

Help Protect Finances of Loved One with Alzheimer's

If you have a loved one showing signs of Alzheimer's or another form of dementia, you'll obviously experience some strong emotions — and you'll likely ask yourself this question: *What can I do to help?* While there are certainly many ways you could provide assistance over time, there's one area that might require your immediate attention: *finances*.

Alzheimer's patients often exhibit a range of money-related problems. Here are some of the most common ones, according to the National Institute on Aging:

- Trouble counting change or paying for a purchase
- Difficulty in balancing a checkbook
- Confusion over bank statements
- Not paying — or even opening — bills
- Making strange and unnecessary purchases with a credit card

Of course, your awareness of these problems depends, to a great extent, on just how familiar you are with the daily life of your loved one with Alzheimer's or similar dementia. But if you have noticed these issues, it may be time for you to act before things get worse — and they *can* get worse, because scam artists constantly target the elderly by making false promises, soliciting personal data, asking for money and even requesting changes in estate-planning documents.

So, what steps can you take? You'll need to clearly communicate your concerns to your afflicted loved one, and you'll have to get their consent for the actions you wish to take on their behalf. This may not be easy, but it's certainly worth the effort.

Here are a few moves to consider:

- *Set up auto-pay.* If your loved one has still been paying bills manually, now may be a good time to set up auto-pay for utilities, loans and other bills.

- *Open a joint checking account.* By opening a joint checking account with your

loved one, or perhaps adding your name to an existing account, you can help ensure all payments are accurate and appropriate.

- *Freeze credit reports.* By freezing your loved one's credit reports at the credit reporting bureaus — Equifax, TransUnion and Experian — you can prevent bogus credit lines from being opened in their name.

- *Create a durable power of attorney.* In the early stages of Alzheimer's or dementia, your loved one could create a durable power of attorney and name you, or another close family member, as the "agent" — which means you'd be empowered to make financial and other decisions when your loved one is no longer capable of doing so. (A durable power of attorney could also be created in cases of advanced Alzheimer's, but it can be somewhat more challenging.)

- *Help establish a living trust.* In addition to a durable power of attorney, a living trust can be valuable for families of Alzheimer's patients. A living trust can hold a person's financial assets and other property while the trustee manages the money and makes investment and spending decisions. A living trust can be complex, so before establishing one, you'll need to consult with your legal and tax professionals.

When you're dealing with the financial issues associated with your loved one's Alzheimer's or dementia, it can feel like you're on a long road. But diligently seeking out the appropriate financial moves can help make the journey less stressful — for everyone involved.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.

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