



New TCARE Software Supports Montana's Caregivers

Caregiving for a loved one can be a rewarding experience, but it often comes with significant emotional, physical, and financial challenges. Over one in five Americans serve as unpaid caregivers, with many providing more than 20 hours of care each week. This heavy load often leads to physical, emotional, and financial stress, making it challenging for caregivers to continue caring for their loved ones at home.

Recognizing these difficulties, the Aging Services Bureau of the Senior and Long-Term Care (SLTC) Division, in partnership with the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program and local Area Agencies on Aging, is introducing a game-changing tool to better support Montana's caregivers: the TCARE software program.

An Evidence-Based Approach

TCARE is an evidence-based program designed to assess family caregivers and

connect them to programs and resources that can effectively reduce their stress and burden. The software operates by addressing the root cause of caregiver burnout, known as identity discrepancy. This occurs when a caregiver's personal identity (such as being a spouse, son, or daughter) conflicts with the new responsibilities and expectations of their caregiving role, leading to stress and burnout.

By identifying and addressing this identity conflict, TCARE provides tailored support to help caregivers manage and reconcile their roles, effectively preventing burnout.

Onboarding and Training

The first onboarding session for training TCARE specialists was held virtually with 13 participants on December 19th. Once the participants complete the additional training modules, they will be able to

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**DEPARTMENT OF
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start accepting referrals for the program. The program includes a soft launch of the program in participating planning and service areas. These specialists will use the TCARE Family Caregiver Support Software to create individualized care plans that address issues such as burnout, stress, and depression. Continuous follow-up assessments and adjustments to care plans will ensure ongoing positive outcomes for caregivers.

The Role of TCARE Specialists

TCARE specialists play an important role in this program. They assess more than 90 burnout factors to measure a caregiver's burnout risk and create tailored, data-driven care plans. Caregivers receive ongoing support and updates from their dedicated TCARE specialist, so they get the help they need when they need it.

Moving Forward

The TCARE software program, with its clinically proven approach, aims to prevent caregiver burnout by offering better care for caregivers. As this program rolls out in Montana, it is expected to provide crucial support to those in need and enhance the overall well-being of family caregivers.

Through initiatives like TCARE, the SLTC Aging Services bureau strives to create a network of care that not only assists caregivers but also ensures that they have the resources and support necessary to maintain their well-being.

For more information on how to participate in the TCARE program or to learn more about its benefits, please contact Patrick Kelly at (406) 444-0998 or send an email to Patrick.Kelley@mt.gov.



TCARE software addresses the root cause of caregiver burnout, known as identity discrepancy. This occurs when a caregiver's personal identity (such as being a spouse, son, or daughter) conflicts with the new responsibilities and expectations of their caregiving role, leading to stress and burnout. Photo by Image-Source/Envato Elements.



Stay Safe on Montana's Winter Roads

Well, the snowy season has officially arrived in Montana. Winter here is stunning, with snow-covered landscapes and crisp, clear air. However, the same beauty that makes winter enchanting can also make driving treacherous. For older adults, it's essential to take extra precautions to stay safe on the roads. Here are some tips and advice to ensure your winter driving experience is as safe and stress-free as possible.

Prepare Your Vehicle

Before you hit the road, make sure your vehicle is ready for winter conditions:

Winter Tires: Invest in a good set of winter tires. They offer better traction on snow and ice compared to all-season tires.

Battery Check: Cold weather can affect your car's battery. Have it tested to ensure it's in good working condition.

Fluids: Keep your gas tank at least half full to prevent the fuel lines from freezing. Use winter-grade windshield washer fluid and make sure your antifreeze levels are adequate.

Emergency Kit: Always carry a winter emergency kit that includes a blanket, flashlight, first-aid supplies, food, water, a shovel, and traction aids like sand or kitty litter.

Plan Ahead

Knowing the road conditions and planning your route can make a big difference:

Weather Reports: Check weather forecasts before you leave. If a severe storm is expected, it's best to delay your trip.

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Route Planning: Choose main roads and highways that are more likely to be cleared and treated. Avoid back roads that might be impassable.

Daylight Driving: Try to drive during daylight hours when visibility is better, and roads are less icy.

Drive Cautiously

When you're on the road, adjust your driving to the conditions.

Slow Down: Drive slower than usual to give yourself more time to react to any changes in road conditions.

