

Starting the Conversation

****How to approach sensitive topics****

- Start the conversation before a crisis happens.
- Do your homework first. Learn about options.
- Use struggles and solutions of friends, family, neighbors as examples to open a topic and voice concerns.
- As adults, we all have the right to make our own decisions.
- Listen well to others' concerns. Respect their opinions even if you disagree.
- Be collaborative. Brainstorm and negotiate.
- Discuss options before help is needed whenever possible.
- Start with the basics:
 - What do people think is the need for care?
 - Are papers in order? (Power of Attorney, insurance, will)
 - What is most important if a crisis should arise?
 - What help seems reasonable?
 - Who might provide help?
 - If something isn't working, what are the alternatives?
- Stay positive and be patient.
- Decide on a balance between safety and independence. What can be safely done on one's own?
- Hold a family meeting with all those involved.
- Put all plans in writing. Agree to review plans regularly to evaluate how they're working.

Use these conversation suggestions to discuss issues such as:

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| * Living options | * Driving | * Health care |
| * Safety | * Social opportunities | * Home maintenance |
| * Mental health | * Caregiver well being | * Accessing assistance |
| * Family communication | * Respite care | * End of life issues |

Helpful Caregiver Resources

- **Southern Maine Agency on Aging**, 1-800-427-7411, www.smaaa.org, offers information and referral for programs and services for older adults, community education, the Family Caregiver Support Program, on line caregiver support group, volunteer opportunities, assist with money management, Meals on Wheels, and an adult day program.
- **Elders1**, 1-877-353-3771 (1-877-ELDERS1), www.caregivinginmaine.org is the statewide toll free connection to the Agency on Aging that serves your area.
- **Maine Office of Elder Services**, 1-800-262-2232, www.maine.gov/dhs/oes is responsible for developing and overseeing many services for older adults in Maine. They offer assistance in finding sources for care, identifying benefit programs, and learning about resources.
- **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)**, 1-800-MEDICARE, www.medicare.gov, provides an overview of Medicare and Medicaid policy and regulations, and consumer literature about health-related services and benefits.
- **Administration on Aging**, www.aoa.gov, is the government agency concerned with issues affecting older Americans. This site offers information about older Americans, legislation, and programs.
- **Eldercare Locator**, 1-800-677-1116, www.eldercare.gov, can help you to find local services for older adults anywhere in the US.
- **National Institutes on Aging**, 301-496-1752, www.nia.nih.gov, offers valuable health and resource information for consumers and professionals.
- **Maine Alzheimer's Association**, 1-800-272-3900, www.alz.org/maine, offers support, resources and education for people with any type of dementia and those who care about them. Their toll-free number is available 24/7.
- **Legal Services for the Elderly**, 1-800-750-5353, www.mainelse.org, provides free legal assistance to socially and economically needy Maine residents age 60 and older.