Family caregiving: Essential to Minnesota’s long-term services and supports system

Families, friends and neighbors provide the majority of long-term services and supports (LTSS) needed by older Minnesotans. The dollar value of the care provided by families and friends is estimated at $7.9 billion per year, exceeding Minnesota's Medicaid expenditures for nursing homes and LTSS.

Sustaining informal caregiving is essential not only to lessen public costs for LTSS, especially as baby boomers age, but also to reduce the impact of Minnesota’s projected workforce shortage. It is predicted that Minnesota will be short about 60,000 direct care and support workers in the next few years.

Caregiving can be rewarding yet challenging. It can provide satisfaction, personal growth and increased meaning and purpose in one’s life. Caregiving can also take a physical, emotional and financial toll on the caregiver. This includes higher levels of stress and poorer health than the population at large. Caregiving is also becoming more complex. In a recent survey, 46 percent of families reported performing medical and nursing tasks, such as wound care and giving injections, with little or no training.

Who is caregiving?

- The typical caregiving family member or friend is a 49-year-old female who is employed and most often caring for a parent with a long-term physical condition. She spends an average of 24 hours per week providing care. Men also participate in caregiving, providing about 40 percent of the care needed.
- People of all races, ethnicities, lifestyles and income levels are caregiving.

What kind of help is available for caregiving families?

- Information about other available services and supports, both for caregivers and the people they care for
- Help finding and getting support
- Training, education, caregiver consultant services, and support groups to help in making decisions and solving problems related to caregiving
- Options for getting a break or relief from caregiving, including respite care, in-home and out-of-home care, adult day services, companion services and assistive technology
- Local support for family and friends’ caregiving is growing through collaborative efforts of Area Agencies on Aging, counties, health plans, local government agencies, non-profit service providers, Living at Home Networks, congregational nurses, tribal agencies and others.
- Family caregiving services are also included in Minnesota’s home and community-based waiver programs and the Alternative Care (AC) program. Eligibility for caregiving services varies by program.

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What resources are invested in families who are caregiving?

In 2016, about $3.9 million was invested in supporting Minnesotans who are caregiving. This includes:

- $2.07 million in federal Title III-E Older Americans Act funds
- $579,000 in state respite
- $750,000 in Minnesota Board on Aging dementia grants
- $511,000 through the Elderly Waiver (EW) and AC programs.

Another $36 million was spent on adult day services through the EW and AC programs.

How many caregivers are being served?

In 2016, Minnesota provided caregiver support services to 26,950 family caregivers of older adults through federal and state aging grant funds. This includes 9,300 duplicated persons through federal Title III-E grants, 3,350 through state respite and dementia grants, 5,300 through home and community-based waiver services and 9,000 through the Senior LinkAge Line.

What outcomes do customers report?

In 2016, family and friends were surveyed on the quality of the caregiver services provided through Title III-E of the Older Americans Act administered by the Minnesota Board on Aging through Area Agencies on Aging. People completing the survey reported that the caregiving services they received:

- Helped them to cope better (98 percent)
- Improved their ability to provide care (95 percent)
- Will help them provide care longer (95 percent).

More information about supporting family caregiving is available from:

- Minnesota Board on Aging
- MinnesotaHelp.info
- Caregiving Link.org
- Family Caregiver Alliance
- National Alliance for Caregiving
- Veterans Caregiver Support

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