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When Should I Hire a Professional Elder Care Advocate?

Posted on July 16, 2015 by [Robyn Tellefsen](#) — 4 Comments ↓



Last month, I shared tips from IKOR International's founder and chief innovation officer, Patricia Maisano, on [how to be an effective advocate for your senior loved one](#).

Over the course of our conversation, however, it dawned on me that despite an individual's best efforts, there may come a point when it makes sense to enlist the services of a professional advocacy organization. Maisano offers her take on the role and the necessity of qualified elder care advocates.



Getting Help for Seniors

As a registered nurse, certified case manager, registered guardian, and professional geriatric care manager, Maisano mentions several scenarios where a professional elder advocate might be needed:

- If you don't live near your loved one, and you can't get there within an hour or so to intervene face to face
- If you're a distant relative and you don't know the senior's wishes
- If the facility or home care agency is not listening to you, or you're seeing pages torn out of the home care notebook (where there should be notes for every shift)
- If you're questioning the necessity or appropriateness of a facility or home care agency and you want someone to assess the situation and offer recommendations
- If you have an intense job and you can't be taking calls all day long

Maisano illustrates the need for professional elder advocates with a personal story about a family member in a care facility. Without saying who she was, Maisano told the nursing staff that her loved one needed to be changed. Nothing happened. But when she went back a little while later with her credentials, her loved one was changed right away.

The unfortunate reality is that in many scenarios – even in elder care – money talks. Care facilities know that professional elder advocates like [IKOR](#) place numerous residents and will let families know if the level of care has changed, says Maisano. And when advocates find new placements for residents, care facilities lose money.

"That's what gives us an advantage," she says. "We have a louder voice."

Choosing the Right Case Manager

Of course, not everyone is qualified to be an elder care advocate, which is why we must be vigilant in choosing the right person and organization to represent our loved ones.

"As the silver tsunami builds speed, there are going to be more and more case managers out there," warns Maisano. "But just because someone took care of her mother doesn't qualify her to be a case manager. Every person is utterly unique."

Maisano recommends checking the case manager's website, credentials, and history in order to get a strong sense of his or her background. And if your loved one requires significant medical involvement, she says, you need a nurse rather than a social worker as your case manager, because the conversation will flow much more clearly between a doctor and an RN.

"If it's not your specialty, a lot of smoke can be blown at you," she says. "RNs can intervene. We're speaking the same language, so we'll get a clearer response."

[Learn more about making a senior care decision...](#)



About Robyn Tellefsen

Robyn Tellefsen is a New York City-based freelance writer, editor, and blogger whose work has appeared on MSN, AOL Jobs, Chase, Parent Society, The CollegeBound Network, and others. She is also a freelance copy editor and proofreader for textbook publishers, educational technology companies, advertising agencies, and individual authors. Robyn has a bachelor's degree in communications from Wheaton College (IL).

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4 comments on "When Should I Hire a Professional Elder Care Advocate?"



Marina says:

July 19, 2015 at 10:49 pm

Excellent point especially "If the facility or home care agency is not listening to you". I personally have experience with this issue when someone very close to me had an early onset of Alzheimer's. Understanding all the facts and navigating endless maze of Nursing Home paperwork documents is very frustrating and time consuming. I would recommend hiring Professional Elder Care Advocate. Sometimes the cost of doing something wrong could be a lot higher than hiring someone who knows what they are doing.

[Reply](#)



Robyn Tellefsen says:

July 21, 2015 at 7:43 pm

Thanks for sharing your experience, Marina. I agree; we need to look beyond the basic financial factors when doing a cost-benefit analysis before hiring a professional elder care advocate. The intangible factors of our own time, energy, and skill should always be taken into consideration.

[Reply](#)



Marina says:

July 22, 2015 at 8:59 pm

Robyn:

You are absolutely right. A lot of people don't consider lost time in "cost-benefit analysis" and as we all know Alzheimer's and Dementia are fast progressing and time is everything. Once again thank you for shedding light on this matter I hope to see more of your articles