

Why This Book Exists

Every organization involved in someone's care is built to solve one bounded problem. A doctor's office keeps a patient panel seen. An agency puts a trained person in a house on a schedule. An attorney answers who is allowed to decide what. Each of them is good at its job, and each of them stops.

What is left over when all of them have stopped is the part nobody was assigned. Whether the medication list is right. Whether the substitute knows about three o'clock. Whether recovery is actually happening. Whether the person at the center of all this is having a good life, most days, inside whatever they are now living with.

That leftover part has a name. In a few technical fields it is called a residual: whatever remains once a process has done everything it was built to do. In a family, it does not have a name. It has a person. Usually whoever was closest, showing up the most, noticing first.

This book will not make that job smaller. Nothing does. What it does is make the job visible, so that the person holding it is holding it on purpose rather than by exhaustion, and so that the rest of the family can see what they are holding.

Use what you need. Ignore the rest. Photocopy anything. Nothing in here has to be done in order, and no family has ever needed all of it at once. The pages most families use week after week appear several times, so there is room to keep going.

Start Here If

Nothing in this book has to be read in order. Find the row that sounds like your week and start there.

You just got a diagnosis and nobody told you what happens next

What a Good Day Looks Like, Family Care Notebook, Legal Readiness

They come home from the hospital tomorrow

Discharge Day, Medication Reconciliation, Emergency Information

You are about to call an agency for the first time

The First Phone Call, Hiring In-Home Help

A stranger is about to spend a day in the house

What a Good Day Looks Like, The Next-of-Kin Box

You are the one doing everything and nobody has said so out loud

Who Owns Continuity?, Dividing the Work, What This Is Costing You

The family is meeting and you do not want it to end in nothing

Dividing the Work, Family Meeting and Decision Log

You cannot remember whether this started three months ago or a year ago

Observation Log, Family Care Notebook

Someone said the word memory care and the room went quiet

Housing Decision Worksheet, Care Continuum at a Glance

You do not know what any of this is going to cost

Financial Readiness, Paying for Care

Nobody can find the power of attorney

Document Locator, Essential Documents, Legal Readiness

You have not had a day off in four months

Getting a Week Off, Primary Caregiver Backup Plan

They keep asking to go home, and they are home

When They Ask to Go Home

You want to know what you are actually dealing with

System Maps, Map Your Own Arrangement, What This Organization Owns