Increase Following Distance: Keep a safe distance between you and the car in front of you to allow for longer stopping distances on slippery roads.

Brake Gently: Avoid sudden movements. Brake gently to avoid skidding. If you start to skid, steer in the direction you want to go and ease off the gas pedal.

Use Your Lights: Use your headlights to increase visibility, especially in snowy or foggy conditions.

Stay Connected

Make sure you're able to communicate and get help if needed.

Mobile Phone: Keep your mobile phone charged and with you whenever you drive. Store important contacts, like roadside assistance, in your phone.

Let Others Know: Inform someone about your travel plans, including your route and estimated arrival time. This way, they can check on you if you don't arrive as expected.

Stay in Your Vehicle: If you get stuck, it's usually safer to stay in your vehicle until help arrives. Run the engine for warmth, but make sure the exhaust pipe is clear of snow.

Know Your Limits

It's important to recognize when it's not safe to drive.

Listen to Your Body: If you're tired or unwell, avoid driving. Cold weather can be more physically taxing, so it's crucial to be at your best.

Consider Alternatives: Sometimes, the best option is to avoid driving altogether. Consider public transportation, ride-sharing services, or asking friends and family for help.

Winter driving in Montana requires preparation and caution, but with these tips, older adults can navigate the winter roads more confidently and safely. Stay warm, stay safe, and enjoy the beauty of winter from behind the wheel.





Lindsey Carter
SLTCD Administrator

A Promising Start to 2025

Strengthening Long-Term Care and Community Support in Montana

Happy New Year! As we step into 2025, the SLTC Division is filled with optimism and a renewed commitment to serving Montana's older adults and individuals with disabilities. The new year brings fresh opportunities to enhance care, strengthen partnerships, and improve the lives of those we serve. Here's a glimpse of what we're focusing on.

Shaping the Future of Long-Term Care in Montana

We're excited to kick off the year with Long-Term Care Strategic Plan Summits facilitated by Mountain Pacific. To address the growing need for long-term care services in Montana, the two-year Long-Term Service and Supports Strategic Planning initiative aims to gather critical input from providers and partners across the state. The upcoming summits build on the momentum of the long-term care strategic plan

roundtables held last fall. These summits in Kalispell, Helena, Great Falls, and Billings will offer a platform for collaboration and input on the future of long-term care. Your voice matters! By working together, we can ensure our strategic plan aligns with the needs and aspirations of our communities.

Olmstead Plan Update

SLTC has contracted with the Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities (RIIC) at the University of Montana to facilitate the development of Montana's Olmstead Plan. An Olmstead Plan is a state's roadmap for providing services and support to individuals with disabilities in community settings rather than institutions, promoting integration and maximizing independence.

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Over the past six months, the RIIC has conducted 23 focus groups across the state, gathering invaluable input from people with disabilities, family members, caregivers, and advocacy organizations. These diverse perspectives, combined with state-provided data, are shaping the plan's development and ensuring it reflects the needs and priorities of Montanans with disabilities.

Currently, the RIIC is conducting in-depth interviews with individuals transitioning to independent living to better understand the supports and barriers they experience. A stakeholder workshop is also planned for this spring to identify concrete strategies and objectives for the plan.

New Year, Renewed Support for Montana's Caregivers!

As we embrace the new year, SLTC remains dedicated to supporting Montana's hardworking caregivers. Over the past few years, our Lifespan Respite grant has provided much-needed relief through respite vouchers, innovative retreats, and a unique food box program. Looking ahead, we're excited to expand our caregiver support initiatives in 2025. This includes implementing TCARE, an evidence-based program that provides personalized care plans to address caregiver burnout, and piloting Gogo Grandparents, a transportation and delivery service that helps older adults maintain their independence. These

programs, combined with our ongoing efforts, will better ensure caregivers across Montana have access to the resources and support they need to thrive.

Strengthening Provider Partnerships

We recognize the invaluable role our providers play in delivering high-quality care. In 2025, we're prioritizing provider engagement through ongoing communication, training opportunities, and collaborative initiatives. We're committed to fostering strong partnerships and ensuring providers have the resources and support they need to succeed.

