

Caregiver Wellness and the Honor in Caregivers Asking for Help[®]

Research Report | November 2020



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Acknowledgments

Caregiver Support Services would like to extend a sincere thank you to our summit speakers, sponsors, advocates, and attendees for their contributions to a successful Caregiver Wellness Summit in Omaha, Nebraska on November 15-16, 2018. The Summit brought together key stakeholders across a broad range of community and business sectors including policy-makers, community leaders, business leaders, governmental program advocates, researchers, spiritual leaders, military veterans, home care aides, nursing assistants, and family caregivers.

About Caregiver Support Services



We are Caregiver Support Services, a company that focuses on family and frontline caregivers. Our mission is to help people become great caregivers for the people and patients around them. It takes a team of people to help others and find solutions for the betterment of the community. We know that health can sometimes be stressful, but with the right support system and focused knowledge, offering care to those in need can be a rewarding experience.

Through our in-person Nursing Assistant and Medication Aide Program, we have trained over 2,000 caregivers. As we work to improve and enhance our company to help caregivers from all over the world, our trainings are now available online. We wish to see people learn and grow as caregivers, reaching new levels of quality care for all patients in need.

With Caregiver Support Services, no caregiver is ever alone in their journey to assist. We work with national organizations to create the best solutions for everyone. Taking care of people in their time of need is a calling of the highest honor. Caregivers are blessings to our health system, and they deserve the right learning aids to nurture confidence for their caregiving situation. With our resources, caregivers can find the answers they seek to help loved ones and patients throughout their caregiving journey.

The research was conducted by Eboni Green PhD, RN. The writing of the report was a collaborative effort as noted below:

Eboni I. Green RN, PhD
Author

Terrence A. Green MBA, CSA
Editor

Abstract. Caregivers manage the physical, emotional, spiritual, and practical needs of a loved one or client while managing their own lives, needs, families, and careers. Providing care for a loved one or client can result in chronic stress and compromise the caregiver’s physical-psychological health. Additionally, most caregivers are doing double duty, and as a result, are at an increased risk for adverse physical and emotional health outcomes. In fact, burnout is a major threat for caregivers. This research report is important because the recruitment of quality frontline professional caregivers is one of the most pressing global issues. Data input for this research is from caregivers who took part in an interactive workshop called “Why We Care, Why We Stay, Why We Leave” facilitated by Dr. Eboni Green.



This research report aims to synthesize the challenges caregivers face in achieving optimum wellness and determine how providers can assist caregivers in accessing the proper supports needed while caring for a loved one or client. Health, social relationships, emotional wellness, pay, and quality of life are areas that require immediate changes. Researchers in nursing, health care administration, and social work need to develop and test interventions designed to maintain and enhance the health and pay of family and frontline caregivers. This research report also provides brilliant suggestions on how an ideal caregiver-friendly health care system should function.

Contents

INTRODUCTION	6
BACKGROUND	7
WHY DO CAREGIVERS NEED SUPPORT?	8
OVERVIEW	8
EMPOWERMENT AND RESILIENCE	9
Family and Frontline Caregivers	9
SPIRITUAL WELLNESS	10
Family and Frontline Caregivers	10
BARRIERS ASSOCIATED WITH ACHIEVING OPTIMUM CAREGIVER WELLNESS	10
Impact on Physical Health	10
<i>Family Caregivers</i>	10
<i>Frontline Caregivers</i>	11
Impact on Social Relationships	11
<i>Family Caregivers</i>	11
<i>Frontline Caregivers</i>	11
Impact on Work	11
<i>Family Caregivers</i>	11
<i>Frontline Caregivers</i>	12
Impact on Finances	12
<i>Family Caregivers</i>	12
<i>Frontline Caregivers</i>	12
Emotional Impact	12
<i>Family Caregivers</i>	12
<i>Frontline Caregivers</i>	12
Intellectual Impact	13
<i>Family and Frontline Caregivers</i>	13
DISRUPTING CAREGIVING SURVEY	13
Results of the Survey	14
<i>Put Family Caregivers in Charge</i>	16
<i>Educate Caregivers about Self-Care</i>	16
<i>Train and Pay for Frontline Caregivers</i>	16
<i>Paid Time Off for Caregivers</i>	16
<i>Knowledgeable, Patient, and Understanding Caregivers</i>	17
<i>Caregiver Wellness</i>	17
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?	17
Provide a Paid Family Leave Benefit for All Caregivers	18
Living Wages and Support for Frontline Caregivers	18
Improve Access to Caregiver Training	18
Implementing Tools and Providing Resources That Enhance Caregiver Wellness	19
Teaching Patience and Kindness	19
SUMMARY	19
BIBLIOGRAPHY	20

Introduction

Caregivers often provide primary care for a loved one or client who has a chronic medical condition. Many caregivers assist a loved one or client in preparing food, taking medicine, bathing, and dressing. Caregiving tasks can be paid or unpaid. Paid assistance is provided by professionals who work in a health care facility or a patient's home, while unpaid caregiving involves offering assistance to friends or family members at no charge.¹ Family caregiving is the most common caregiving type, with approximately 17.7 million Americans caring for their aged family member.² Research suggests that caregivers are often ill prepared for their role and provide care with little or no support, yet more than one-third of caregivers continue to provide intense care to others while suffering from poor health themselves.³ Studies also suggest that an influential factor in a caregiver's decision to place a loved one in a long-term care facility is a real or perceived burden.⁴

”

“Some of the most important people are also the most invisible. If I were creating a list of unsung heroes and heroines—caregivers would be at the top of the list.”

Sister Norita Cooney⁵



Family and frontline caregivers frequently care for the aging, children with special needs, or ill family members or friends with little or no training. These relationships, both familial and paid, are generally based on the mutuality of the relationship. For example, the caregiver's desire to assist others is reinforced by the positive feelings of helping someone in need. However, positive feelings alone will not draw enough caregivers to care for elders and other vulnerable populations. Soon there will be significantly fewer family and frontline caregivers from which to draw. Therefore, the role of family caregivers has become increasingly important, as is the recruitment of quality frontline professional caregivers.

¹ Hewko et al., “Invisible No More.”

² Pfende, “Caregiver Statistics Broken Down.”

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Caregiving for Family and Friends.”

⁴ Koopman et al., “Factors Associated with Caregiver Burden.”

⁵ Green, Caregiving in the New Millennium.