, private insurance

What they need help with:

- ☐ Meals
- ☐ Bathing, dressing, or personal care
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Supervision or safety
- ☐ Housework
- ☐ Social connection

3. Call Your AAA With This Script

A Area Agency on Aging

Calling...

“Hi, I’m caring for my [mom/dad/partner/grandparent/friend], and I’m trying to figure out what help is available in their area. I don’t really know what to ask yet. Can you help me understand what programs or services we might qualify for?”

4. Ask These Questions

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| ☐ Can you screen us for programs we might qualify for? | ☐ Is there help for home safety changes, like grab bars, ramps, or fall prevention? |
| ☐ Are there respite care options in our area? | ☐ Are there caregiver support groups or training programs? |
| ☐ Are there waitlists we should get on now? | ☐ Can you send me the next steps by email or mail? |
| ☐ Are there meal delivery programs available? | ☐ Are there adult day programs nearby? |
| ☐ Can someone help us understand Medicare, Medicaid, VA benefits, or other financial support? | ☐ Who helps with transportation to appointments? |

Our favorite question?

“What do caregivers in my situation usually not know to ask about?”

5. Take Notes During the Call

Write down:

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| ☐ Name of the person you spoke with | ☐ Waitlists |
| ☐ Their direct number or extension | ☐ Documents you need |
| ☐ Any programs they mentioned | ☐ Who to call next |
| ☐ Eligibility rules | ☐ What step you should take first |
| ☐ Costs, if any | |

Before you hang up, ask: “Can I follow up with you directly if I get stuck?”

Having a human name is wildly underrated.

6. After the Call, Do This Annoying (But Important) Part

Within 24 hours:

- ☐ Save the contact name and number
- ☐ Add deadlines or follow-up dates to your calendar
- ☐ Start any applications they recommended
- ☐ Get on waitlists, even if you're not sure yet
- ☐ Share the info with siblings, partners, or anyone else who keeps saying "let me know how I can help"

Try this text:

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I called the Area Agency on Aging. Here's what they said we may qualify for. Can you take one of these follow-ups?

Delivered

Because congratulations. You now have homework to delegate.

A Note to Caregivers

We're not going to lie. This may feel a little government-y at first.

You might get transferred. You might need to leave a voicemail. You might hear the word "eligibility" enough times to develop a twitch.

Stay with it. The good stuff is often behind the least sexy phone menu.

Also: the AAA may not provide every service directly. Sometimes their job is to point you to the right local program, nonprofit, benefits counselor, transportation service, or waitlist.

That still counts as help.

Save yourself some Googling.

More Caregiver Cheat Sheets at [WeCareOutLoud.org](https://www.WecareOutLoud.org)

