



NEWS COLUMN – Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

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Home for the Holidays

**Pamela K. Matura, Executive Director, Area Agency on Aging District 7
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There is something about the holiday season that takes our heart and mind to thoughts of home and memories of Christmases past. Maybe it's a special meal, the scent of Christmas cookies baking in the oven, or a holiday tradition that makes you smile. No matter the memory, the holidays often lead us home to connect with family and friends.

Adult children may find when coming home for the holidays that Mom or Dad's health might be declining and they may sense that some assistance may be necessary in order to maintain safety and the quality of life for their parents. Caregiving is not easy for anyone, and as a long-distance caregiver, it can be even more challenging. **Please know that you are not alone** - there may be as many as seven million people in your same situation in the United States. Read the list below to evaluate whether your loved one may need some assistance in order to remain in their home safely. If you notice that some of the statements ring true for your parent or loved one, call the Area Agency on Aging District 7. We can help you find resources and provide you with the peace of mind to enjoy your visit during the holiday season. Or, if you are a long distance caregiver living in our district and caring for someone outside our district, please feel free to also give us a call – we can find similar resources and assistance that are available in the area of the country where your loved one resides. Look for:

- A decline in personal hygiene. Your loved one may not feel up to completing daily hygiene or may seem to be unaware of hygiene needs.
- Difficulty managing medications. You may notice pills lying around in unusual places, unfilled prescriptions or empty pill bottles.
- Falls or near falls, with or without injury.
- Increased clutter in the home or a general lack of cleanliness of the living environment.
- Outdated and spoiled food in the refrigerator.
- Difficulty cooking or preparing meals. This can include problems following recipes or directions, burned food, lack of awareness of whether they have eaten, lack of appetite, or reliance on "junk food" that requires no preparation.
- Difficulty keeping track of personal schedules, especially missing medical appointments.
- Difficulty managing finances. You may notice bills piled up but unpaid, overdue bills, overdrawn checking accounts, lack of budgeting.
- Decreased interest in previous hobbies and friendships.
- A general decline in physical health. They may have lost weight and appear more frail. You may notice bruising or other injuries, increased forgetfulness, or less stamina for daily activities.

If you decide that help is needed, the Area Agency on Aging District 7 is here to help. Our staff is available to provide information and answer questions about a number of care needs and options that are available. After speaking with a specially-trained nurse or social worker concerning your family member's needs, an in-home consultation to assess your loved one's situation will be provided at no cost to identify risks and determine what assistance or preventive measures could improve their quality of life. Call us toll-free at 1-800-582-7277.

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