

VITRA Health

Caregiver Education December Edition

Alternative Caregiver & Informal Support



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Identify Formal and Informal Supporters

Gathering information from families about their informal and formal supports is essential to identify which supports can help family members achieve desired outcomes for their child and themselves. Early intervention can also help families strengthen their informal and formal supporters. Team members work with families to identify current supporters and future support needs.

Informal supporters are part of the family's personal social network. They might be related to the family (e.g., maternal grandmother, sister) or they might be a friend, a neighbor, a colleague from work, or members of a faith-based community. Formal supporters are typically individuals from organizations or agencies that provide help or a service to the family (e.g., early intervention provider, physician, social service case manager).

Information about a family's informal and formal supporters is often gathered during first contact. The team should also revisit changes to a family's support system as part of regular check-ins.

Alternative Caregiver Information

Alternative caregiver means a person who is at least 18 years old and has a criminal record clearance who cares for a child in either the Resource Family's home or in the alternative caregiver's home when the Resource Family is away from their home for more than 24 hours at a time.

Help and Support for Caregivers

As a caregiver for a parent or spouse, or for a child with special needs, you may feel overwhelmed and at times invisible. And you may develop caregiver fatigue. Use these resources and suggestions to help you find emotional and task support to ease your stress as a caregiver.

Federal Government Caregiver Resources

Alzheimer's Caregiving: Learn from the National Institute on Aging how to respond to the challenges of being a caregiver for someone with Alzheimer's Disease or other forms of dementia.

Caregiver Resources: Get a basic overview from NIH's MedlinePlus of caregiver services and a list of resources to help you protect your own health.

Caring for the Caregiver: This resource from the National Cancer Institute is for family and friends who are caring for a person with cancer.

Managing Someone Else's Money Guide: Get tips from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau on how to manage your family member's finances and property when they can't handle their bills themselves.

Veterans Caregiver Support: Find information about the Caregiver Support Program that offers training, educational resources, a support hotline, and more from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Office of Women's Health Caregiver Page: Get tips on how to prevent or relieve caregiver stress, and how to find and pay for home health care services.

State and Local Caregiver Resources

Finding Local Services: Use this list from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to find state and local government and non-government resources including comparisons of home health agencies and the Eldercare Locator to help caregivers connect with senior services.

Additional Support for Caregivers

If you're not able to leave your loved one at home but need emotional support, an online support group might be a good option. Be careful not to give out detailed personal, medical, or financial information to anyone online to protect against fraud or scams.

Source: <https://www.usa.gov/disability-caregiver>