Less Restrictive Alternatives: Types of Help

Guardianship and/or conservatorship should be last resorts as they remove legal rights, and restrict independence and self-determination.

Less restrictive alternatives can include a range of strategies, from supported decision making to other formal and informal arrangements. Below are some suggestions of things to be considered to support someone's independence.

Education interventions:

- Supplementing or simplifying information with alternate forms of communication, e.g., visual aids.
- Care navigation: Support with understanding and accessing information and resources – Medicare GUIDE programs, Alzheimer's Association

In-home functional help

- Home Health service (occupational and/or physical therapist) home safety evaluation can help optimize environment
- Home modifications: ramps, stair lifts, lighting, guardrails, etc. – public funding may be available.
- Items like grab bars, shower chairs, transfer rails/poles, fall alarms, adaptive tools for eating/self-care – may be covered by insurance
- Assistive devices: day/date clocks, medisets
- Smart home tools
- Reminder services or devices (e.g. Skylight calendar system)

Help coming into the home

- Home healthcare (medical) services – may be covered by Medicare/insurance.
- In-home support for personal care, meals, medication, transportation, etc.
- Private caregivers or assistance services – maybe as supplement to other care
- Companions or friendly visitors (avoids "care" focus)
- VA supports for veterans and spouses
- Respite services for caregivers

Supports in community

These may provide: social and educational programming, meals, art and music programs, organized outings, transportation, exercise programs, etc.

- Senior centers and community centers
- Faith communities
- Dementia-friendly programs – memory cafés, tandem support groups
- Seattle/Puget Sound: MOMENTIA, Memory Hub
- Virtual villages / neighborhood networks
- Adult day health programs – PACE, VA, others
- Supportive / assisted living communities
    - Independent living with meals and some services
    - Assisted living – varying levels and types of help
    - Dementia or memory care – usually secure/locked units

Financial supports

- DPOA for finance.
- Joint accounts or authorized signers (consider legal/asset impacts).
- Automatic bill payment, or bill paying services: through bank account or specific billing account.
- Fiduciary or Daily Money Manager: a professional that manages most or all financial affairs.
- Trust, Special Needs Trust, ABLE accounts: set up with legal support.
- Representative payee for Social Security or VA Fiduciary: appointed, typically have to petition SSA, VA, etc.

Legal, logistical

- DPOA for health, finance, or both.
- Advance directives – including mental health and dementia directives.
- Protective arrangements – can be tailored to the situation.
- Legal advocate or guardian ad litem (related to court, elder abuse).
- Case management, care management, or care coordination services.
- State/local agency or department services and supports:
    - Developmental Disabilities
    - Deaf, Blind, Disabled, Veterans, or Aging
    - Vocational Rehabilitation