

# Early Preparation Key as Children Keep Watch on Aging Parents

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Moving back in with the parents is one of the last things many children want to do, but as mom and dad start to age, their kids are finding it difficult to take care of them from afar.

Nearly 7 million Americans provide long distance care to an elderly loved one, according to the National Council on the Aging. As the responsibility of parents and children change, early preparation can give everyone in the family peace of mind, said Tish Thomas, director of the School of Health Professions' Adult Day Connection at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

"With families more spread out than ever before, it is becoming difficult for children to keep an eye on their aging parents," Thomas said. "It is extremely important that families start researching options before an emergency happens. It's never too early to start planning."

The AARP reports that nearly one out of every four U.S. households is involved in care giving to persons age 50 and older. This care can be costly, as caregivers spend an average of \$279 per month on care-related activities, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Another growing problem is now being referred to as the "sandwich generation," a generation of people who are caring for their aging parents while supporting their own children. The National Alliance for Caregiving reported that 41 percent of caregivers have children. For those caught in the middle of trying to take care of parents and children,

stress and financial hardship can be an additional burden.

Though the topic may be tough, Thomas feels that early planning can save both money and heartache. Thomas suggests that families look into area organizations and professionals that can provide information on adult day services, home healthcare needs, creating a power of attorney and writing a will. In addition, children should keep in contact with neighbors and others who are close to their parents to see if they have noticed any changes. Using technology such as cell phones, e-mail and webcams can be another way to help monitor aging family members from miles away.

"Parents can be very good at hiding things from their children. They don't want to give up their independence," Thomas said. "Call the neighbors, talk to the mail carrier and church friends - find out if anyone has noticed anything that might not be normal."

Source: University of Missouri

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