



## Where to Turn for Help with Your Care

Sometimes, despite the best efforts by agency staff/administration or your provider, you may experience problems or have concerns about the care you receive in your home. Here are some steps you can take to help resolve those issues.

### **Express Your Concerns**

- Discuss your concerns with your provider and/or their supervisor. Be as specific as you can about the problems you're having. Think of the 5 W's – who, what, when, where, and why. Try to have information about as many of those W's as possible when making your complaint.
  - For example, instead of saying, "I don't like how she gives me a shower," you might say, "I have told Mary that I don't like getting my hair wet during my shower, but the last four times my hair has gotten wet because she lets the water run over my head."
- Ask a family member or friend to be there with you if it would make you feel more comfortable.
- State what you would like to have happen and ask how the problem would be resolved to your satisfaction.
  - For example, "When Mary gives me a shower, I would like her to make sure I have on a shower cap, direct the spray of water so it doesn't hit my head or face, and give me a washcloth so that I can wash my face."
- Know your rights based on your contract with the caregiver or agency, and/or based on state law, regulations or protocols.
  - If your home health or home care agency is licensed, they are governed by Virginia state regulations that can be found by calling 804-367-2101 or visiting <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/OLC/Laws/documents/2011/pdfs/2011%20HCO%20regs.pdf>.

- Go up the chain of command if you are working with an agency. Talk with the supervisor, and then the manager.

### **If You Need Outside Help**

While it's always best to try to resolve any problems directly with the worker or agency, there are places you can go if a situation arises where you need additional help.

- **Adult Protective Services** investigates abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable older adults. To report suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation, call your local department of social services or the Virginia Department of Social Services' 24-hour, toll-free Adult Protective Services hotline at (888) 832-3858.
- **Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)** coordinate and often provide a range of services to assist older adults and frequently younger persons with disabilities maintain their independence and dignity. To find your local AAA, call (804) 644-2804 or visit <http://www.vaaaa.org/agencies/>.
- **Care Managers or Service Coordinators** assist consumers in getting the care and services they need and can help resolve a problem. To get a list of private geriatric care managers, go to [www.caremanager.org](http://www.caremanager.org) or call (520) 881-8008. If Medicaid or a state-funded program pays for your services, you will most likely have an assigned case manager.
- **Centers for Independent Living (CILs)** are organizations that provide services to maximize the independence of individuals with disabilities. To learn more about the services they provide, and locate a CIL near you, call 800-552-5019 or visit <http://www.vadrs.org/cbs/cilslisting.htm>.
- **State/Local Ombudsmen** advocate for individuals who receive long-term care services and supports in facilities and in the community. Their services are free and confidential. To talk to an ombudsman if you have questions or concerns about your care or services, call (804) 726-6624 or go to <http://www.ltombudsman.org/ombudsman/virginia>.
- The **Virginia Department of Health** is the entity that regulates home health care agencies in Virginia. The Department inspects these agencies and also investigates complaints. Contact information for the Department can be found by calling (804) 367-2102 or by visiting [http://www.vdh.state.va.us/OLC/AcuteCare/home\\_hospice.htm](http://www.vdh.state.va.us/OLC/AcuteCare/home_hospice.htm).
- The **Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy (VOPA)** works to address concerns about care and services, rights, access to services, and more for people with disabilities both in residential and community settings. To contact VOPA, go to <http://disabilitylawva.org/> or call (804) 225-2042.