

LONG-DISTANCE CAREGIVING: DEVELOPING A PLAN OF ACTION

If you are planning on visiting a person with dementia whom you are caring for from a distance, it is important to develop a plan of action for your visit. Consider the following suggestions to help ensure you are prepared for your time together.

1. **Assess the needs of the person with dementia** as best as you can before visiting them. Talk to family members, friends, neighbours, their physician, health agencies and other people who are in contact with the person. Use the handout *Assessing the Needs of the Person with Dementia* as a guide.
2. **Identify local services needed** and make necessary appointments with service providers before you leave for your visit. Communicate clearly what you are hoping to achieve. Be prepared with questions you would like to have answered, and the services you are seeking. For more efficiency, send a fax or email prior to the appointment.
3. **Whenever possible, divide the responsibilities of care with other family members.**
4. **Find out what the person with dementia would like to do during your visit.** Also, communicate with them what you would like to achieve during your visit.
5. **Make the most of your visits:**
 - Reassess the situation as you are spending time with the person with dementia.
 - Spend quality time with the person with dementia as much as possible.
 - Make appointments, identify local resources (including neighbours, friends, etc.) and coordinate services for the person.
 - Develop your own 'directory of local resources' and make sure to leave your contact information with all people involved in the person's care.
 - Make a list of the person's medications, medical history, emergency contacts, and a schedule of activities. Keep a copy for yourself, leave one at the person's house and one for key people involved in the person's care.
6. **Communicate regularly with all individuals who are helping with the person with dementia's care.**

