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San Francisco's Institute on Aging Announces Companioa – Exclusive 360-Degree Care Program for Those Living with Dementia and their Caregivers

SAN FRANCISCO, January 14, 2021 — [Institute on Aging](#), one of California's largest nonprofits dedicated to health and community programs for older adults and adults living with disabilities, today announced [Companioa](#), the Bay Area's only fully coordinated comprehensive support and guidance system for older adults living with dementia and their caregivers. Companioa is the first stage of Institute on Aging's larger dementia strategy. This first step is designed to take dementia care to a whole new level by offering a deeper understanding of the disease and giving those involved the resources they need to manage it.

The Bay Area has one of the state's fastest growing populations in terms of older adults diagnosed with dementia, impacting one in every two adults 85 and older (source: San Francisco Dept. of Aging and Adult Services). However, it's common to see diagnoses in adults much younger than 85.

"We consider dementia *the* defining health crisis of this era, said Tom Briody, President and CEO of Institute on Aging. "Until now, there has been no end-to-end support program in the Bay Area to help those with dementia and their caregivers navigate this very challenging disease. As an innovative organization, it's Institute on Aging's responsibility to provide that support."

Why is Companioa So Needed?

Nearly 20% of residents in San Francisco are 65 and older, which is higher than the national average of 16.5%. As this segment of the population ages, so will the number of dementia diagnoses. According to the [Dementia Friendly America](#) formula, it is estimated 12,000 San Franciscans who are 65 or older already have some form of dementia today. Nationally, this number of Americans identified as having Alzheimer's is expected to swell from 5.7 million in 2020 to 14 million by 2050.

Dementia has a ripple effect on not only those diagnosed, but those in the care circle. Family caregivers now encompass more than one in five Americans, [according to a 2020 study](#) by the National Alliance of Caregivers and AARP that found an increase of 9.5 million more caregivers in the last five years.

The majority of these unpaid caregivers do not have the knowledge of best care practices for dementia. Adding to this is the fact that caring for someone with dementia day-in and day-out is an emotional rollercoaster, resulting in caregivers often feeling alone, burnt out or overwhelmed.

“More and more family members are finding themselves unexpectedly thrust into the caregiver role and thoroughly unprepared for the challenge,” added Briody. “Companioa offers them the resources, education and advice they need, all in a single place so they know exactly where to turn for help. We're their companion on this journey.”

How It Works

Companioa matches each individual with dementia and their caregiver with a professionally trained and certified Care Coach, who provides psychological support and actionable strategies to help the caregiver navigate the system and provide the best care. Care Coaches are available to their families 5 days a week, 12 hours a day, via phone, email or video chat. Care Coaches are certified by [CARES](#), a program endorsed by the Alzheimer's Association and other organizations.

Companioa also provides each caregiver with:

- A customized care plan created and guided by the Care Coach which addresses individual needs and is based on an initial in-home consultation. Twice a month, the Care Coach reviews the plan with the caregiver, discusses any changes and makes revisions accordingly.
- Full access to ongoing learning and enrichment with online educational seminars on a variety of topics in the dementia space, in order to better connect the caregiver with wide range of helpful resources.
- Peer support with Care Circles — a weekly, virtual meet-up group with others on a similar journey. The groups are led by a professional and designed to enable caregivers to share, connect and learn with others in comparable situations.

Pricing for Companioa starts at \$250 per month. In some cases, long term care insurance may cover part or all of the cost, depending on the health insurance provider.

Additional offerings, such as home care assistance, social day services through IOA's Enrichment Center and specialized services can be added to the Companioa plan for an incremental cost.

“No one is handed a road map when they become a caregiver for a loved one with dementia,” said Alison Moritz, Program Director for Institute on Aging's Enrichment Center, who interacts with adults with dementia and their caregivers on a daily basis. “It's a very bumpy ride, full of unknowns. Companioa establishes a whole new culture, one that is based on a supportive community full of resources and security, to guide them along the way.”

About Institute on Aging

Founded in 1973, Institute on Aging (IOA) is one of California's largest community-based nonprofit organizations providing comprehensive health, social, and psychological services for older adults and adults living with disabilities. IOA's mission is to enhance the quality of life for adults as they age, by enabling them to maintain their

health, well-being, independence, and participation in the community. Long considered one of the most innovative and diverse organizations of its kind, Institute on Aging annually touches the lives of more than 20,000 older adults and adults with living disabilities and their families each year through programs designed to alleviate isolation and enable seniors to continue living independently in the community. Learn more at www.ioaging.org.

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