

Expanding Home Care Value through Innovative Client and Caregiving Supports

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The number of people who are 65 and older in the United States has grown since 2000 by 20 million, reaching 17.8 percent of the total population.

According to the US Census Bureau, those numbers will continue to grow for years to come. Because 90 percent of these older Americans prefer to age in place, living in one's own home and community safely, independently and comfortably, in-home caregivers have become more important than ever¹. The assistance that caregivers provide older adults and individuals with disabilities with dressing, feeding, grooming and other activities of daily living often makes the difference for them between remaining in their homes and communities and facing placement in nursing facilities.

Unfortunately, shortages of in-home caregivers in every region of the country have been severe and persistent. Home care agencies have tried many plans for attracting more workers, including providing increased pay and enhanced professionalism and offering steady work with well-matched clients and their families close to their homes. All have been attempted with mixed results for increasing caregiver recruitment and retention.

As the nation's largest provider of personal care services with 53,000 caregivers in 11 Eastern, Southeastern, and Midwestern states, 50-year-old Help at Home hires 150 new caregivers a day and thousands each month to serve nearly 70,000 clients. The company has grown its caregiver base from 28,000 to more than 54,000 from 2020 to 2023 and now have a retention rate of over twice the industry average. To achieve these results, Help at Home has invested in caregiver support programs to highlight and recognize their work, provide career growth opportunities to elevate the role and create a sense of purpose and belonging.

For example:

- **They offer a caregiver recruitment hotline as well as an automated hiring process which allows candidates to apply for caregiving jobs via their smartphones.**
- **They offer ongoing caregiver training and upskilling, online caregiver communities, and caregiver councils.**
- **They've implemented awards programs for caregivers who provide exemplary service.**

In short, Help at Home continually strives to foster a supportive environment which nurtures caregivers and their relationships with clients. The company's caregivers' average four-year relationships with their clients and spend 21 hours-per-week on average providing in-home care. They are often thought of as "family" in many cases where clients do not have family nearby. These are some of the reasons why caregiver retention is higher, and they are more likely to stay with Help at Home.

In 2022, the company launched an innovative care management program, Care Coordination from Help at Home, which not only connects home care with the health care ecosystem but has also empowered caregivers to feel increased job satisfaction as they are more connected to their clients' overall health and wellbeing. The program's goal is to improve client health and by doing so has improved satisfaction by addressing brewing health conditions earlier, thereby decreasing the likelihood clients will end up in Emergency Departments, hospitals and nursing homes.

The key to the Care Coordination program's success is leveraging caregivers' familiarity with and daily frontline observations of their clients to better connect home care to health care. Here's how it works:

Caregivers working for clients in the program receive a weekly text that includes a brief survey asking about their client's breathing, mobility, mood, etc., as well as whether they have enough food. These observations are transmitted to the Clinical Support Team, composed of data scientists, nurses, social workers and community health workers, who analyze, and act based on these observations of the clients' physical and behavioral functioning, home safety, and social determinant of health (SDoH) needs. The team alerts the appropriate primary care or specialty providers of escalating health issues that enables interventions and/or connects clients with needed community services and resources.

Caregivers feel proud knowing their observations of clients serve as early warnings to avert health emergencies. An example of the program's impact is captured in this Help at Home [video](#) featuring Help at Home caregiver, Carla, and her client, James, who has Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

"My role is being observant," says Carla, sitting next to James on a couch in the video. "It's easy and takes just a few minutes to have a conversation [about his health] that I wouldn't otherwise have had. Maybe we catch something before it gets to be a problem. It could save his life."

In fact, Carla made an early observation one day by documenting a change in James' health condition in the weekly survey. She had noticed he began declining his daily walks and thought this might be due to a change in his health--increasing shortness of breath. The Care Coordination team intervened by contacting James' primary care provider and then his pulmonologist. After James had a timely visit and evaluation that week with his pulmonologist, his COPD medications were appropriately adjusted, and his breathing improved. This early intervention avoided what could have been an emergency situation and possible hospital admission.

Helping clients remain in their homes is very gratifying for caregivers. When asked about their own health and wellbeing on the weekly survey, nearly 50 percent expressed an interest in better understanding their clients' conditions or needs, which would alleviate worry and stress for them. Others wanted information about how to meet their own needs, including learning about stress management, managing their grief, and obtaining community services for themselves. Help at Home acknowledges caregiving is not an easy job and understands the importance of taking care of caregivers, so they are healthier and better equipped to take care of clients.

“Caregiving can be a difficult job, so we are attentive to the caregiver, as well as the client, acting as a listening ear and easing the burden of their role,” said Help at Home’s Care Coordination President Julie McCarter. “We elevate the caregiver role by providing them with support through our Care Coordination team--and we know this leads to greater caregiver satisfaction scores and tenure.”

McCarter pointed out that reducing clients’ hospital stays and increasing their days in community means their caregivers are assured they will miss fewer days of work since their clients remain at home.

Net Promote Scores (NPS) have shown to be significantly higher – 17% more -- for those caregivers who are involved in the most mature Care Coordination program located in Pennsylvania when compared to scores for those who are not program participants.

Caregivers play a vital role in the future of our aging society. Innovative programs like Care Coordination that place importance on their relationships with their clients and their powers of observation improve client health care and increase their days spent in community. At the same time, Care Coordination improves caregiver retention offering a greater sense of purpose and professionalism through making a greater difference in their clients’ lives.

¹ <https://www.usnews.com/360-reviews/services/senior-tech-aging-in-place-survey>