

## Elder Care & the Sandwich Generation

In recent years more and more working adults are assuming responsibility for taking care of their aging parents. Many of these same folks also continue to function as the primary caregivers for their own children, which has given rise to the now familiar phrase “sandwich generation” (wedged between the two groups requiring care).

According to the US Census Bureau the number of elderly in the US will rise from 40.4 million in 2011 to 70.3 million by 2030 which includes the last of the baby boomers. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services the increase in life expectancy for an American from 1900 to today has gone from 49.2 years to 78.1 years. For those turning 65 these days the life expectancy compared to those in 1900 has increased by an additional 19 years.

Elder care involves decision making regarding the existing residence of an aging person, physician choices and the often difficult decision to move a loved one to a nursing home, an assisted living facility or other residential care setting. Compounding things is the complexity of medical issues, including these recent statistics; 2 in 5 Medicare recipients have 3 or more medical conditions and 1 in 5 has 5 or more.

In addition there are multiple legal implications involved and family members are often unprepared when tragedy or an unforeseen illness strikes. Many experts recommend keeping a folder of important documents (medical paperwork and contacts, deeds, power of attorney, living wills etc.) Being prepared will help to alleviate stress and confusion.

There is a 67% chance that a senior will become physically or mentally impaired in their lifetime (American Eldercare Research Organization). United States businesses can expect losses of nearly \$35 billion annually as employees need to tend to loved ones aged 50 and older (MetLife). AARP found that > 90% of elders wanted to stay in their own homes as long as they can and > 80% receiving long term care, do so at home.

Of the nearly 17% of elder care providers >42% care for a parent, >19% care for a grandparent and 21% for another relative. Nearly 85% of long term care hours are provided by unpaid caregivers. A full 10% of full time employees reduce their work to part time to accommodate care giving needs. In many cases sympathetic employers have cooperated to help retain valuable workers by offering flexible or reduced work schedules. In other instances sorely needed accommodations may not be possible leading to more difficult individual choices.

Fortunately help is available through several local agencies that are experienced in assisting working individuals and families to navigate through these complex issues and help ensure that your elders are able to age with dignity.

For confidential assistance with an elder care issue call **LECSA EAP (631)-851-1295**