

Family Caregiver Support

Summary

More than 65 million people in the United States are informal (unpaid) caregivers to older persons who live in the community and have at least one limitation on their activities of daily living. These caregivers include spouses, partners, adult children, and other relatives and friends. The Family Caregiver Support Program at HESSCO Elder Services has been created to assist these informal caregivers who are caring for a loved one and are looking for resources, answers, direction, or emotional support.

Cost of service to client

There is no charge for services from the Family Caregiver Support Program, although a donation to the program will enable us to serve more family caregivers. In addition, there are no income eligibility requirements for this program.

Frequently asked questions

Q: Who is eligible for services through the Family Caregiver Support Program?

A: The Family Caregiver Support Program is available for many types of informal (unpaid) "caregivers," including:

- A caregiver for an older adult (over 60 years of age)
- A grandparent or other relative (over 60 years of age) caring for a child or children under the age of 18
- A parent, grandparent, or other relative (over age 60) caring for one or more individuals with mental retardation or developmental disabilities.

Q: What services are available through the program?

A: Available services include:

- Information about available community services
- Assistance in gaining access to those services
- Caregiver assessment and home visit by Caregiver Specialist
- Assessment report with a Plan of Caregiving based on the caregiver's strengths and weaknesses
- Establishment of an Emergency Plan and long range goal planning
- Individual supportive counseling
- Follow-up contact as needed

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Q: Is there money available for respite services so that a caregiver can have time away from caregiver responsibilities?

A: Caregivers may usually access a small one-time grant for this purpose through the Caregiver Program. The Caregiver Specialist will also explore with the caregiver other possible funding sources for respite care.

Client snapshot

Mrs. Trey called HESSCO Elder Services in early December after her husband's primary care physician suggested she contact us for a home care evaluation. Mr. Trey is 69 years old and has been diagnosed with mid-stage Alzheimer's disease. The couple has three children – ages 16, 12 and 9.

The intake worker sensed the anxiety and distress Mrs. Trey was experiencing and asked if she would also like to speak to HESSCO's Family Caregiver Specialist. Mrs. Trey spoke at length with the Family Caregiver Specialist, who then scheduled an appointment in two days for a home visit.

During the home visit, Mr. and Mrs. Trey agreed that adult day health would be an excellent program for Mr. Trey, as he needed and wanted socialization and cognitive stimulation. Through the respite program Mr. Trey was able to begin going to adult day health the following week for two days each week. The Caregiver Specialist worked with the family to secure Mr. Trey accessible public transportation to adult day health, and to get Mr. Trey approved for MassHealth, which enabled him to attend adult day health five days each week.

The Caregiver Specialist also found support for the family members as they cared for Mr. Trey. She located an Alzheimer's support group for children, provided informational material for Mrs. Trey and the children, and arranged for a Safe Return bracelet for Mr. Trey. The Caregiver Specialist also arranged for an Alzheimer's Habilitation Specialist to work with Mrs. Trey and the children in the home, which helped Mr. Trey's family understand the disease process better and learn techniques for dealing with behavioral problems.

This family still faces many caregiving challenges, but Mrs. Trey feels more prepared for them. She knows that she can always count on HESSCO Elder Services' Family Caregiver Program to give her the assistance, direction and support to address her husband's and family's needs—without neglecting her own.

Volunteer opportunities

Office volunteers are needed to help with clerical and research aspects of the program.

Other helpful information

A list of local support groups for family caregivers is available by calling HESSCO Elder Services or online at www.hessco.org.

The Family Caregiver Alliance

This website includes a clearinghouse of information, online support groups, and other resources geared specifically toward family members caring for loved ones with chronic, disabling health conditions.
www.caregiver.org

Empowering Caregivers

This website from the National Organization for Empowering Caregivers has articles, message boards, a humor section, chat rooms, and many other features to support and inform caregivers.
www.care-givers.com

National Family Caregiver Support Program

Part of the US Administration on Aging's system, this website provides excellent links and practical information on a variety of topics related to caring for a family member.
<http://www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprogram/caregiver/carefam/carefam.asp>

For a complete list of services and programs throughout the state, please call 1-800-age-info or visit www.800ageinfo.com/map