

If your state has a promising practice to add to this list, please reach out to NoWrongDoor@ACL.hhs.gov.

As of data collected in 2019, more than 1 in 5 Americans serve as caregivers.¹ Of those caring for an adult, almost 90 percent are family caregivers.² Caregiving affects many parts of individuals' lives, posing challenges to financial situations, other priorities, and mental and physical health. Twenty-one percent of caregivers reported their health as fair or poor, compared to only 12 percent of the general population, and nearly 25 percent of caregivers feel that providing care has made their health worse.³

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates the strains on caregivers. Over half of current caregivers would not have identified as caregivers before the pandemic, and 1 in 4 unpaid caregivers report feeling more stress trying to balance work and family due to COVID-19.⁴ CARES Act ADRC grantees have also documented increased challenges for caregivers, including gaps in childcare, need for PPE, and burnout risk.⁵

This document highlights some of the strategies states have continued or implemented during the pandemic to support caregivers.

Proactive Wellness Check-Ins and Counseling for Caregivers



Wisconsin includes caregivers among the group of individuals prioritized for proactive check-in calls. Several other states, including Colorado and New Hampshire, are also reaching out to family caregivers to assess the pandemic's impact and better understand families' needs.



Indiana uses a caregiver assessment to assess caregivers' health (physical and mental) and needs. Several states, such as Washington, use an evidence-based assessment to measure family caregivers' risk for burnout and provide tailored solutions. Among other states, Massachusetts is providing support and offering counseling services to caregivers virtually.

Respite

Innovative Methods for Offering Respite Virtually

Because in-person respite programs are not always available due to COVID-19, Colorado sites have developed virtual respite programming. Through these programs, caregivers receive packets with resources and stress-relieving techniques and activities; care recipients receive activity kits and participate in virtual activities such as games or simple crafts via Zoom.

Policy Changes

Prior to the pandemic, Lifespan Respite Grant (LRG) providers were required to be center-based programs or individuals living outside the home. Due to the pandemic, Oklahoma's LRG program allows family caregivers to hire other adults living within the home to provide respite care. This policy change allows caregivers to receive respite while also minimizing potential COVID-19 spread to/from others outside the home.

Similarly, Wisconsin adjusted its family caregiver support policy to allow primary caregivers and relatives to receive stipends when respite providers are not available or safe due to COVID-19. Wisconsin also waived the 112-hour annual limit for NFCSF to allow caregivers as much respite as needed through the end of 2021.

Virtual Caregiver Programs and Support Groups

Several states have hosted a virtual evidence-based program called "[Powerful Tools for Caregivers](#)", which helps caregivers strengthen skills to take care of themselves while caring for someone else. New Hampshire offered a series called "Supporting Caregivers during COVID", which teaches caregivers self-care strategies. Wisconsin compiled an [online list of all virtual caregiver events in the state](#). Another resource is [Best Practice Caregiving](#), an online, searchable database of evidence-based programs for caregivers with dementia.



New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Wisconsin are employing a caregiver eLearning program to expand and enhance caregiver training opportunities and access to community services and resources.

The statewide system will assist caregivers to expand their knowledge and confidence through focused self-paced, skill-based modules.

Backup Caregivers

The Maryland Department of Aging developed a statewide [Caregiver Services Corps \(CSC\)](#), a network of volunteers who provide immediate, temporary in-home assistance for older adults who have gaps in caregiver assistance related to COVID-19. Individuals who request support from the CSC may also be referred for additional resources, as appropriate.



Southwest Vermont Council on Aging (SVCOA) also developed a caregiver registry to help connect individuals with caregivers. The registry includes information about vetted, professional caregivers, such as their availability, geographic area, and services provided. This resource helps address caregiver shortages caused by caregiving agency staffing challenges and helps families make more informed, person-centered choices about care.

References

^{1,2,3} AARP, National Alliance for Caregiving. *Caregiving in the U.S. 2020*. 14 May 2020. PDF. Retrieved from <https://www.aarp.org/ppi/info-2020/caregiving-in-the-united-states.html>

⁴ Blue Cross Blue Shield. *The Impact of Caregiving on Mental and Physical Health*. 09 Sept 2020. Retrieved from https://www.bcbs.com/sites/default/files/file-attachments/health-of-america-report/HOA-Caregivers_3.pdf

⁵ Grantee Rapid Assessments and Semi-Annual Reports submitted to the Administration for Community Living.