

# Supporting Family Caregivers in North Carolina

## Facts about Family Caregiving in North Carolina

- There are 1.73 million family caregivers providing care to an adult with limitations in daily activities at least some time during the year.
- 18% of those 45-plus are caregivers and 39% were previously.
- Families provide at least 80% of all care services needed to help their relatives live in their homes. Most caregivers provide or provided care to someone 75 or older.
- The number of older and disabled adults in need of help is growing. 60 counties have more people 60 and over than ages 0-17. This number will increase to 90 counties by 2025.
- Caregiving can become more complex when long-distance care is involved as well as when legal procedures such as guardianship are in place.
- Most of the care provided by family members is uncompensated. The value of unpaid care in North Carolina is \$11.7 billion.
- The “caregiving career” of a family caregiver averages eight years when caring for someone with Alzheimer’s. Caregiving can often be a 24/7 undertaking when the loved one cannot be left alone.
- More care is provided by families as the disability of the family member increases. Yet, the number of family members available is declining. The caregiver support ratio (the number of potential caregivers age 45-64 for each person age 80 or older) will decline from 8.0 in 2010 to 3.9 in 2030.

## Families Providing Care – What is Involved?

As the population of our state continues to grow closer to 10 million, the changing demographics reveal that the number of older and disabled adults in need of assistance is growing even faster.

Of the 1.4 million people age 65 or older in the state, approximately a quarter of them have two or more physical or mental conditions that make it difficult to do activities required to remain independent. Family members across North Carolina are called on every day to help their older and disabled loved ones with common tasks such as:

- Providing transportation to doctor’s appointments
- Paying monthly bills
- Helping with meal preparation
- Assisting with household chores
- Managing daily medications
- Providing assistance with bathing and dressing
- Being responsible for medical procedures



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## Caregiving Impacts Employed Caregivers as well as Employers.

- Over 60% of all family caregivers work.
- More than 75% of caregivers in North Carolina report that they have to make adjustments to their work schedules and 15% say they have to give up work entirely in order to care for their relatives.
- Family caregivers may face financial hardship if they must leave the workforce. They may forego earnings from Social Security benefits and can lose employment related benefits such as health insurance and contributions to retirement plans.
- U.S. businesses lose up to an estimated \$33.6 billion per year in lost productivity from full-time working caregivers. Costs associated with replacing employees and other factors such as absenteeism all take a toll. The average cost to employers per full-time working caregiver is \$2,110.
- More employers are providing elder care benefits such as referral to caregiver resources in the community to their employees. In addition to being an asset to their employees, employers have found these benefits to be a competitive advantage in employee recruitment and retention.
- Workplace policies that support and accommodate working caregivers show business benefits including enhanced employee productivity, lower absenteeism, and reduced costs.

## Legislative Proposals to Support Families in 2015

In recognition of the valuable role that families play in providing the care of older and disabled adults in North Carolina, AARP North Carolina has convened two workgroups involving over 30 organizations and groups in the state to look at regulatory, policy, and legislative strategies that could enhance support for family caregivers.

In the 2015 legislative session, on behalf of our 1.1 million members in North Carolina, AARP will seek legislation to:

- Allow employees to **use existing sick leave benefits for caregiving** purposes.
- Allow employees to **take short increments of unpaid leave for a family member's** illness, injury, or medical appointment.
- Address **problems that can arise with interstate guardianships** that are often granted when an adult lacks capacity to make decisions for him or herself.

In addition the legislature should work to:

- **Increase the availability of respite care services** which provide short periods of relief for family members from their on-going caregiving tasks.
- **Provide supportive services** such as home-delivered meals and in-home aide services **that enable older and disabled adults who are on waiting lists** for services to live independently in their homes.



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