Unable to Ask for Help

At times individuals may be unable to make their needs known to those around them. This can be the result of the loss of his/her ability to speak because of a stroke or other medical problem, the result of a decline in brain functioning such as in certain dementias or a progressive illness such as Parkinson’s Disease. Others may be unable to seek help because of physical limitations that reduce or prevent mobility.

Loss or decline in speech:

- If he/she has retained the ability to write, provide a hard backed pad of paper with a pen attached. Consider the larger pens now available with a padded grip for ease in holding. Make sure the pen glides smoothly. Look for a thicker point and use light colored paper, rather than white, to reduce glare.

- Make sure that regular appointments are made to check hearing and vision.

- Use picture cards to communicate needs – telephone, toilet, drink, food, hot, cold, happy, sad…(Make your own or look in teaching supply stores for things that might be adaptable.)

- The individual may be able to use a computer or a telephone designed for those who have speech or hearing problems. Talk to the telephone company and ask about available options.

- Use a personal monitoring service that provides for an alarm that can be worn and activated when there is an emergency to call a number for help.

- Provide a bell to alert others in the house that there is a need.

- Install simple buzzers in areas prone to accidents –bathroom, kitchen, garage, and basement…

- Use medical alert jewelry in the event he/she is away or the caregiver becomes incapacitated.

Dementia and other brain diseases

- When problems start, schedule frequent monitoring of his/her well being.

- Use community assistance to monitor an individual – postal workers, newspaper delivery persons, meals on wheel volunteers and others offer monitoring programs.

- Make sure fire and smoke alarms are functioning. Consider those with both audio and visual alerts.

- As a disease progresses, he/she may require 24-hour supervision if problem solving abilities decline.

- Ask simple, easy to answer questions. “Would you like a drink?” “Are you in pain?”

- Consider using monitors (such as those designed for infants) placed in frequently used rooms – bedroom, bathroom. Some transmit sound and others incorporate video.

- Monitor food and fluid intake, medications, weight, skin condition, bowel and bladder functioning to identify problems when they are starting rather than when it becomes an emergency.

- Use medical alert jewelry in the event he/she is away or the caregiver becomes incapacitated.