



Rhode Island Department of Elderly Affairs
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RHODE ISLAND SENIOR BEAT

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NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM CELEBRATES 10 YEARS

CRANSTON --- The holiday season often evokes memories of families getting together to celebrate good times and share fond memories. Holiday traditions are passed on from generation to generation with great care and love. In many families, this precious oral history might be lost if it weren't for family caregivers.

The National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFSCP), now celebrating its 10th anniversary, has had a major role in providing resources and support to families involved in caregiving duties. Family caregivers are the foundation of support for the nation's long term care system. Just a brief look at some basic statistics shows the impressive impact that family caregivers have had on long term care support systems.

According to the National Family Caregiver Alliance, 66 percent of all older persons with chronic disabilities are cared for, or by a family member. Sixty-five million people provide care for a clinically ill, disabled, older family member or friend each year. More than 470,000 grandparents age 65 and older have primary care responsibility for their grandchildren.

NFSCP was established and funded in 2000, under the provisions of the Older Americans Act, to support families in their efforts to keep older relatives in the community.

Each day, caregivers assist relatives and loved ones with simple tasks such as cooking, cleaning, or handling their finances, to more complicated tasks such as bathing, dressing, toileting, giving them their medications, helping them with to get around the house or outside the home and making sure that they stay connected to their circle of family and friends.

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RI Senior Beat-November 26, 2010-caregiver support-page 2

While almost all caregivers view their work as compassionate and rewarding, they often experience significant stress and challenges in their day-to-day caregiving chores. To cope with the stress and meet these challenges, caregivers also need support and encouragement to maintain their own physical and emotional well-being. That's where the NFCSP can lend a hand. NFCSP offers a range of services that include information for caregivers about available services, assistance to caregivers in gaining access to services, respite care and supplemental services that bolster their caregiving efforts.

A survey of NFSCP programs brings the critical importance of caregivers into focus. The NFCSP has provided information and resources to more than 1.3 million caregivers. More than 140,000 caregivers have received counseling and training and joined peer support groups. More than 73,000 caregivers have benefited from 9.8 million hours of respite service.

Additional information provided by the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) shows that 77 percent of caregivers believe that NFCSP services have helped them to keep their older relative in the community longer than they thought was possible and 89 percent reported that these services helped to make them a better caregiver.

When you put all the statistics together, some conclusions become very clear. NFSCP services have helped assure that millions of seniors remain in the community as a vital link to their family culture and tradition. NFCSP has helped to preserve the dignity of the elder.

Several resource agencies have been established under the NFCSP to help caregivers get the support that they need. The Family Caregiver Alliance works to advance the development of high-quality and cost-effective policies and programs for caregivers in every state in the country. The National Alliance for Caregiving was created in 1996 as a non-profit coalition of national organizations focusing on family caregiving issues. The National Family Caregivers Association educates, supports and advocates for more than 50 million caregivers for seniors across the nation. The Eldercare Locator is a public service of AoA that enables caregivers to find resources for older adults in any U.S. community.

For more information on the NFCSP, go to www.aoa.gov. The telephone number is 202-619-0724. E-mail inquiries can be directed to aoainfo@aoa.hhs.gov.

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RI Senior Beat-November 26, 2010-family caregiver support-page 3

The Department of Elderly Affairs was established as a cabinet-level position in 1977 under Rhode Island General Law 42-66-1. DEA is responsible for the development and implementation of a comprehensive system of programs and services for Rhode Islanders ages 60 and older and for adults with disabilities. DEA is also the state's single planning and service Area Agency on Aging under the provisions of the Older Americans Act of 1965.

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