

Seniors need some TLC, too

Gillian Shaw, Vancouver Sun

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Squeezed by needs of aging parents and growing children, today's sandwich generation is starting to outsource management of elder care.

Whether it's getting grandma to the doctor, planning a downsizing move, hiring in help or making sure medications are on track, many people either lack the expertise or the availability to do tasks once considered the domain of the extended family.



Peter Silin, of Diamond Geriatrics, with Alison Bell, whose mother lives in Vancouver while she spends most of her time in Alaska.

Glenn Baglo, Vancouver Sun

"People may be out of town, they may be too busy or they may not have the expertise," said Peter Silin, whose company Diamond Geriatrics (diamondgeriatrics.com) offers elder care management, counselling and consulting for the elderly, their caregivers and businesses.

"You can hire someone and that's what I do. What it does is it gives you peace of mind and it can help you let go of some of the feelings of guilt."

Demand for such services is growing fast among aging baby boomers looking for eldercare benefits at work as they once welcomed help from their employers for childcare needs.

Among Silin's clients is a Vancouver law firm whose partners get up to \$500 a year in his services, as part of an extended benefits package much the way they would get money for glasses or physiotherapy.

While some outsourcing benefits provided by employers, like the personal assistance service of Thirsty Muse (thirstymuse.com) offered by Telus and other companies would be considered a taxable benefit, Silin is a registered social worker and his counseling is a medical benefit.

"One of the big issues that comes out is the sandwich generation challenge," Ric Wilson, vice-president, Dehoney Financial Insurance and Administration Services said of the discussion his company engaged in with the law firm when it was working on its employee benefits package. "In reviewing the work-life balance for each of the partners, one of the things that came up as a challenge for them was managing the issue of their aging parents.

"That led to a discussion involving bringing in Peter's services to reduce the stress and worry of managing that personal issue for each of them."

Dehoney said the partners also get the advantage of having an expert who can navigate through the system to help their parents and get more effective results than they might get on their own.

The benefit allows for \$50 per visit to a maximum of \$500 in a calendar year, covered under extended health.

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