

Caregiving: So Rewarding ... and Oh, So Stressful

Abstract

We live in a world of unprecedented demographic changes—in Seattle, across the United States, and around the world. People are living longer than at any other time in the history of the world. New models of long-term care are needed, and it is well-agreed among individuals and organizations in “aging world” discussions that we are way behind the eight ball.

Demographics don't lie. As we come to understand that our entire population will be affected by the issues facing both unpaid family caregivers and paid caregivers, through concern, innovative thinking, and collaboration, new models of programs and services will arise. The winds of social change are calling.

Data

According to Family Caregiving in 2017: A Full-Time Unpaid Job for Many (www.caring.com/research/caregiving-in-2017):

- About 40 million United States residents provide unpaid care to an adult with an illness or disability (34 million for a loved one age 50+).
- Caregiving is expensive. Forty-four percent of unpaid caregivers spend at least \$5,000 annually on food, clothing, transportation, medications, health care, transportation, and legal services for their loved ones.
- About two-thirds of caregivers spend 30 hours or more per week on caregiving, including shopping, attending medical appointments, managing finances, providing transportation, communicating with family members.
- Caregivers want help providing regular companionship for their loved one and also help with housework, bathing/hygiene, and transportation.
- Most working caregivers miss work due to caregiving.

The caregiving impact on women:

- Nationwide, 66 percent of caregivers are women. Current Population Reports: 65+ in the United States: 2010, U.S. Census Bureau: bit.ly/V34jwf
- In 2011, the negative impact on a caregiver's retirement fund is approximately \$40,000 *more* for women than it is for men. In total, the cost impact of caregiving on the individual female caregiver in terms of lost wages and Social Security benefits equals \$324,044. The MetLife Study of Caregiving Costs to Working Caregivers: bit.ly/1m5UNxY
- Low-income women are particularly impacted by the gender wage gap and caregiving career interruptions. Advocacy Starts at Home: Strengthening Supports for Low-Income Older Adults and Family Caregivers, Justice in Aging Special Report, February 2016: bit.ly/1UIGvW1

City Role

The Seattle Human Services Department's Aging and Disability Services division—the Area Agency on Aging for Seattle-King County—facilitates the King County Caregiver Support Network, a coalition of agencies that receive federal and state funding for family caregiver support services.

Recommended Pre-reading

- A public secret: assisted living, caregivers, K. Woodward, Globalization; International Journal of Ageing and Later Life, 7(2): 17_51: www.ep.liu.se/ej/ijal/2012/v7/i2/a02/ijal12v7i2a02.pdf
- Care documentary: www.caredocumentary.com
- Northwest Universal Design Council: www.environmentsforall.org
- King County Caregiver Support Network: www.kccaregiver.org
- Who Will Care for the Caregiver?: nyti.ms/2k4zUdy

Presenter



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