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## **Intrafamily care still works today**

Intrafamily care was common in the United States several generations ago. Now there are indicators that many baby boomers are inviting their parents to move in with them, renovating their homes to make room for their aging parents. A recent article in USA Today ("When mom (or dad) moves in" by Marco R della Cava, May 15, 2006) reports on the growing trend for adult children to renovate or add on to their existing homes to accommodate mom or dad. With the rising costs of nursing home care, children are reverting to the "old ways" of multigenerational living, giving the children both peace of mind regarding the parent's care, and reducing many of the stresses related to long distance caregiving. Additionally, the children have the assurance of senior-suitable housing when *they* need it.

Mr. della Cava's article points out many of the advantages and success stories related to inviting a parent or grandparent to move into the family homestead. A 2004 study by the AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving shows that 34 million people are looking after someone 50 or older. Of those, nearly 9 million are living with the person they care for. Some of the latter group resides in the parents' or grandparents' home. But more and more children have moved a distance away from their childhood homes, and have established a life in the new community. It seems logical to have the parent move in with them.

A recent article in Elder Law Answers ([www.elderlawanswers.com](http://www.elderlawanswers.com)) cautions both parties to prepare for the move. The move will be a big adjustment for everyone. Mom may resist leaving her home, and friends, and the familiar to move to an entirely new community where she may be more dependent. Preparation can make the process easier.

Some things to think about include working out the financial details first. Will siblings help? How much can the parent afford to contribute? If the parent provides funds for the renovations, how will that affect the inheritance of any siblings? Details of the financial arrangements should be ironed out prior to starting any renovations, or moving mom and dad. Possible tax deductions should be investigated

Making the home senior friendly is very important. It is important to consider the whole family and how to make the parent or parents feel independent but still part of the family. Separate living quarters can go a long way to furthering the senior's independence. The AARP designed a course for contractors that is overseen by the National Association of Home Builders. The three-day Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist program is one of the fastest growing courses offered. Small items such as levers to replace door knobs and grab bars in the bathroom are recommended. Making sure rugs are non-slip and widening doorways for wheelchair access might be necessary. Careful thought should be given to living space so that everyone is comfortable.

It is important, too, that the family caregivers receive the help and support that they need. Home health care workers, respite care, adult day care, and meals programs are all possible sources of assistance. The AARP publishes a book called "How to Care for Aging Parents" which offers many helpful ideas and resources. Other books, and on-line resources, are also available.

Choosing to care for an aging relative can be a wonderful, mutually satisfying decision. It can be rooted in the simple fact that families take care of one another. If you are fortunate enough to have the resources to care for an aging relative, and the relative is not so ill that such care is possible, with good preparation and clear vision, the intergenerational family can still work today.