# National Family Caregiver Support Program

## BACKGROUND

Families—not social service agencies, nursing homes, or government programs—are the primary providers of long-term care for older and disabled persons in the United States. More than 44 million persons are informal caregivers, providing unpaid help to older adults living in the community and have at least one limitation on their activities of daily living. These caregivers include spouses, adult children and other relatives and friends.

The degree of caregiver involvement has remained fairly constant for more than a decade, bearing witness to the remarkable resilience of the American family in taking care of its older persons. This is despite increased geographic separation, greater numbers of women in the workforce and other changes in family life.

Family caregiving has been a budget-saver to governments faced with the challenge of covering the health and long-term care expenses of persons who are ill and have chronic disabilities. The economic value of our Nation's family and informal caregivers has been estimated at $450 billion annually.

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The enactment of the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2000 established the National Family Caregiver Support Program. The program calls for all States, working in partnership with Area Agencies on Aging and local community-service providers, to have five basic services for family caregivers.

These services include:

- Information to caregivers about available services
- Assistance to caregivers in gaining access to services
- Individual counseling, organization of support groups, and caregiver training to assist the caregivers in making decisions and solving problems relating to their caregiving roles
- Respite care to enable caregivers to be temporarily relieved from their caregiving responsibilities
- Supplemental services, on a limited basis, to complement the care provided by family caregivers

Currently funded at $162 million including the Native American Caregiver Support Program, this program has served more than 750,000 caregivers. Implementation of the National Family Caregiver Support Program has resulted in new partnerships, improved access to services, and outreach to special populations, and provision of services to respond to the unique needs of families.

**Eligible Populations**

Those eligible for the program include:

- Family caregivers of older adults, age 60 years or older
- Caregivers of a person with Alzheimer's disease or a related disorder (regardless of age)
- Grandparents and relative caregivers, age 55 years or older, of children no older than age 18
- Relative caregivers, age 55 years or older, of a disabled adult 19-59 years of age (not including natural or adoptive parents)

The statute requires States to give priority consideration to:

- Persons in the greatest social and economic need, with particular attention to low-income individuals
- Older individuals providing care and support to persons with severe disabilities, including children with severe disabilities

## HOW DO I FIND HELP IN MY COMMUNITY?

Your local Area Agency on Aging is the primary resource for information. In a few States, the State Unit or Office on Aging serves as the Area Agency on Aging.

You can locate the appropriate Area Agency on Aging through the Eldercare Locator, the AoA-supported nationwide, toll-free information and assistance directory. Older persons and caregivers can call the Eldercare Locator 1-800-677-1116 or visit http://www.eldercare.gov.

## NATIVE AMERICAN CAREGIVER SUPPORT SERVICES

AoA awards grants to assist American Indian, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian families caring for older relatives with chronic illness or disability and grandparents caring for grandchildren. The program offers a variety of services that meet a range of caregivers' needs, including information and outreach, access assistance, individual counseling, support groups and training, respite care, and other supplemental services. For more information on this program visit http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/HCLTC/Native_Americans/index.aspx

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

AoA Web site: http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/HCLTC/Caregiver/index.aspx

Family Caregiver Alliance: http://www.caregiver.org

National Alliance for Caregiving http://www.caregiving.org

National Family Caregivers Association http://www.thefamilycaregiver.org/

### For more information about ACL

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