The 2025 Legislative Session

The legislative session is a critical opportunity to advocate for policies that support elder adults, individuals with disabilities, and the long-term care system in Montana. We're actively engaging with lawmakers to promote legislation that strengthens services, improves quality of care, and enhances the lives of those we serve.

We're excited about the year ahead and the opportunities it holds. By working together, we can make a positive difference in the lives of Montanans who rely on long-term care services. We wish you a happy, healthy, and successful 2025!

Sincerely,

Lindsey Carter

Unmasking Scammers, One Red Flag at a Time

The Montana Fraud Watch Network

By Alex Ward,
AARP Lead Volunteer for
American Indian Outreach

Fraudsters are getting craftier by the day, but the Montana Fraud Watch Network is here to help you stay one step ahead. During International Fraud Awareness Week last November, three webcasts highlighted the Red Flags people need to recognize to avoid being victimized. By understanding these tactics, you can better protect yourself from scams.

Red Flags to Watch Out For **Unexpected or Unsolicited**

Communications: Be cautious of unexpected emails or phone calls, especially if they ask for money or personal information. It's usually best to let unsolicited calls go to voicemail so you can assess their legitimacy.

Too-Good-to-Be-True Offers: If an investment opportunity or deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Be skeptical of risk-free guarantees; they often mask hidden dangers.

Non-Traditional Payments: Scammers often request payment through unconventional means, such as gift



Photo by Marg Johnson VA, Envato Elements

cards. For instance, the IRS will never ask for back taxes to be paid with an iTunes gift card.

Scare Tactics and Urgency: Fraudsters use fear and pressure to make individuals act quickly. If someone is rushing you to make a decision, it's likely a scam. They also employ scare tactics to jolt you into making hasty decisions.

Requests for Personal Information: Legitimate organizations, especially federal agencies, will not ask for information they already have. Be vigilant about protecting your personal data, even if it seems harmless.

Compelled Silence: Scammers want their schemes to be kept secret. If someone tells you not to discuss their offer with anyone else, it's a major red flag.

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These red flags are powerful tools when combined with real-life case studies, showing how easy it can be for criminals to victimize individuals. Remember, one can never be too careful with their personal information.

Take Action

Stay informed and protect yourself from fraud by watching the [Fraud Awareness Webinar](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRqUnt0dTEg) (youtube.com/watch?v=rRqUnt0dTEg). For additional resources, refer to the following websites:

- [Montana Commissioner of Securities & Insurance](http://csimt.gov) (csimt.gov)
- [Internet Crimes Complaint Center](http://ic3.gov) (ic3.gov)
- [AARP Montana](http://states.aarp.org/montana) (states.aarp.org/montana)
- [AARP Fraud Watch Network](http://aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/about-fraud-watch-network) (aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/about-fraud-watch-network)

Report any fraudulent activity to these agencies and stay safe!

Don't Let Life's Challenges Leave You In the Cold *Energy Share Provides Assistance Paying Heating Bills*

Energy Share is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Montanans overcome home energy emergencies. Whether it's a disconnect notice or a propane tank running low, Energy Share provides situational assistance regardless of income, heat source, or energy provider.

As cold weather sets in, heating bills can quickly become overwhelming. If you or someone you know is struggling to pay these bills, call 1-888-779-7589 or visit their webpage:

energysharemt.com/how-to-apply

You can also connect with Energy Share's services through your local Human Resources Development Council.

In Montana, community spirit is all about neighbors helping neighbors. Something as simple as accompanying a friend to complete an application can make a big difference. Additionally, inform your energy provider about your situation — they might be able to direct you to further resources.

Healthy Meals, Happy Caregivers

Montana's Lifespan Respite Food Box Program

The Montana Lifespan Respite Coalition Food Box Program has been a resounding success in providing much-needed respite for caregivers across the state. By offering food boxes for healthy meals, the program aims to alleviate the burden of meal preparation and allow caregivers a well-deserved break.



Photo by Mirwan80, Envato Elements

Program Overview

Funded by the Administration for Community Living and supported by matching funds from Montana State University Extension, the initiative has been distributing food boxes to caregivers since April 2024. These boxes, filled with pre-made meals or meal kits, are designed to provide nutritious and convenient options. Although the initial funding ran out after 30 days, new funding will begin distribution in January 2025.

