



## ELDER CARE GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Activities of Daily Life (ADLs)** – the basic tasks of everyday life that include dressing, bathing, eating, functional mobility and toileting.

**Administrator** – a licensed professional who manages the day-to-day operation of a care facility such as a **nursing home** or assisted living facility.

**Adult Day Care** – a facility that provides a variety of health, support services, and activities in a supervised social setting. Adult day care programs enable participants to attend during the day then return home in the evening.

**Advanced Directives** – legal documents that allow a person to communicate their decisions about end-of-life care ahead of time. The two main types of advance directives are a living will and a medical power of attorney.

**Area Agency on Aging & Disability (AAAD)** – an agency designated by the state whose mission is to plan and coordinate services and advocate for older people or for people with disabilities within a specific geographical area. They provide information, resources, assistance and links to community services. [www.gnrc.org/agencies-programs/aaad/](http://www.gnrc.org/agencies-programs/aaad/)

**Alzheimer's Disease** – a type of dementia that results in progressive memory loss, impaired thinking, disorientation and change in personality and mood. [www.alz.org/](http://www.alz.org/)

**Ambulatory** – the ability to ambulate or walk around, not bedridden or hospitalized. A person who requires a wheelchair is still considered to be ambulatory.

**Assistant Director of Nursing (ADON)** – a registered nurse that services work under the Director of Nursing (DON)

**Assisted Living Facility (ALFs)** – a residential care facility that provides 24-hour services for elderly or disabled adults who require assistance with one or more daily living activities but who do not need skilled nursing care.

**Care Plan** – a document that identifies nursing orders for a patient and serves as a guide to nursing care.

**Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)** – a person who helps patients with healthcare needs under the supervision of a Registered Nurse (RN) or a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN).

**Certified Nursing Technician (CNT)** – a person who helps with all aspects of a patient’s daily care such as bathing, dressing, bathing, and personal grooming. They work under the supervision of a Registered Nurse (RN) or a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN).

**Conservator** – a person appointed by the courts to handle someone’s affairs when that person can no longer handle them for him or herself. A conservator usually handles only financial affairs.

**Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRC)** – a type of retirement community that provides multiple levels of aging care needs in one location. Seniors can move from Independent Living to Assisted Living to Nursing Home care as their needs change. CCRCs typically require a substantial entrance fee as well as monthly fees.

**Custodial Care** – non-medical care that includes 24-hour supervision as well as assistance with personal needs such as eating, bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting and mobility.

**Dementia** – a progressive decline of cognitive function due to damage or disease of the brain beyond the natural process of aging. This condition is characterized by loss of memory, judgment, concentration, language, complex motor skills and other intellectual function and is sometimes accompanied by emotional and personality changes.

**Director of Nursing (DON)** – a registered nurse who supervises the care of all of the patients at a health care facility and is responsible for formulating nursing policies and monitoring the quality of care delivered, as well as the facility’s compliance with federal and state regulations pertaining to nursing care.

**Discharge Planner** – a professional who assists patients and their families in developing a care plan for a patient following a hospital or nursing home stay.

**Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Order** – an order written either in a hospital or on a legal document to respect a patient’s expressed request not to have cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) done if the heart stops or breathing ceases.

**Elder Care** – social and medical programs designed for the special needs and requirements unique to senior citizens.

**Family Caregiver** – a relative or friend who provides unpaid assistance for an older adult with a chronic or disabling condition.

**Geriatrics** – a branch of medicine that deals with the problems and diseases of old or aging people.

**Geriatric Care Manager** – a health and human services professional, usually a licensed social worker, who assesses an elder person’s ability to live independently in a home environment and develops a care plan to assist in arranging housing, medical, social and other services.

**Health Care Agent or Proxy** – a person designated in a legal document to act in the place of someone else who is unable to make or communicate decisions regarding their own healthcare treatment.

**Health Care Power of Attorney or Proxy** – a legal document that allows a person to give authority to someone else to make any necessary healthcare decision for them and to see that doctors or other healthcare providers give the type of care one wishes to receive.

**Home Health Agency (HHA)** – an agency often certified by Medicare to provide health-related services in someone’s home. Services include nursing care, occupational therapy, speech or physical therapy, social work or personal care.

**Home Health Aide** – a person who helps with bathing, grooming, meals and light housekeeping.

**Home Health Care** – health care services provided in a patient’s home.

**Homemaker Service** – a person who provides assistance with general household activities such as meal preparation, cleaning, laundry and shopping.

**Hospice Care** – professionally coordinated support services for terminally ill patients and their families. Services include pain and symptom management, social services, as well as emotional and spiritual support. The care can be provided at home or in other facilities.

**Independent Retirement Living Facility** – a retirement facility offering independent housing for fully functional residents in a community setting where meals may be shared or other social activities provided.

**Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs)** – the basic tasks of everyday life that include managing money, shopping for groceries or clothes, telephone use, travel in the community, housekeeping, preparing meals and taking medications correctly.

