

APPROACHES TO LONG-TERM CARE

As individuals age and reach that stage in life where caregivers are necessary to ensure safety and continued well-being, those individual and family members need to know how to pay for those services. Payment for care services are based upon the individual's physical needs and financial resources. Needs and resources will determine the method of payment.

The in-need individual, usually an elder, will be required to make full payment to care providers from personal funds (private pay) or the individual will be required to make partial payment from personal funds that will be combined with public assistance (private/public pay).

The best explanation results from illustration. Usually an individual begins needing a minimal degree of assistance. Over time that assistance need may grow into around the clock or full-time (24/7) care. The degree of need in the individual will impact and determine the formula for payment, either private, or a combination of private/public pay. In other words, truly minimal assistance will usually be privately paid, but as the need increases families begin to feel the economic pinch and look to either insurance or government payment options.

For those difficult financial decisions, the family member(s) will review all insurance benefits, More likely than not the family ultimately will be required to ascertain the net value of all the assets in which the individual as an interest. With assistance from professionals including accountants and attorneys, along with interested family members and with the informed consent of the individual, a payment plan may be devised. Ultimately payment will be made from one of two sources, either 1) private pay (includes long-term care insurance), or 2) combination of private pay and government assistance.

To determine whether the individual qualifies for any available governmental assistance, the family member may look at the various public agencies which offer several services at a minimal, sliding scale, or no fee basis. The following sites are a good beginning resources:

- www.mass.gov
- www.medicaid.gov
- www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov
- www.massresources.org

Should the needs continue for a significant amount of time, then family members are faced with the reality that all the assets of the in-need person will be completely spent for the in need individual's care.

Negotiating your way through the maze of needs, providers, payments from individuals and public agencies, is often confusing and time consuming. Seek professional assistance.

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