Key Program Features

Variety of Food Options: Caregivers can choose from pre-made meals from [Orders Up Delivery](#) or meal kits from [Hello Fresh](#) and [Blue Apron](#). [Orders Up](#), located in Bozeman, Mont., serves chef-prepared cuisine made entirely from real, premium ingredients.

Flexibility: The program offers both individual and family-sized meals to accommodate different household needs.

Convenience: Food boxes are delivered directly to caregivers' homes, eliminating the need for shopping and preparation.

Research Component: The program is also conducting research to measure its

impact on caregiver well-being and inform future program development.

Program Impact

The Food Box Program has already made a significant impact on the lives of caregivers.

Respite: By providing nutritious meals, the program has freed up caregivers' time and allowed them to take a much-needed break from their caregiving responsibilities.

Improved Well-Being: Many caregivers have reported feeling less stressed and more energized after participating in the program.

Community Reach: The program has reached caregivers in 27 different counties across Montana, serving a diverse population.

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Protecting Montana's Vulnerable Adults from Exploitation

Exploitation of vulnerable adults is a serious issue that affects many Montanans. It involves the abuse of power or trust to take control of a vulnerable adult's money, assets, or property through deception, coercion, fraud, undue influence, or intimidation. Each year, older adults lose more than \$28 billion due to exploitation, with family caregivers and social safety net programs often bearing additional costs.

In Montana, the Adult Protective Services (APS) bureau works tirelessly to address and combat exploitation. In 2023 alone, APS investigated 2,541 reports of exploitation, with the numbers for 2024 trending even higher.

APS is committed to identifying and supporting vulnerable adults in the state, as demonstrated by a recent case where an APS investigation, in conjunction with the FBI and Fergus County Sheriff's office, led to the conviction of a daughter who stole more than \$700,000 from her elderly mother.

This case highlights the importance of vigilance and collaboration in preventing exploitation.

What Can You Do to Prevent Exploitation?

Exploitation can happen to anyone, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, health, disability status, or living situation. It is crucial to educate seniors, professionals, caregivers, and the public on the signs of exploitation and how to prevent it. Here are some steps older adults can take to stay safe.

Take Care of Your Health: Maintain your physical and mental well-being.

Seek Professional Help: Address loneliness, and depression, and encourage family members to do the same.

Plan for Your Future: Establish a power of attorney or a living will to address health care decisions in advance. Seek legal advice before signing any



WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SUSPECT ABUSE OF A VULNERABLE ADULT?

Adult Protective Services specialists help protect vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. They help end abuse by matching the needs of the person with community partners in their area, such as mental health professionals, public health officials, law enforcement, the courts, the aging network, and other community groups.

- If you suspect harm is occurring right now, call 911
- If the concern is not life-threatening, you can call 1-844-277-9300 or contact APS online: dphhs.mt.gov/sltc/aps
- If you would like more info about APS, contact Senior and Long Term Care to get a brochure: 1-406-444-4077

Handle Your Own Mail: Post and open your own mail to stay informed.

Protect Personal Information: Avoid giving out personal information on the phone.

Use Direct Deposit: Ensure all checks are directly deposited into your bank account.

Have Your Own Phone: Maintain access to your own phone to stay connected.

Review Your Will: Periodically review and update your will to reflect your wishes.

Know Your Rights: If you have a paid or family caregiver, voice your preferences and concerns. If you live in a nursing home facility, contact your long-term care ombudsman, who can advocate on your behalf.

The Path Forward

Addressing the exploitation of vulnerable adults requires ongoing attention and action. Through education, vigilance, and collaboration, we can protect our loved ones and ensure they receive the respect and care they deserve. The APS

bureau remains steadfast in its mission to safeguard Montana's vulnerable adults from exploitation and support their well-being. For more information and resources, visit the [National Council on Aging's website \(ncoa.org\)](http://National Council on Aging's website (ncoa.org)). Let's work together to build a safer and more respectful community for all.

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Looking Ahead

The Montana Lifespan Respite Food Box Program is a valuable resource for caregivers in Montana, providing a much-needed respite from the challenges of caregiving. As the program continues, it is expected to expand and reach even more caregivers in need.