**Intermediate Nursing Care Facility** – an intermediate nursing care facility provides custodial and intermediate care for seniors. Custodial care is non-medical care that includes 24-hour supervision as well as assistance with personal needs such as eating, bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting and mobility. Intermediate care facilities are licensed by states to provide basic medical care under the supervision of a registered nurse.

**Level of Care in Nursing Facilities** – Level of care classifications utilized by some states to license long-term care facilities. Multi-level facilities may maintain graduated levels-of-care up to or including skilled nursing services.

Levels I and II are financed by Medicaid or private payment and provide 24-hour skilled nursing services as well as restorative and other therapeutic services. Many specialize in areas such as rehabilitation.

Levels III and IV include nursing and retirement homes. Services range from routine nursing care to assistance with activities of daily living or supervised care for persons not requiring nursing or medical services.

**Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)** – a nurse that has been licensed to provide basic nursing care under the direction of a Registered Nurse or Physician.

**Licensed Social Worker** – an individual who is licensed by a state to practice social work.

**Limited Medication Administration** – an optional service in an assisted living facility that allows a family member or licensed practitioner to administer medication to a resident.

**Living Will** – a legal document that communicates a person’s wishes regarding life prolonging medical treatments, should he or she be in a terminal condition and not be able to communicate their health care wishes.

**Long-term Health Care** – a range of assistance, services and support provided over an extended period of time designed to meet medical, personal and social needs.

**Medicaid** – a government program that provides health coverage for lower-income, families and children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. It is financed by the federal and state governments and operated by the state. <http://medicaid.gov/>

**Medical Power of Attorney** – a legal document that gives one person the authority to make medical decisions for another person and to see that doctors or other healthcare providers give the type of care one wishes to receive.

**Medicare** – a federal system of health care insurance for people over the age of 65 and for certain younger people with disabilities. <http://www.medicare.gov/>

**Memory Care** – specialized care that is specifically designed to serve residents with Alzheimer’s disease or other dementia.

**Minimum Data Set (MDS)** – part of the federally mandated process for clinical assessment of all residents in Medicare or Medicaid certified nursing homes. The process provides a comprehensive assessment of each resident’s functional capabilities and helps staff identify health problems.

**Nursing Home** – a state licensed facility that provides 24-hour skilled nursing care or long-term health care to those who are chronically ill or unable to handle their own necessary daily living needs.

**Occupational Therapy (OT)** – a form of therapy that helps people improve basic motor functions and reasoning and their ability to perform tasks in their daily living (eating, dressing, bathing).

**Palliative Care** – any form of care that focuses on reducing pain and / or the severity of the symptoms of a disease, or slowing the disease’s progress, rather than providing a cure.

**Physical Therapy (PT)** – a form of therapy that focuses on the preservation, enhancement, or restoration of movement and physical function impaired or threatened by disability, injury or disease.

**Quality Indicator Survey (QIS)** – a long-term care survey process that was developed under the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). It standardizes how the survey process measures nursing home compliance with federal standards and the interpretative guidelines that define those standards.

**Registered Nurse (RN)** – a nurse who has graduated from a nursing program at a college or university and has passed a national licensing exam.

**Rehabilitation** – the process of helping a person who has suffered an illness or injury restore lost skills and regain maximum function or self-sufficiency.

**Respite Care** – short-term or temporary care service to relieve an in-home caregiver of responsibility for an individual with long-term care needs,

**Restorative Nursing** – replication of activities initiated by PR, OP, and SLP performed by nursing staff (activities include range of motion, dressing, hygiene, walking and feeding).

**Retirement Facility** – a residential facility for those who are retired. Additional services are usually provided within the building including meals, gathering, social, recreation, and some for of health care.

**Sedentary Lifestyle** – a lifestyle generally characterized by sitting or remaining inactive for most of the day.

**Self-administered Medication Management** – a program in certified assisted living residences that enable patients to take their own medications. Trained practitioners remind the patients to take medication, check the medication package, verify the resident's name on the package, observe the resident while they take the medication, and document their observations.

**Skilled Nursing Care** – daily nursing or rehabilitative care that can only be performed by a Registered Nurse (RN) or a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN).

**Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF)** – a nursing facility with the staff and equipment to provide skilled nursing care and / or skilled rehabilitative services and other related health services. SNFs are often used for short-term rehabilitation after hospital discharge.

**Speech and Language Pathology (SLP)** – structured activity focused on communication skills, perceptual and cognitive skills, and swallowing.

**Subacute Care** – a specialized level of care needed by a patient who does not require hospital acute care but who requires more intensive skilled nursing care than is provided to the majority of patients in a skilled nursing facility.

**Spousal Impoverishment Law** – a federal law providing that if one member of a married couple becomes a resident of a nursing home, the property and assets of the married couple will be combined, regardless of who owns the assets, and divided in half, according to Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) standards. This process protects the spouse who still lives in the community.

**Therapeutic Services** – a form of therapy designed to remedy, cure or stop some disease.

**Wound Care** – the prevention of wound complications and the promotion of wound healing.