



Nevada Care Compass



Helping families navigate senior care
with clarity, compassion, and confidence.

Is It Time?

A Family Guide to Recognizing
When More Support May Be Needed

*What families often miss
before a crisis.*

Helpful guidance for families navigating:



Aging



Safety Concerns



Memory Changes



Caregiving



Senior Living Decisions



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You're Not Alone

Recognizing changes early can help families make more thoughtful decisions before a crisis happens.



Many families notice small changes long before a crisis happens.



A missed medication.



A recent fall.



Confusion with appointments.



Difficulty managing daily routines.



Increased stress on a spouse or adult child.

At first, these moments may seem small or isolated. Over time, however, they can begin to affect safety, independence, health, and quality of life.

Many families later realize the signs had been building for months—sometimes even years.

Recognizing concerns early can help prevent unnecessary emergencies, reduce stress, and create more thoughtful plans for the future.



What Families Often Miss Before a Crisis

Families often adapt slowly to changes because they **happen gradually**.

It's common to explain away concerns by saying:

- "They've always been forgetful."
- "They're just slowing down."
- "They're stubborn."
- "They're fine most of the time."
- "I can handle it myself."

But small concerns can sometimes signal larger changes in safety, judgment, **memory, mobility, nutrition, isolation, and caregiver stress.**

Starting conversations early often creates more choices, better outcomes, and less pressure during difficult moments.



A Note From Nevada Care Compass

This guide was created to help families better recognize common changes related to aging, safety, memory, caregiving, and daily support needs.

Every family situation is different. The goal is not to rush decisions, but to encourage thoughtful conversations and early planning before a crisis occurs.

“Planning early doesn't take away independence—it often helps preserve it longer.”

Early awareness can help families:



Improve safety



Reduce stress



Protect quality of life



Make more informed decisions



Preserve independence longer



Safety at Home

Small changes in the home environment can sometimes become larger safety risks over time.

Many seniors successfully remain at home for years with the right support, planning, and safety adjustments.

However, certain changes may signal increased risk for falls, medication mistakes, injury, or isolation.

Recognizing concerns early can help families make thoughtful decisions before an emergency occurs.



Signs to Watch For

- ☐ Recent falls or balance concerns
- ☐ Difficulty getting in or out of bed or chairs
- ☐ Trouble safely using stairs
- ☐ Cluttered walkways or trip hazards
- ☐ Poor lighting in hallways or bathrooms
- ☐ Forgetting to turn off the stove or appliances
- ☐ Difficulty bathing safely
- ☐ Missed medications or medication confusion
- ☐ Unopened mail or overdue bills piling up
- ☐ Weight loss or spoiled food in the refrigerator
- ☐ Increased isolation or rarely leaving home
- ☐ Difficulty keeping up with housekeeping or laundry



What Families Often Miss Before a Crisis

Many safety concerns develop gradually over time.

Families often adapt slowly to these changes without realizing how much daily routines, mobility, memory, or judgment may already be affecting safety and independence.

Simple Ways to Improve Safety at Home



Improve lighting in hallways and bathrooms



Remove loose rugs and cluttered walkways



Install grab bars near toilets and showers



Create medication reminders or organizers



Schedule regular wellness check-ins



Encourage social interaction and activity



Discuss transportation alternatives early



Planning ahead does not mean giving up independence.

In many cases, small adjustments and early support can help seniors remain safer and more independent for longer.



Helpful resources at your fingertips.

Scan to download more free guides and tools.





Memory & Cognitive Changes

Some changes in memory, judgment, or daily decision-making can happen gradually over time.

Families often adapt slowly to cognitive changes because they may appear subtly at first.



A forgotten appointment.



Repeated questions.



Difficulty managing finances.



Confusion with medications.



Changes in judgment or behavior.

These moments can sometimes be dismissed as normal aging, stress, or occasional forgetfulness.

However, increasing confusion, impaired judgment, or changes in daily functioning may signal the need for additional support or evaluation.



Signs to Watch For

- ☐ Repeating questions or stories frequently
- ☐ Missing appointments or important dates
- ☐ Confusion with medications
- ☐ Difficulty managing finances or paying bills
- ☐ Poor judgment or unsafe decision-making
- ☐ Increased vulnerability to scams or financial exploitation
- ☐ Getting lost in familiar places
- ☐ Personality or mood changes
- ☐ Increased anxiety, suspicion, or paranoia
- ☐ Forgetting names, routines, or conversations
- ☐ Difficulty following conversations or instructions
- ☐ Withdrawal from hobbies or social activities



What Families Often Miss Before a Crisis

Memory and judgment changes often happen gradually.

Families may unknowingly compensate for changes by:

- Taking over finances
- Managing appointments
- Reminding medications
- Avoiding difficult conversations
- Limiting activities quietly

Over time, these adjustments can make it harder to recognize how much support may already be needed.



Occasional Forgetfulness vs. Increasing Concern

Occasional forgetfulness can be a normal part of aging.

However, increasing confusion, safety concerns, impaired judgment, wandering, medication mistakes, or significant personality changes may warrant further attention and support.

“Changes in judgment are often harder to recognize than changes in memory.”



Early conversations create more opportunities for thoughtful planning, support, and safer long-term decisions.



Changes in Daily Living

Everyday routines often become more difficult gradually—making changes easy to overlook at first.

Many families first notice small changes in organization, routines, hygiene, nutrition, or transportation.

Over time, these changes can begin affecting safety, confidence, and overall quality of life.



