

Sandwich Generation Feels Strain of Caring for Both Parents, Children Need for Non-Family, In-Home Caregiving is on the Rise

By Guest Columnist Emma R. Dickison, President of Home Helpers and Direct Link

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(HealthNewsDigest.com) - Lay-offs throughout the country have dominated headlines in recent months. But for many working Americans, the recession has created the need to work longer hours and multiple jobs, even if it means less pay. These trends are taking the greatest toll on the “Sandwich Generation,” the millions of individuals who are simultaneously caring for their aging parents as well as their own children.

As medical breakthroughs make it possible to live longer and manage chronic conditions, today’s average life span reaches far into the 70s. As a result, many “Sandwich Generation” adults in their 40s to 60s are finding themselves trying to balance the pressures of their careers, along with the needs of their parents, children and other personal and household responsibilities.

These Herculean demands are nearly impossible to satisfy, especially for adults that are caring for parents who do not live with them, or even nearby. In fact, more than 50 percent of adult children who are providing care live more than an hour away from their parents.

Even the best “jugglers” are finding this balancing act to be unrealistic, and because the care given to children and seniors cannot be compromised, many families are choosing to hire in-home caregivers to fill the gap.

As the President of Home Helpers, a non-medical, in-home senior care company, I’ve witnessed these trends firsthand. Despite their best efforts, the average family caregiver works full time, cares for his or her children, and provides an average of 18 hours a week of caregiving to one or both parents. In many cases, 18 hours of care is simply not enough, and many families have found comfort in supplemental care through agencies such as Home Helpers.

Although a recession will have an impact on any industry, there are three industries that remain strong: education, technology and health care. As a mother, as well as a senior care expert, I’ve found that Americans will always find a way to care for loved ones, young or old, as best we can, no matter the economic climate.

By pure demographics, the reliance on in-home caregivers will increase dramatically as more than 75 million Americans reach age 65 or older in the next two decades. Beginning in 2011, Baby Boomers will turn 65 at the rate of 10,000 per day.

With this drastic demographic shift as America’s most revered generation ages, in-home senior care will continue to flourish, along with the prevalence of two-income working families, creating an even greater need for non-family caregivers.

Like the decision to hire a child care provider, families need to be equally careful when choosing an in-home caregiver for an elderly loved one. As you know, your situation is completely unique. Choose an agency that offers care plans customized to your loved one’s needs. In addition, make sure the care agency meets all state standards and that its caregivers are employees, not subcontractors, who have been thoroughly screened and appropriately trained. Agencies must also carry the necessary levels of workers’ and unemployment

compensation and liability insurance.

To help you and your family to feel more comfortable and confident in your caregiving decisions, I suggest joining a community support group and networking with other families who are dealing with similar issues.

For more information, visit the Society of Certified Senior Advisors at www.csa.us. You can also visit Home Helpers at www.HomeHelpers.CC and Direct Link at www.DirectLink911.com.

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