

Hospitalizations, Rehab & Safe Discharges

Important Considerations for Families & Patients

» BY JULIE ROSE

Hospitalizations can happen suddenly, leaving little time to make decisions or absorb information. Once the immediate medical issue has stabilized, families are frequently surprised by how quickly conversations turn to discharge – sometimes before they feel ready.

Discharge planning is not just about leaving the hospital. It involves understanding follow-up care, medication changes, therapeutic recovery needs and recommendations, safety risks and whether home or a rehabilitation setting is appropriate. These decisions are often made under time pressure, while individuals and families are adjusting and processing new information.



JULIE ROSE

Specific details may be overlooked, expectations may be unclear and necessary supports may not be fully in place – increasing the risk of setbacks, avoidable stress or hospital readmission. Successful discharge planning considers not only the medical plan, but also how recovery will actually unfold day to day.

It's important to work with a trusted, experienced professional who can help individuals and families understand discharge options, ask the right questions and ensure plans are realistic, safe and aligned with long-term needs – not just with the hospital's timeline. This ensures a more successful outcome.



When an older family member is about to be discharged from the hospital, a trusted, experienced professional can help individuals and families understand options, ask the right questions and ensure plans are realistic and safe.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT REHABILITATION OPTION

Rehabilitation settings vary widely, and the right choice depends on much more than the medical diagnosis. Complexity, functional abilities, cognitive status, insurance coverage and the level of support available at home all play a critical role.

Understanding the differences between inpatient rehab, skilled nursing, outpatient therapy and home-based services early can help individuals and families make informed decisions, reduce stress and support better recovery outcomes.

Insurance coverage often dictates next steps, and the right advocate who understands the patient's full story can ensure they discharge to the best setting. Patient

confidence on next steps improves long-term outcomes.

THE SWITCH TO PARENTAL SUPPORT—WHEN ADULT CHILDREN BECOME ADVOCATES

Often a hospitalization or health crisis becomes a turning point for families. Adult children may suddenly find themselves communicating with medical teams, managing information, coordinating care and making decisions for a parent – often while balancing careers, parenting and distance.

This role shift can become overwhelming quickly. Medical language may be unfamiliar, recommendations

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Rob Heltzel
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Licensed States: VA, DC, SC, WV, MD, TN
Office: 703-368-9248
Mobile: 571-436-9691
Rob.Heltzel@home.com
www.TeamHeltzel.com
7001 Heritage Village Plaza, Suite 250,
Gainesville, VA 20155



STEVE GREKSOUK
Loan Officer | NMLS#2017582
804.339.5428
steve.greksouk@home.com



KIM YEAGER
Loan Officer Assistant Not Licensed
571.341.8603
kim.yeager@home.com



ARLENE S. FLETCHER
Loan Officer Assistant | NMLS#992397
571.445.9316
arlene.fletcher@home.com



First OLLI Ideas Festival for Adults 50+ Set for May 8-9

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University (OLLI Mason) will host its inaugural Ideas Festival on May 8-9, inviting adults ages 50+ to explore opportunities for lifelong learning, connection and enrichment.

Held on the Fairfax campus, the free, two-day event will feature more than 20 classes, demonstrations and activities spanning art, music, history, health and more.

“Our goal is to inspire continued learning while connecting people with like-minded peers,” said Debbie Engleson, president of OLLI Mason. “This festival offers a dynamic introduction to everything OLLI Mason provides.”

Highlights include hands-on ses-

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sions such as watercolor painting, tai chi and chair yoga, as well as a panel discussion, “Global Perspectives on Longevity,” on Saturday, May 9, at 3 p.m., featuring George Mason faculty and experts.

Founded in 1991, OLLI Mason offers adults 50+ access to year-round classes, clubs and social experiences, with flexible in-person and online options.

The Ideas Festival is free and open to adults age 50 and older. Attendees may participate in individual sessions and attend one or both days.

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may feel confusing and emotions can run high when individuals and family members disagree. Knowing what questions to ask, how to interpret care plans and when to ask for clarification or additional support can make a meaningful difference.

Support for family caregivers is not just helpful – it’s essential. Having guidance during these moments can help clarify important decisions and help families feel more confident as they step into advocacy roles.

SPRING PLANNING: REVIEWING CARE & LIVING ENVIRONMENTS

Spring is an excellent time to assess daily living environments and care arrangements. Changes in mobility, cognition or health often emerge gradually. This can make it easy to overlook issues that can quietly become larger concerns.

A beneficial review could include:

- Safety and daily routines
- Accessibility and support needs within the home
- Transportation, social engagement and oversight
- Whether current care arrangements still align with evolving needs

Making adjustments when changes are recognized, rather than ignoring them,

can prevent unexpected crises. It can also ensure that a plan is in place when the unexpected event happens.

Even small changes – when made early – can improve safety, comfort and quality of life.

AGING IN PLACE: PLANNING FOR SAFETY & INDEPENDENCE

Many individuals want to remain in their homes as they age. This can be a meaningful and realistic goal, but it requires more than wishes and good intentions. It involves practical planning, environmental awareness, and regular reassessments as needs change.

Aging-in-place specialists evaluate how a home supports safety, independence and daily living. This may include recommendations related to layout, lighting, mobility supports, bathroom safety and space for potential in-home care. When paired with appropriate support, these adjustments can help extend independence and reduce preventable risks.

Julie Rose, M.Ed., CDP, CHC, CAPS is CEO of Paladin Life Care providing exceptional care and advocacy for senior clients and those with disabilities in Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia.

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