

The Power of Caregivers for a Healthy America

Every day, more than 70 million people provide essential support that helps older adults and people with disabilities live independently in their homes and communities. Caregivers are a cornerstone of America's long-term care system, yet they often face significant physical, emotional, and financial strain that threatens their ability to continue providing care.

Family caregiving

Family caregivers provide the majority of long-term support for older adults and people with disabilities in the U.S. They increasingly shoulder complex care needs that affect their well-being and financial stability.

- 1 in 4 American adults provides care for older adults and people with disabilities, up 24% from five years ago.¹
- Family caregivers provide an average of 27 hours of care per week, and nearly a quarter provide more than 40 hours.²
- More than half of family caregivers perform complex medical and nursing tasks, yet only 22% receive training for these activities.³
- Family caregivers experience higher rates of depression and substantially higher mortality risk than non-caregivers.⁴
- Every year, family caregivers lose an estimated \$522 billion in wages due to caregiving, and employers lose \$33 billion due to employees' caregiving responsibilities.⁵
- 61% of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) who receive long-term services and supports live with a family member. Another 1.3 million adults with I/DD who do not receive formal services are supported by their families.

Direct care workforce

The direct care workforce includes personal care attendants, home health aides, job coaches, residential workers, direct support professionals, and others who provide essential daily support. They face persistent job-quality, recruitment, and retention challenges that strain service availability.

- Over 5.4 million direct care workers support older adults and people with disabilities in the U.S.⁶
- In 2025, 88% of provider organizations reported moderate or severe staffing challenges, and 62% reported turning away new referrals due to inadequate staffing.⁷
- In the coming decades, a growing number of people will age with disabilities, during periods of life when it's less likely a spouse or child is available to provide care.⁸
- Low wages, limited career pathways, and poor job quality impact recruitment and retention, and turnover in home care reached nearly 75% in 2024.⁹
- By 2032, the U.S. will need an additional 800,000 direct care workers, more than for any other occupation.¹⁰

ACL efforts to advance caregiving

By supporting the full spectrum of caregiving — from direct care workers to family, friends, and neighbors — ACL develops and scales community solutions that honor individual choice, promote health and safety, prevent costly institutional care, and build a more resilient infrastructure. ACL’s strategy integrates national leadership on caregiving, investments in direct services, and a strong research portfolio.

Strategic leadership and coordination

ACL provides leadership on caregiving by bringing together federal and non-federal partners to align national strategies and strengthen caregiver support systems. Through the [RAISE Family Caregiving Advisory Council](#) and the [Advisory Council to Support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren](#), ACL administers implementation of the [National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers](#), in partnership with more than 15 federal agencies, advancing nearly 350 near-term actions to support family caregivers.

ACL-funded programs

ACL funds programs that support caregivers across the lifespan, strengthen community infrastructure, and improve access to services.

- [National Family Caregiver Support Program](#): Funds supports that help family and informal caregivers care for older adults in their homes for as long as possible.
- [Native American Caregiver Support Services Program](#): Provides grants to tribal organizations to support caregivers of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian elders.
- [Lifespan Respite Care Program](#): Expands the availability and quality of respite services for caregivers of older adults and people with disabilities.
- [University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities \(UCEDDs\)](#): Advance training, research, and systems change to improve supports for people with I/DD and their families.
- [Grandfamilies and Kinship Support Network](#): Provides technical assistance to agencies and organizations working to strengthen services for grandfamilies and kinship families.
- [National Caregiver Support Collaborative](#): Advances recognition and support of family, kin, and tribal caregivers through improved needs assessment, supportive services, and data collection.
- [State Implementation Grants](#): Advancing the National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers through cooperative agreements to state units on aging.
- [Community Care Corps](#): Supports communities in developing volunteer programs that provide non-medical assistance to older adults and adults with disabilities.
- [Alzheimer’s Disease Programs Initiative](#): Expands dementia-capable home and community-based services for individuals living with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias and their caregivers.
- [Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center](#): Provides technical assistance to states to improve recruitment, retention, and training of the direct care workforce.
- [Person-Centered, Trauma-Informed Service](#): Supports services for Holocaust survivors, other older adults with a history of trauma, and their family caregivers.
- [Community of Practice for Supporting Families of Individuals with I/DD](#): Convenes state teams to drive sustainable systems change that improves outcomes for people with I/DD and their families.
- [Bridging the Aging and Disabilities Networks](#): Builds state aging and disability network capacity to support individuals with I/DD and their families.

Research and innovation

ACL supports applied research and rapid innovation to strengthen caregiving, improve outcomes, and expand access to effective supports.

- [National Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Family Support](#): Translates state-of-the-art research and training into services and support programs that improve the health, quality of life, and care for people with disabilities and their families.
- [RESILIENCE Rehabilitation Research and Training Center](#): Adapts and scales evidence-based programs and designs new approaches to improve the health and function of children and older adults with disabilities.
- [Caregiver AI Prize Competition](#): Incentivizes innovators to develop, test, and scale AI-enabled tools that support family caregivers and the direct care workforce in providing safe, person-centered care at home.
- [Small Business Innovation Research Program](#): Advances technologies, robotics, and AI to extend the caregiving workforce, support independent living, and enable broad adoption of affordable tools.

Sources

- 1 [Caregiving in the US Research Report 2025](#).
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Schulz R, Beach SR. [Caregiving as a risk factor for mortality](#). The Caregiver Health Effects study. JAMA December 15, 1999;282:2215-9.
- 5 [The MetLife Caregiving Cost Study: Productivity Losses to U.S. Business](#), Page 17.
- 6 [Direct Care Workers in the United States: Key Facts 2025](#).
- 7 [The State of America's Direct Support Workforce Crisis 2025](#).
- 8 [Future Change in Caregiving Networks: How Family Caregivers and Direct Care Workers Support Older Adults Now and in the Future](#) (2023).
- 9 [Understanding the Direct Care Workforce](#). PHI.
- 10 [Direct Care Workers in the United States: Key Facts 2025](#).