

# The 24-Hour Backup Test

*A practical stress test: Could another responsible person step in tomorrow?*

Imagine that the usual caregiver unexpectedly cannot provide care for the next 24 hours. Could another responsible person find what they need, understand the essential routine, and keep the day moving safely and respectfully?

## TEST THE SYSTEM - NOT THE CAREGIVER

The purpose is not to judge anyone or predict a crisis. It is to find information, access, routines, or responsibilities that currently depend on one person. A gap found during a calm test is a gap that can be fixed before it becomes urgent.

## HOW TO USE THIS TEST

Choose the person who would most likely step in. If possible, have that person work through the test with you. Do not simply tell them the answers. Ask whether they could actually find the information, supplies, contacts, and instructions they would need.

- ☐ Use an ordinary 24-hour period as the test day.
- ☐ Walk through the day from morning to bedtime and overnight needs.
- ☐ Mark READY only when the backup could realistically handle or locate the item.
- ☐ Mark GAP when something is missing, unclear, outdated, inaccessible, or known only by the usual caregiver.
- ☐ Record what needs to be fixed and who will fix it.

## IMPORTANT

This worksheet does not replace professional medical instructions, emergency plans, legal documents, or authorization requirements. A backup caregiver does not automatically have authority to make healthcare, financial, or other decisions.

**Test date:**

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**Person receiving care / preferred name:**

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**Usual caregiver:**

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**Person taking the test as backup:**

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## Step 1 - Can the Backup Get Started?

Start as though the usual caregiver is suddenly unavailable. Could the backup begin without calling that caregiver for every answer?

| Could the backup find or do this? | READY / GAP | What is missing or unclear? |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Home / facility access            |             |                             |
| Current care information          |             |                             |
| Emergency contacts                |             |                             |
| Healthcare contacts               |             |                             |
| Current medication list           |             |                             |
| Pharmacy contact                  |             |                             |
| Calendar / today's schedule       |             |                             |
| Essential supplies                |             |                             |
| Keys / transportation plan        |             |                             |

### DO NOT PUT SECURITY CODES OR PASSWORDS HERE

Record where authorized access instructions are securely kept rather than copying alarm codes, PINs, passwords, or other sensitive credentials onto this worksheet.

**The first thing that would stop or delay the backup:**

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**What needs to change:**

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## Step 2 - Walk Through the Day

Move through an ordinary day. The backup should be able to understand what happens, what help is needed, and where instructions or supplies are kept.

| Part of the Day         | READY / GAP | What would the backup need to know or find? |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Morning / getting up    |             |                                             |
| Breakfast / hydration   |             |                                             |
| Morning medications     |             |                                             |
| Bathing / personal care |             |                                             |
| Dressing                |             |                                             |
| Mobility / transfers    |             |                                             |
| Midday / lunch          |             |                                             |
| Afternoon routine       |             |                                             |
| Evening medications     |             |                                             |
| Dinner / hydration      |             |                                             |
| Bedtime routine         |             |                                             |
| Overnight needs         |             |                                             |

**One routine that is obvious to the usual caregiver but not to anyone else:**

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## Step 3 - Assistance, Communication & Safety

A backup should know not only what needs to be done, but also how much assistance is normally provided and what matters to the person receiving care.

| Area                   | READY / GAP | What the backup needs to understand |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| Walking / mobility     |             |                                     |
| Transfers              |             |                                     |
| Toileting              |             |                                     |
| Eating / drinking      |             |                                     |
| Communication          |             |                                     |
| Memory / reminders     |             |                                     |
| Supervision            |             |                                     |
| Hearing / vision needs |             |                                     |
| Equipment use          |             |                                     |
| Important preferences  |             |                                     |
| Known safety concern   |             |                                     |

**Something a new helper might accidentally do for the person that the person can still do independently:**

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## Step 4 - Medications, Treatments & Equipment

The test is whether the backup can follow the person's existing plan and locate current instructions - not whether the backup can make treatment decisions.

| Item                                  | READY / GAP | Where are current instructions / what is missing? |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Current medication list               |             |                                                   |
| Medication schedule / assistance      |             |                                                   |
| As-needed medicine instructions       |             |                                                   |
| Allergy / reaction information        |             |                                                   |
| Current treatments                    |             |                                                   |
| Home-health / therapy services        |             |                                                   |
| Medical equipment                     |             |                                                   |
| Equipment supplier / support          |             |                                                   |
| Power / oxygen / refrigeration backup |             |                                                   |
| Necessary care supplies               |             |                                                   |

### IF SOMETHING DOES NOT MATCH

The backup should know whom to contact when medication, treatment, equipment, or written instructions are unclear or conflicting. Do not invent a workaround for medically important equipment or treatment.

**Who should the backup contact with a medication or treatment question?**

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**Who should the backup contact about equipment or supplies?**

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## Step 5 - Today's Commitments & What Could Change

Care can fail even when the daily routine is understood if the backup does not know what is scheduled or what has recently changed.

| Commitment / Change            | READY / GAP | What does the backup need to know? |
|--------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|
| Appointment / procedure        |             |                                    |
| Home-health / therapy visit    |             |                                    |
| Medication or supply refill    |             |                                    |
| Transportation                 |             |                                    |
| Meal / grocery need            |             |                                    |
| Recent care-plan change        |             |                                    |
| Question awaiting follow-up    |             |                                    |
| Time-sensitive task            |             |                                    |
| Pet / household responsibility |             |                                    |

**What has changed recently that an older written plan might not show?**

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**What is most likely to be forgotten during a handoff?**

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## Step 6 - What Happens If the First Plan Fails?

A useful backup plan needs another layer. A person may become unavailable, transportation may fall through, equipment may stop working, or a service may not arrive.

| If This Happens...                           | Is There a Plan B? | Backup / Contact / Next Step |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| First backup caregiver unavailable           |                    |                              |
| Transportation unavailable                   |                    |                              |
| Pharmacy / medication supply problem         |                    |                              |
| Home-health or other service does not arrive |                    |                              |
| Essential equipment problem                  |                    |                              |
| Power / utility interruption                 |                    |                              |
| Food / essential supply problem              |                    |                              |
| Unable to reach usual healthcare contact     |                    |                              |

### USE ESTABLISHED BACKUP PROCEDURES

For medically important equipment, oxygen, utilities, medications, or services, use backup procedures provided by the appropriate professional, supplier, agency, or local authority rather than creating an improvised solution.

**The weakest dependency in the care arrangement right now:**

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**What would make it less dependent on one person or one service?**

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## Step 7 - Score the System & Fix the Gaps

This is not a score of the caregiver or the person receiving care. It is a simple readiness check for the care system.

### OVERALL RESULT

- ☐ **READY** - Another responsible person could probably manage the next 24 hours using the information and support already in place.
- ☐ **PARTLY READY** - The basic plan works, but several gaps should be corrected.
- ☐ **NOT READY YET** - Too much essential information, access, or responsibility still depends on one person.

| Gap Found | What Will Fix It? | Who Will Do It? | Target Date |
|-----------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|
|           |                   |                 |             |
|           |                   |                 |             |
|           |                   |                 |             |
|           |                   |                 |             |
|           |                   |                 |             |
|           |                   |                 |             |

**The single most important gap to fix first:**

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### WHEN TO RETEST

Retest after a hospitalization, significant medication or treatment change, new equipment, change in mobility or supervision, move, new service, change in the backup person, or whenever the current plan no longer reflects the care being provided.

Next test date: \_\_\_\_\_ Plan last updated: \_\_\_\_\_