

The **POWER** of ATTORNEY PROJECT

Planning for Long Term Care in Ontario

Welcome to the Power of Attorney Podcast which is part of our Conversations that Matter Podcasts. My name is Mary Bart, Chair of Caregiving Matters. This podcast is intended to provide general information only and is not intended to be a substitute for seeking personalized legal, financial or other advice. This podcast raises issues that our audience can further explore on their own in their own local communities with their own local experts. This project will help to be a call to action for families to solve their issues, find solutions to their problems, and have greater peace of mind.

Mary- Our guest speaker is Faith Madden and she is a social worker. She has her BSW and MSW. Faith is manager of patient care at Mississauga Halton Community Care Access Centre. Welcome Faith.

Faith- Thank you, Mary.

Mary- Could you share with us a little bit about what you do at the CCAC?

Faith- Importantly, I manage a placement team who are dedicated and they care about the patients that they work with as well as the rest of the community team who take such pride in the work that they do. Basically what I do within my portfolio is manage any of the calls that come to my attention, work alongside external community agencies, sit on a number of committees and more importantly if families or patients connect with me I assist with trying to alleviate any kind of concerns, provide information sharing, provide information to our organization with relation to the needs of our community related to placement and work alongside my colleagues within this organization to look at how we can make the journey for our patients more successful.

Mary- Thank you Faith for that. That is very all encompassing and busy job. I'm sure you work very hard and every day you must see different family situations so we are truly honored that you can join our project and share some of your wisdom. Thank you. Let's get started. I do have my first question for you. When is long term care needed?

Faith- First of all, I just wanted to start off by saying for many of us who deal with our family members when it's our time to look at placement, it's a very difficult decision. It's very life changing to come to the decision now that we have to move from our place of familiarity to go to some place different. Just that conversation alone for many families and caregivers is such a stressful situation, they could be guilt

ridden, all kinds of promises could have been made in the past, the request to please not put me in a long term care home but sometimes it comes to a point where that needs to happen. What do we look at in terms of when is it the right time to apply? Many times we find that the family or caregivers are simply no longer able to provide care. They could be extremely tired. They've been doing it for years and they've come to the point where they are mentally and physically exhausted. The other thing could be a health condition that is prolonged by the patient that now becomes a point where nursing or personal support is required and it starts after we see the point where we need to start looking at some other alternative resources such as long term care. The other piece is that the patient may be in the hospital situation and they cannot return home so that kind of discussion needs to happen ahead of time because when it's in the hospital it's usually a crisis situation and a lot of decisions need to be made in a very quick time and lastly we need to look at in terms of what is in the community at this point that caregivers can explore or utilize to hopefully help their situation with their loved ones. So when we are talking about applying for long term care it's really all-encompassing but I think the key word here is planning and having the discussion ahead of time; not when the crisis hits.

Mary- Okay and yes that's so true because people don't always plan until something happens and as one person said to me, "why would I ever plan for long term care? It's like planning for a root canal. It'll just happen so I'm not going to waste my time trying to plan?"and I looked at that person and I said, " you know, if you had the courage to have that conversation, and to find the resources in the community, you would have a better road map when something does happen. You'll be more knowledgeable and people need to be more aware that it takes some time to plan and as you plan you get greater confidence firstly in the system and that you're making the right decision based on some logic and not on being in a panic situation." That's why this podcast is so important so that we can together talk about the issues of planning and really how important it is. Another question for you, Faith is " where and when do I start?"

Faith- The beginning points after the conversation with your loved ones about this is what we are planning on doing, then there are the steps about looking for some alternatives and most importantly is to connect with CCAC through our contact centre and then upon doing so, the contact centres' staff will run through a number of questions just to find out what is actually happening in the home, and more importantly will assign a care coordinator to come out and do an initial visit to assess what is actually happening in the home. That is actually the starting point. Some families what they may do is connect with their family physician to explain what is happening in terms of the person's physical health deteriorating and they're burning out. That's another way in which we can get a referral is through a physician who calls on the family's behalf. It could be a patient themselves or a neighbour so there's many referral sources that can call into our contact centre to get the process started so we can have a care coordinator come out, do the visit, and then there is a number of paperwork that is involved in a part of that assessment so the actual home visit that is booked is used to assess if they are even eligible for long term care. There are some criteria that make a person eligible so they have to be over the age of 18, have a valid health card and their health care needs have to be able to be looked after in the long term care facility. So, for example, if their health is deteriorating and the caregiver has exhausted all the various community resources that are available in the community through adult day services, which we

will talk about a little later on, short term respite services which give the caregiver a bit of a break, a paid psw or personal support worker to come in the home...if all of those things have been exhausted, then that's what we talk about looking now towards long term care and the care coordinator would take all those things into account as part of their assessment.

Mary- Okay, that is very interesting. So in choosing a long term care home what should people look for?

Faith- Very importantly, because this is such a personal decision when we are talking about a long term care facility, this is going to be their loved ones new home so this is why it's so important to know your loved one and have the discussion ahead of time, before there is a crisis when you're doing the preparations of looking for long term care to look at what is this person all about? So for some people ethnicity and culture is so important and we do have some homes in Mississauga/ Halton region that are ethno-specific and as well as in the province of Ontario there may be homes that fit this criteria and for some families that may be very important to be considered. The other thing that drives a decision of course is finances. So we need to look at what is important to that individual. Do they want to be in a room by themselves as in private accommodation or do they want to share as a semi private or basic accommodation in which a sharing aspect would be involved? Most importantly, some of the other things that look at is of course going for a visit. It's really important that when they go on a tour they talk to the staff, to the residents, and it's not always about the esthetics of the home. They need to look at the care that is going to be provided. Find out how many staff are on the floor at night...what kind of philosophy that that home has towards their residents...they could be looking at does this home provide pets? As that may be important to that individual. Do they have gardening, horticulture? Some of those things are very important but more importantly, we also have a video. The opportunity to do a virtual tour of all the homes does exist for all of our homes so you have the opportunity to do that from all over the world from the comfort of your home. There is a description for each of the homes which explains a little bit, what the differences may be and that gives them an opportunity as well to be able to be well informed and choose the long term care home.

