Family Caregivers In South Carolina Provide Care Valued At $7.4 Billion

Over 770,000 family caregivers in South Carolina provide 737 million hours of ‘free’ services to their chronically ill, disabled, or frail elderly loved ones each year. If their services had to be replaced by care workers paid $10.04 per hour, the cost would be almost $7.4 billion each year.

Impact of Caregiving

- Unpaid family caregivers provide 80% of all long term care in the U.S.
- Family caregivers are at higher risk for stress, depression physical and financial problems and increased mortality. These problems may impede their ability to give care now and support their own care needs in the future.
- The caregiver’s own physical health is an influential factor in the decision to place an impaired relative in a long term care facility.
- The average caregiver foregoes $659,139 in salary, and retirement benefits over the course of a lifetime.
- U.S. businesses lose $11 to $29 billion per year due to decreased productivity by stressed working caregivers and replacement costs when employees resign to become full-time caregivers.
- Most caregivers are ill-prepared for their role and receive little or no support.

Respite, Counseling & Support Are Shown to Reduce Costs

- Respite decreases the risk to caregivers, reduces the risk of acute hospital admissions, and helps prevent or delay costly placements in assisted living facilities or nursing homes.
- Counseling and support improve health outcomes and extend caregiving.

South Carolina Family Caregiver Support Program – A Statewide Consumer-Directed Model

South Carolina’s model builds on current research and best practice to provide a statewide infrastructure to support family caregivers who are the backbone of our long-term care system in SC.

Family Caregiver Support Services

Administered locally by the 10 Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), each AAA has a full-time Family Caregiver Advocate who works directly with family caregivers, providing:

- Information & Assistance in accessing existing community services
- Support & Counseling, and
- Caregiver Training

Eligible caregivers may also obtain a mini-grant or budget to purchase the following services from the provider of their choice:

- Respite (A short break from caregiving)
- Supplemental Services

Caregivers either purchase the agreed upon services and receive reimbursement through the FCSP or they may access services through vouchers.

Target Populations

- Unpaid adults caring for a frail or disabled adult (60 or older)
- Unpaid adults caring for someone with Alzheimer’s disease
- Grandparents or relative caregivers (55 or older) raising a child 18 or younger
- Grandparents (55 or older) caring for a disabled adult (19-59 years)

Accomplishments – Fiscal Year 2012

Regional Family Caregiver Advocates worked one-on-one with caregivers, providing counseling, support, and help in gaining access to available community services. Many more caregivers received caregiver information.

Consumer choice – Eligible caregivers receiving a mini-grant were able to purchase services from the provider of their choice or arrange for a neighbor or family member to provide in-home respite. The average respite grant was $460.

2089 caregivers purchased 127,209 hours of respite. Making careful choices the average caregiver was able to purchase 61 hours of respite at an average cost of $7.73 per hour.

Many family caregivers also participated in caregiver training programs, counseling and support sessions.