For more information or to learn how to participate in the program, please contact Call MSU Extension 406-613-8191 or email respite@montana.edu

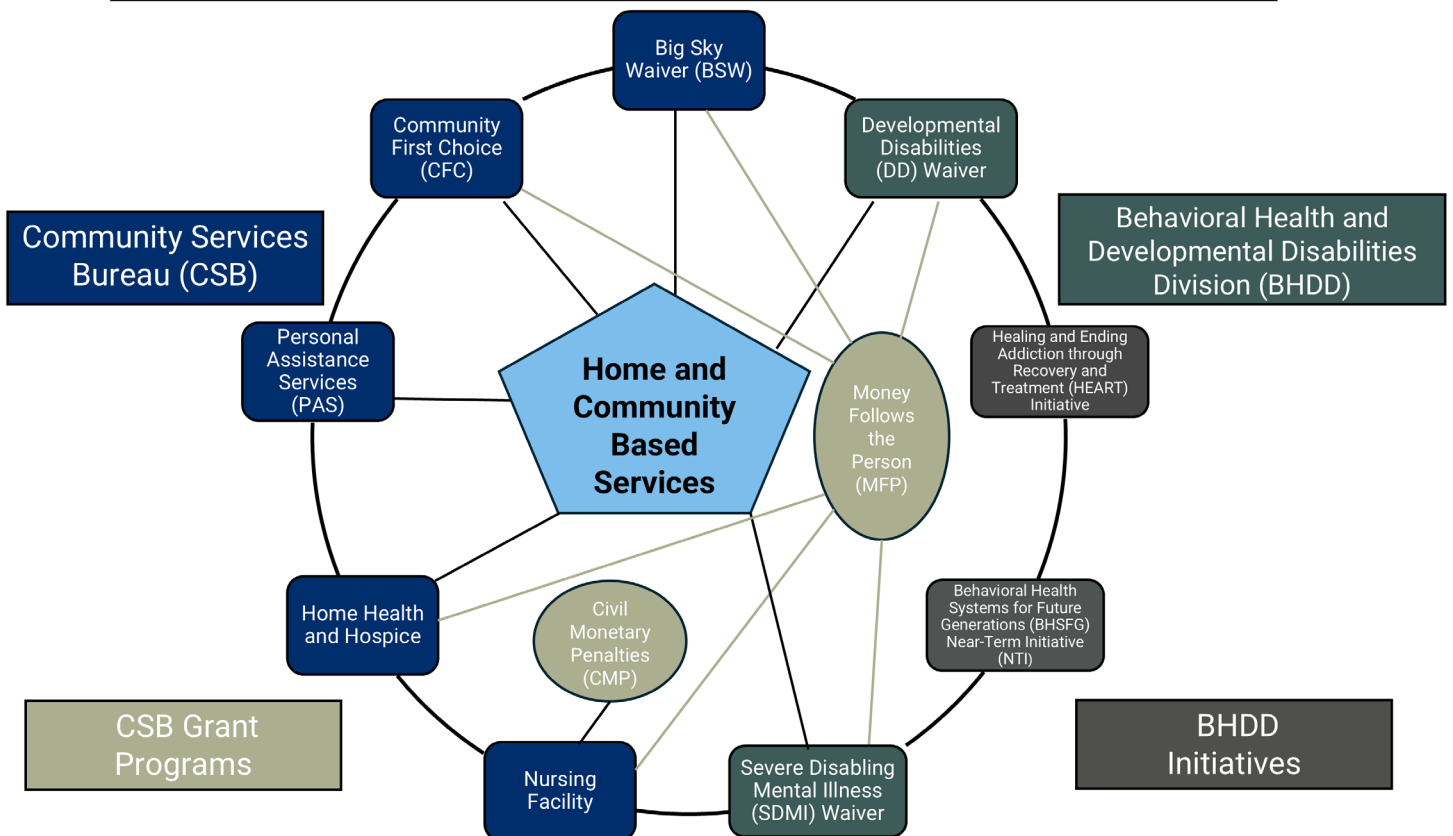
Montana's Continuum of Care

Keeping People in Their Homes and Communities

Imagine a system where the support you need grows with you, evolving to meet your changing needs in the comfort of your own home. The SLTC Division's Community Services Bureau (CSB) is dedicated to making this a reality for Montana residents. CSB manages several Medicaid community-based services, offering a range of programs and care options from the least restrictive settings to institutional care.

SLTC's continuum of care primarily focuses on Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), which allow individuals to receive care and support within their own homes or community settings, avoiding the need for institutional care. The Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (BHDD) Division, although outside of SLTC, also contributes by providing specialized services for individuals with behavioral health and developmental disability needs.

