

## Personal Emergency Response Systems

When someone is frail, unsteady on their feet or experiencing memory or thinking problems, we often worry when they are home alone. There are steps between being alone and having a constant companion.

One of these options is a Personal Emergency Response System (PERS). These systems allow a person to wear a bracelet or a necklace with a button to push for assistance. This button connects wirelessly to a receiver somewhere in the home that alerts a central dispatch. This receiver is usually connected to a cellular or landline phone. The person at the PERS dispatch center communicates with the wearer, asking if s/he needs assistance.

When help IS required, or the wearer does not respond to the dispatcher's question, the dispatcher calls the person's primary responder. That primary responder is identified at the time the system is set up. It may be a family member, a next door neighbor or local 911. If the primary responder is unavailable, the dispatcher calls the backup responder. If this fails as well, the local 911 will be called.

There are some newer high tech programs that provide fall detection systems or safety camera systems that monitor and predict usual patterns of daily activity and note unexpected activities. Not everyone will be willing to participate in close and frequent observation. They MAY be willing to begin with the least invasive option if it can assure a caregiver's peace of mind and their ultimate well-being.

There are varying monthly costs and installation fees for any of these programs. There are also varying levels of remote connectivity and technical sophistication for all the programs. Call and speak to a few providers to get an idea of what they offer and what things will cost.

An additional system for someone who may wander is available from the Alzheimer's Association. It is a Medic-Alert/Safe Return bracelet. If an individual with dementia wanders and becomes lost, caregivers can call the 24/7 emergency line to report it and a community support network will be activated. GPS locators can also assist in this process.

A review of systems and a list of some national providers was completed by **Consumer Reports** in 2015. Follow this link to read it.

<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/2014/06/what-to-look-for-in-a-medical-alert-system/index.htm#>

Many local Home Care companies also have PERS programs. A Resource Specialist at SMAA (1-800-427-7411) can send you a list of local providers.