



## HOLDING A FAMILY MEETING

- Are you concerned about a health change in your parent, spouse or sibling?
- Do you need additional help caring for your spouse or parent? Would you like other family members to play more of a role?
- Are out of town family members visiting and wanting to help?

### It may be time to hold a Family Meeting

A “family meeting” is a chance for spouses, children, and others involved to discuss the care of an older family member. It helps families identify needs, share responsibilities and come up with a plan that will best serve the older adult and family as a whole.

A family meeting respects the older adult and his or her wishes and decisions. It also acknowledges and supports the primary caregiver.

It is best to hold a family meeting as early as possible after a need arises.

## Before the Family Meeting

- Ask both the older adult and primary caregiver whom they want to attend. Consider all relevant family members.
- Pick a convenient date, time and place. Arrange a conference call if possible for family members who cannot attend.
- Make a list of issues to be discussed based on the goals of the older adult and primary caregiver.
- Keep the agenda small so each issue receives full attention and allow time to discuss next steps.
- Collect information that may be helpful to the meeting such as medical reports or legal documents.
- Consider a professional (social worker, caregiver consultant, or clergy member) to facilitate the meeting, as needed. Contact the Senior LinkAge Line® at 1-800-333-2433 to find a caregiver consultant to assist with family meetings.

## A family meeting respects the older adult and his or her wishes and decisions



## The Family Meeting

- Arrange seating so all can see and hear each other.
- Start the meeting with a welcome.
- Select a person to take notes on decisions, assignment of tasks, and follow-up items.
- Review the agenda and use it to stay on task.
- Address the most important issues first so they receive full attention.
- Reach a sense of closure on each issue. Put issues that arise during the meeting in a “parking lot” to be addressed later.
- Create a plan that includes what needs to be done and who will do it. Include a back up plan in case of emergency.
- Summarize the discussion and review all decisions made.
- Identify a family spokesperson who will communicate decisions to non-family members such as home care, physician, medical team and others who need to know.
- Plan the next meeting, as needed.

## Follow-up

If the older adult agrees, share the plan with those who need to know. Stay connected through mail, phone calls, email or website.



## Helpful hints

- Use respectful listening and keep an open mind. There will be differences in opinions, values, and relationships.
- Listen to what the older family member has to say. Talk directly to him/her and provide extra time as needed.
- Use “I” statements to express your needs, feelings, and concerns.
- No interrupting or side conversations.
- Turn off cell phones, radio and TV.
- Stay focused on the purpose “helping Dad maintain independent living for as long a possible” or “planning for a move”.
- Avoid using “always” or “never”.
- Give everyone an opportunity to be heard.
- Avoid making assumptions. Ask questions to get the facts.
- Remember that your family member has the right and responsibility to make his or her own decisions.



## Resources for older adults and family caregivers

### The Senior LinkAge Line® 1-800-333-2433

The Senior LinkAge Line® is a statewide information and assistance service to help you find local services, supports and information including respite care, caregiver support services, health insurance counseling, chores, meals and transportation.

### MinnesotaHelp.info® [www.MinnesotaHelp.info](http://www.MinnesotaHelp.info)

MinnesotaHelp.info® of the Minnesota Board on Aging is a web-based tool designed to help people in Minnesota find caregiver supports, resources, information, financial assistance and other forms of help.

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This information is available in other forms to people with disabilities by calling 651-431-2500 or 800-882-6262 or through the Minnesota Relay Service at 711 or 1-800-627-3529 (TTY), 1-877-627-3848 (speech-to-speech relay services).

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# Holding a Family Meeting

## Steps to address eldercare issues and share the care



### HOW A FAMILY MEETING CAN HELP

- Builds understanding about changes in an older adult's health or ability to function.
- Increases communication and sharing of caregiving responsibilities.
- Finding solutions and making tough caregiving decisions.