SENIOR AND LONG-TERM CARE CONTINUUM OF CARE



Several grant programs complement these efforts, including MFP, which helps individuals transition from institutional settings back into the community, and Civil Monetary Penalties (CMP), which uses funds to improve the quality of care in nursing home facilities.

A Comprehensive Range of Services

Designed to evolve with a member over time, a continuum of care better ensures that changing needs are met. This person-centered approach allows for coordinated and integrated care, which provides a seamless experience for individuals as they navigate through different levels of support. The CSB continuum of care includes:

Living Options: A variety of living arrangements are tailored to individual needs to include independent living with minimal support to more intensive care settings.

Support Services: A range of services, including personal care, homemaker assistance, and respite care, is available to help individuals maintain their independence.

Medical and Therapeutic Services: Access to medical care, therapy, and rehabilitation services ensures that individuals receive the necessary treatment and support.

Looking Ahead

In upcoming editions of “Aging in the 406,” you’ll find detailed information about each element of the continuum of care

and its corresponding connections. By highlighting these services, SLTC aims to inform and empower Montana residents, to help them make informed decisions about their care options. Stay tuned for more insights and updates on how the CSB is working to enhance the quality of life for the aged and disabled population in Montana.

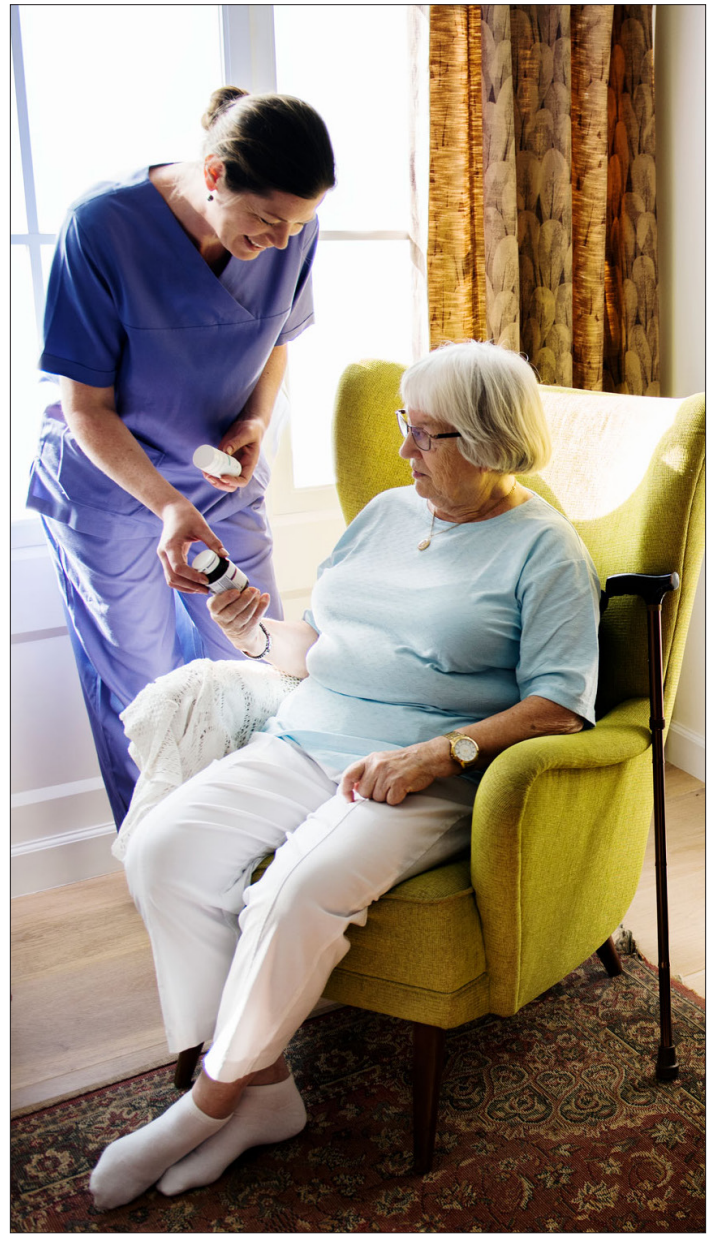


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