

National Family Caregiver Support Program (OAA Title III-E)

Authorizing Legislation: Section 371 of the Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended

The Purpose of the Program and How it Works

The National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP), established in 2000, provides grants to States and Territories, based on their share of the population aged 70 and over, to fund a range of supports that assist family and informal caregivers to care for their loved ones at home for as long as possible.

Families are the major provider of long-term care, but research has shown that caregiving exacts a heavy emotional, physical and financial toll. Many caregivers who work and provide care experience conflicts between these responsibilities. Twenty two percent of caregivers are assisting two individuals, while eight percent are caring for three or more. Almost half of all caregivers are over age 50, making them more vulnerable to a decline in their own health, and one-third describe their own health as fair to poor.

The NFCSP offers a range of services to support family caregivers. Under this program, States shall provide five types of services:

- information to caregivers about available services,
- assistance to caregivers in gaining access to the services,
- individual counseling, organization of support groups, and caregiver training,
- respite care, and
- supplemental services, on a limited basis

These services work in conjunction with other State and Community-Based Services to provide a coordinated set of supports. Studies have shown that these services can reduce caregiver depression, anxiety, and stress and enable them to provide care longer, thereby avoiding or delaying the need for costly institutional care.

Eligible Program Participants

While the Aging Network has always been involved with meeting the needs of both care recipients and family caregivers, by creating the National Family Caregiver Support Program, Congress explicitly recognized the important role that family caregivers occupy in our nation's long-term services and supports system. As of the 2006 Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, the following specific populations of family caregivers are eligible to receive services:

- Adult family members or other informal caregivers age 18 and older providing care to individuals 60 years of age and older;
- Adult family members or other informal caregivers age 18 and older providing care to individuals of any age with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders;
- Grandparents and other relatives (not parents) 55 years of age and older providing care to children under the age of 18; and
- Grandparents and other relatives (not parents) 55 years of age and older providing care to adults age 18-59 with disabilities.

Each family caregiver presents his or her own unique needs and preferences for the types of programs and services they wish to receive at any given point in time. Further, the programs and services that are available vary from state to state and community to community. Fortunately, a number of national organizations and programs exist to help inform and support program development and innovation. Please see resources and links below for additional information regarding research, technical assistance and support for program development.

Data Highlight Extensive Services Provided to Caregivers

In FY 2010, the most recent year for which service data is available, over 700,000 caregivers received services through the National Family Caregiver Support Program. These services helped them better manage their caregiving responsibilities while ensuring their loved ones remained in the community for as long as possible. Service highlights include the following:

- **Access Assistance Services** provided over 1 million contacts to caregivers helping them locate services from a variety of private and voluntary agencies.
- **Counseling and Training Services** were provided over 125,000 caregivers with counseling, peer support groups, and training to help them better cope with the stresses of caregiving.
- **Respite Care Services** were provided more than 64,000 caregivers with 6.8 million hours with temporary relief – at home, or in an adult day care or institutional setting – from their caregiving responsibilities.

Data from AoA's national surveys of caregivers of elderly clients shows:

- OAA services, including those provided through the National Family Caregiver Support Program, are effective in helping caregivers keep their loved ones at home;
- Nearly 40 percent of caregivers report they have been providing care for 2-5 years while approximately 29 percent of family caregivers have been providing care for 5-10 years;
- 77 percent of caregivers of program clients report that services definitely enabled them to provide care longer than otherwise would have been possible;

- 89 percent of caregivers reported that services helped them to be a better caregiver;
- Nearly half the caregivers of nursing home eligible care recipients indicated that the care recipient would be unable to remain at home without the support services; and
- Nearly 12 percent of family caregivers reported they were caring for a grandson or granddaughter.