Signs to Watch For

- ☐ Laundry or housekeeping piling up
- ☐ Wearing the same clothing repeatedly
- ☐ Difficulty preparing meals safely
- ☐ Unopened mail or unpaid bills
- ☐ Missing medications or appointments
- ☐ Trouble managing transportation or driving
- ☐ Weight loss or poor nutrition
- ☐ Declining personal hygiene
- ☐ Sleeping excessively or unusual fatigue
- ☐ Difficulty using phones, technology, or reminders
- ☐ Reduced participation in hobbies or social activities



Changes Families Commonly Step In To Help With



Grocery shopping



Transportation



Medication reminders



Cooking meals



Managing bills or paperwork



Cleaning and laundry



Scheduling appointments



Independence Looks Different for Everyone

Support can sometimes help seniors maintain routines, confidence, safety, and quality of life longer.

“
Small daily changes
are often easier to
overlook because they
happen gradually.
”



Small Daily Changes Matter

Daily routines often provide some of the earliest clues that additional support, structure, or planning may be helpful.



Noticing changes doesn't mean doing everything at once. It simply means having the right information to make the best choices for today—and for the future.



You don't have to wait for a crisis to start the conversation.



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Caregiver Stress Matters Too

Supporting someone you love can be rewarding—but it can also become emotionally and physically overwhelming over time.

Many caregivers quietly carry increasing responsibilities while trying to balance work, family, finances, medical appointments, household responsibilities, and emotional stress.

Because these responsibilities often build gradually, caregivers may not recognize how exhausted or overwhelmed they have become.



Signs of Caregiver Burnout

- ☐ Feeling constantly overwhelmed
- ☐ Increased anxiety or irritability
- ☐ Trouble sleeping or resting
- ☐ Feeling guilty no matter what you do
- ☐ Neglecting your own health needs
- ☐ Emotional exhaustion or frustration
- ☐ Difficulty balancing work and caregiving
- ☐ Family disagreements about care decisions
- ☐ Feeling isolated or unsupported
- ☐ Worrying constantly about safety or emergencies



Caregiving Often Changes Slowly

Many family caregivers gradually take on more responsibilities over time:

-  Managing appointments
-  Grocery shopping
-  Transportation
-  Medications
-  Finances
-  Household tasks
-  Emotional support

What begins as “helping out occasionally” can slowly become a full-time responsibility.



Asking for Help Is Not Failure

Needing support does not mean you are failing your loved one.

Caregiving is difficult—especially when balancing safety, independence, emotions, finances, and family dynamics.

Support systems, planning, and community resources exist to help families navigate these changes more sustainably.

“You can deeply love someone and still feel overwhelmed.”



Be kind to yourself. You're doing the best you can.



Caregivers deserve support too.

Protecting your own health and well-being is an important part of supporting someone else.



You don't have to do it all alone. There is help—and it makes a difference.



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Understanding Support Options

Support can look different for every family—and needs often change gradually over time.



More thoughtful decisions



Greater flexibility



Smoother transitions



Less pressure during emergencies

1



In-Home Support

Receive assistance while staying in the comfort of home.

- ✓ Meals & medications
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Companionship
- ✓ Personal care
- ✓ Household tasks

2



Independent Living

For active seniors who want maintenance-free living with social opportunities.

- Meals & activities
- Transportation
- Social connections
- Fewer household responsibilities

3



Assisted Living

Provides additional daily support while encouraging independence.

- Medication management
- Bathing & dressing help
- Meals & housekeeping
- Mobility support
- 24-hour staff availability

4



Memory Care

Specialized support for Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia.

- Structured routines
- Enhanced safety
- Cognitive support
- Increased supervision

5



Residential Care Homes

Smaller, home-like settings that offer personalized care and support.

- Quieter environments
- Personalized attention
- Smaller resident groups
- Additional daily support



Support Needs Often Change Over Time

A senior's needs today may look very different six months or two years from now.

Exploring options early can help families:

- ✓ Understand available resources
- ✓ Compare levels of support
- ✓ Learn about potential costs
- ✓ Plan for future needs
- ✓ Make decisions at a comfortable pace



“
Support is not
one-size-fits-all.”



The goal is not to take away independence.
The goal is to create the safest, most supportive environment possible while preserving dignity, connection, and quality of life.





What To Do Next

You don't need to have every answer today. Small steps and thoughtful conversations can make a meaningful difference over time.



Recognizing changes can feel overwhelming, but planning doesn't have to happen all at once. Start with small, intentional steps that support safety, independence, and peace of mind—for your loved one and your family.

Helpful First Steps



1

Start the Conversation

Approach conversations with compassion, patience, and curiosity. Listening is often more helpful than trying to "solve" everything immediately.



2

Focus on Immediate Safety Concerns

Pay attention to falls, medications, wandering, nutrition, driving concerns, and caregiver exhaustion.



3

Gather Important Information

Begin organizing medications, medical providers, emergency contacts, insurance information, legal documents, and financial information.



4

Learn About Available Resources

Understanding available support options early can help families make more informed and confident decisions over time.



5

Give Yourself Permission to Ask Questions

No family has all the answers immediately. Support, information, and guidance exist to help families navigate changing needs more thoughtfully.



You Don't Have to Navigate This Alone



Nevada Care Compass provides free local guidance for seniors and families throughout Northern Nevada.

We help families:



Better understand care options



Identify safety concerns



Explore local resources



Navigate senior living decisions



Plan thoughtfully as needs change



Schedule a Free Consultation

We're here to help—at no cost and with no obligation.



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