Mary- Your video sounds like an excellent tool and people could sit at home on their computers and literally scan and go through all the facilities...that would be a great time saver. They would learn a lot about the homes even before doing a physical visit and they would be able to be more informed and be able to be more knowledgeable so good for you for making those videos. That's wonderful. My next question for you is, "what are the steps a loved one needs to make when a loved one is ready to make the transition into a long term care home?."

Faith- First of all in terms of doing the transition- you would start to plant the seed with their loved ones and also perhaps maybe speaking with the doctor to reinforce that it really is time to now move to another alternative source so that the caregiver doesn't feel the entire thing is on them. In terms of the transition part of it could be setting up the home by asking and inviting the patient to go with them to view the home so that they're engaged in the process and when the bed offer does come, set up the room in a nice personal way. Bring photographs and a radio...those little things are so important. The caregiver needs to be in touch with their loved one because there will be feelings of fear, anxiety and other feelings for the caregiver and patient. It's a new experience for all. They can talk to the home to

find out what kind of things can I do to make that transition a successful one? They can help by telling the long term care home what makes their loved ones tick. What kind of things would be important to their loved one for them? Some patients might not want to get up late in the morning so some of the personal information sharing can be done ahead of time to help the transition. With regards to if the patient required a subsidy if they're going into a basic accommodation, then it's really important to make sure the financial part is done in advance. So the income tax has to have been done and the information provided for income so that they have the paperwork required completed for the subsidy.

Mary- So that's a really interesting point that I would like to talk to you about. So families not only need to look at the home and the specifics within the home but they also need to customize their room with maybe some photos, but also they need to have their finances in place and be prepared to walk into meetings with the financial information so that your staff can have the info to go through the decision making process. Start to get organized and have everything in a file folder so that everything is prepared. That's a really great tip. That's wonderful. Do you have any other advice on how to make it a successful transition into a long term care facility?

Faith- Well some of our patients, who for example, where there are some resistance, we have some fantastic resources, in our community either the patient is attending an adult day program where they can go and get socialization. We have great resources in that community day program, support workers who will work with the patient and family to also help the caregiver's transition into the long term care and it's been extremely successful in accessing the adult day program and it's really across the province of Ontario and it does help. The other pieces are the psycho geriatric support workers who work with the patient and the family within the home and they provide information and intervention type of help for the transition of those kinds of patients. So this is very helpful for the families and reassuring for the patients when they know they have other resources to call upon to make that transition into the long term care facility.

Mary- Thank you for that and my final question is, "can you speak to the finances and long term care rates in Ontario?"

Faith- So the long term care home rates are legislated and set out by the ministry of health and long term care so every patient would know what the basic rate, versus semi and private would be in terms of a bed. The rates are also posted on the Mississauga/Halton website and as I had indicated earlier the whole waiting period to get a bed is also based on finances. More patients are interested in the basic beds because that's what they can afford and of course the higher end comes up a little quicker. So we always tell families if you cannot afford to pay for a private room although those beds come up quicker, you stick to what you can afford and wait because you will be signing a contract and held liable to pay those rates for a good period of time until you can downgrade to a basic bed in the home so the homes control the beds as soon as the person moves in. Base it on what you can afford currently because that can change. In terms of veterans there are two homes that provide veteran beds so it's always preferable to call veterans affairs to see about what kind of subsidies they can access to top up their finances.

Mary- Well that's very true Faith and as people plan for long term care and I can speak to this through my own personal experience, we had to plan for the monthly rate but we also had to make sure that there was enough money for my mother in law so that she had new clothes and money to get her hair done and it's really important to budget. So we have to plan to make sure the monthly rates are sustainable so that we can keep our loved one as comfortable as possible so the rates are key to that so thank you for sharing that. Finally, I would like to thank you Faith for joining us on this project. Your wisdom and insight will be valuable for our audience. Could you please share your contact information with us?

Faith- Sure. If anyone wants the information they can go to Mississauga/Haltom community access centre and have our website. We also have healthcareathome.ca/mh or they can call 310-2222 so there's no area code required.

Mary- Thank you very much for that and again I would like to wrap up by thanking you Faith for joining us and today Chris Kata, who is from our board of directors, have a few closing comments.

Chris - Mary, who are our initial project supporters?

Mary – We wish to acknowledge that this project is funded in part by the government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program. Our other initial supporters include Care Connect, The Care Guide, The Healing Cycle Foundation and Scotiatrust. Caregiving Matters is an internet based registered Canadian Charity dedicated to educating and supporting family caregivers. 90% of our work is done online and by leveraging technologies. 10% is done by producing local educational events. We leverage technologies in everything that we do ensuring greater reach and sustainability. I trust that we have given some of the highlights of our exciting new initiative. If you are interested in speaking with me about the project, please let me know. We look forward to your questions and your ideas.

Chris - Mary, if listeners have questions, what is the best way for them to contact us?

Mary Bart- You can contact me directly Mary Bart, Chair of Caregiving Matters at 905-939-2931. My email is mary@caregivingmatters.ca and our website is www.caregivingmatters.ca