

An Alzheimer's Caregiver Coach is someone who can help you prepare for the future while living successfully in the moment. A Caregiver Coach helps you design a plan, provides support, increases confidence, cultivates an environment to maximize independence, and helps to restore a sense of normalcy.



This is Gary and Berdina's Story . . .

Caregivers often function under incredible strain. Unaware of all the available resources, every request for help feels like a shot in the dark. Such was the case for Gary who cares for his wife, Berdina who is 77-years-old, lives with dementia, diabetes, and is losing her sight. She attends Easterseals NH's Adult Day program, which supports individuals with memory loss, three days a week. Gary is a wonderful caregiver; he also works part-time for Caring Companions, another Easterseals program that provides in-home, non-medical care.

Living on a limited income, their funds were soon depleted as the medical bills piled up. Gary tried to keep it all together while maintaining employment and caring for Berdina. Fortunately, he was put in touch with Easterseals NH's Caregiver Coach, Shirley Gordon. Shirley helped Gary apply for Medicaid. This has been a life-saver for Gary as under this program, Berdina is now eligible for respite care, the Easterseals Adult Day program, and home care.

Just as things were looking up, Berdina was hospitalized with the flu. She was discharged to a rehabilitation center that, unbeknownst to Gary, was under state investigation for inadequate care. Gary experienced first-hand the impact of inadequate care. For example, Berdina would ring her buzzer for assistance and then have to wait 25 minutes for staff to respond. Berdina needed help with feeding, and Gary would visit in the afternoon and find her lunch tray untouched. He feared for his wife's safety and well-being. He wanted to bring her home but needed support to do so.

Shirley encouraged Gary to put a plan in place to take care of his wife at home. Although medical staff were initially skeptical, Gary remained determined, and, with Shirley's help, organized the necessary assistance. This is where a Caregiver Coach can make all the difference. Shirley connected the dots and made sure this family found the resources to make it possible for Berdina to recuperate home, all the while supporting the caregiver.

Shirley arranged for Berdina to receive occupational and physical therapy at Easterseals. Shirley also talked with the social worker, when Gary was too exhausted to advocate, and explained why Berdina couldn't stay at the rehabilitation center, and made the case to bring her home. The plan included additional hours of Caring Companions home care. This was in fact a money saving solution; even with the increased home care hours, Medicaid would still be paying out less than if Berdina was a resident at the rehabilitation center. As a Caregiver Coach, Shirley understood the system and could advocate on the family's behalf and teach Gary about the services for which he and Berdina are eligible.

Most of all, Easterseals NH's Caregiver Coach could offer emotional support and encouragement to Gary during those dark days when he was overwhelmed, worried about his wife's safety and health, and didn't know his options or where to turn for help. The Caregiver Coach's optimism and knowledge of the various social service systems and resources enabled this family to achieve their dream for Berdina to live at home with safety and well-being.

"Caregiver Coach Services has been my life line," says Gary. "We've received incredible support from Easterseals."