

Understanding the Role of a Caregiver

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Key concepts, responsibilities, and best-practice guidelines

1. What a Caregiver Does

Domain	Typical Tasks	Why It Matters
Physical Care	• Assisting with bathing, dressing, toileting • Mobility support (transfers, gait aid) • Medication reminders & administration (if authorized) • Monitoring vitals, nutrition, hydration	Maintains health, prevents complications (e.g., pressure ulcers, dehydration)
Emotional & Social Support	• Listening, providing companionship • Encouraging hobbies, social interaction • Reducing isolation & anxiety	Improves mental well-being, slows cognitive decline
Safety & Environment	• Fall-proofing the home • Managing emergency plans (e.g., fire, medical alerts) • Supervising use of equipment (wheelchairs, lifts)	Reduces risk of injury, creates a predictable environment
Administrative & Advocacy	• Scheduling appointments, coordinating with health providers • Managing insurance, billing, and paperwork • Advocating for the care receiver's preferences and rights	Ensures continuity of care and protects legal/financial interests

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Domain

Typical Tasks

Why It Matters

	• Teaching the care?receiver self?management skills	
Education & Training	• Updating family members on care plans • Staying current on disease?specific guidelines	Empowers independence and promotes informed decision?making

2. Core Competencies

Competency	Description	Practical Tips
Communication	Clear exchange of information with the care?receiver, family, and health team.	• Use simple, respectful language. • Confirm understanding with “teach?back.”
Observation & Assessment	Spotting subtle changes in condition, behavior, or environment.	• Keep a daily log of mood, appetite, sleep, pain levels. • Use standardized tools (e.g., Braden Scale for pressure injury risk).
Time Management	Balancing routine tasks, emergencies, and personal rest.	• Create a daily schedule with buffer blocks. • Prioritize “must?do” vs. “nice?to?do.”
Problem?Solving	Quickly adapting to unexpected situations (e.g., medication error).	• Follow the “STOP” protocol: Stop, Think, Observe, Plan.
Self?Care	Maintaining one’s own physical, mental, and social health.	• Schedule regular breaks, exercise, and social contact. • Seek respite services when needed.

3. Ethical Foundations

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1. **Respect for Autonomy** – Honor the care?receiver's choices whenever possible; involve them in care planning.
 2. **Beneficence** – Act in the best interest of the person receiving care.
 3. **Non?maleficence** – Avoid causing harm; follow safety protocols.
 4. **Justice** – Provide equitable care regardless of background or diagnosis.
 5. **Confidentiality** – Protect personal health information; share only with authorized parties.
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4. Typical Care Settings & Adjustments

Setting	Unique Considerations	Adaptation Strategies
Private Home	Variable space, limited medical equipment	• Portable lifts, bedside commodes. • Home?modifications (grab bars, ramps).
Assisted Living / Senior Community	Shared staff, community activities	• Coordinate with facility's care team. • Leverage scheduled group programs for socialization.
Hospice / Palliative Care	Focus on comfort, end?of?	