

Commission on Aging
Information for Legislators and Candidates
CAREGIVERS

There are 532,000 Nevadans providing care to loved ones and friends every year. This saves Nevada taxpayers an estimated 4 billion dollars a year by avoiding publicly paid care giving programs. Laws are needed that will help these volunteer caregivers to remain in the workplace while maintaining or increasing their ability to perform these valuable services.

Need – In the U.S. approximately \$450 billion worth of uncompensated care is being provided by family or informal caregivers. Around 39% of all adult Americans are caring for a family member who is sick, disabled or elderly, which is up from 30% in 2010. A family member's relationship with a senior makes them the best possible resource to ensure seniors remain in their own home. Caregiving requires a person to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and can lead to feelings of isolation and depression. With on-going support, caregivers can continue to provide home care to millions of family members who are sick and disabled.

Potential Models - Unpaid "family" caregivers need to be recognized and supported. There currently is no legal definition or recognition in Nevada. Caregivers need to be recognized and included in hospital discharge planning and other home and community based services assessments and planning. Many states offer a form of Medicaid program support to help out family caregivers, even with financial support. Oregon has a program to help assist a spousal caregiver financially. New York allows any family member other than a spouse, parent or designated representative to be paid as a family caregiver. These programs are designed to help pay for caregiving by someone the senior knows and trusts. Additionally, unpaid caregivers deserve to be protected from discriminatory employment practices, much the way expectant mothers or employees with chronic diseases are protected.

Benefits – Seniors and people with disabilities will be able to stay in their homes with their families instead of being institutionalized. This saves taxpayers' money. Expanding Medicaid programs to include assistance to unpaid caregivers will help to avoid caregiver burnout and depression, so they can continue to provide care for their family members at a much reduced cost when compare to paying for 24/7 services.

Implementation – The State Medicaid Plan can be amended to include new programs that are designed to help family caregivers. Models are available in other states. Without help, family caregivers cannot take care of their family members adequately, and other more costly service will be needed.