Challenges in Caregiving

No one can ever be fully prepared for the challenges of caregiving. The tasks and responsibilities involved can be demanding, even more so when caregivers themselves are frail, have been thrust into their role unexpectedly or reluctantly, or must care for someone who is uncooperative or combative.

Physical challenges: Caregiving presents physical challenges to the person who provides care. The caregiver may need to assist with or even assume complete responsibility for physically demanding tasks, such as doing laundry or housekeeping. Or the caregiver may need to help with more basic needs, such as bathing or dressing the person. The caregiver must be sure of her physical capability to provide care. For example, a man who has had a stroke may need his wife's support while rising from a bed, chair, or toilet or while walking. But his wife may be unable

DOES THIS PERSON NEED CARE?

Family and friends concerned with an older person's ability to care for himself can ask themselves the following questions to determine whether the help of a caregiver is needed:

- Eating: Are clothing items frequently stained by food? Is the person losing weight without an obvious explanation?
- Getting in and out of a chair or bed: Does the person rock back and forth several times before actually getting up? Are nearby furniture items or objects used for support? Does sitting seem to involve falling backward into a chair?
- Toileting: Are clothing items soiled or wet?
- Bathing: Are the person's skin and hair dirty?
- Grooming: Does the person have a rumpled or disheveled appearance?
- Walking: Does the person seem unsteady? Have falls occurred?
- Taking medicine: Do prescriptions last longer than they should? Are prescriptions used up faster than they should be?
- Using the telephone: Does the person seem to understand phone conversations? Is the phone consistently answered when the person is known to be home?
- Managing money (paying bills, balancing a checking account): Do bills go unpaid, leading to overdue notices? Has the person repeatedly been notified of overdrafts on accounts?
- Preparing food: Are food items kept past expiration dates? Do pots and pans seem to become scalded repeatedly? Has the stove been found left on?
- Doing laundry: Are clothes clean?
- Housekeeping: Is the home increasingly unkempt? Can the person find things readily when they are needed?
- Using transportation: Has the person repeatedly become lost while traveling in ways or on routes that are familiar?
- Shopping: Is the kitchen or pantry stocked with a reasonable amount and variety of food items?