

# Caregiver Chronicles

AREA AGENCY ON AGING OF DANE COUNTY  
2865 N SHERMAN AVE, MADISON, WI 53704  
[HTTPS://AAA.DCDHS.COM/](https://aaa.dcdhs.com/)

November 2024



# National Family Caregiver Month

November is National Family Caregiver Month—a good time to both celebrate caregivers and take stock of available supports going into the 2025 National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP) grant year. For the past few years, funds from the American Rescue Plan Act boosted funding for grant awards significantly. In 2025, grant funds return to original levels. The Dane County Caregiver Program will emphasize sustainability for the span of time caregivers spend providing care, helping caregivers make use of planning tools and other resources available for support in addition to grant funding.

## Some Things to Think About Early On

When some older adults think about “planning” and talk with family members, estate planning and pre-paid funerals are typical topics. In a culture where aging and disability are feared, some older adults prefer to pass over consideration of aging and the inevitability of change it brings and skip right to the end.

It’s unsettling to think about eventual decline, so it’s easier to talk about it before there is an urgent need when discussions can be framed in terms of positive choices. Planning for a future with priorities at the center (like family, friends, and community connection and engagement) can be a positive exercise. If your potential care partner is geographically distant from you and other family members would they consider moving closer? If their current home does not accommodate modifications for changes in mobility would they consider moving to a more adaptable home or apartment? In either case, take the time to encourage evaluation of their current home for safety. Some hazards, like stairs, are obvious but other important modifications like brighter lighting or removing hazardous floor coverings can help prevent falls.

While you are having discussions, consider addressing finances as well and from your perspective as potential caregiver. I often encounter older adults who are reluctant to spend savings or sell a home to cover the cost of care because they would like to leave their assets to children and grandchildren. It can be helpful for their future caregivers to weigh in and say that what may be more important is for their loved one to have good care and depend less on family members who may already be juggling work and childcare. Or, as is often the case when a spouse is providing the care, depend less on a caregiver who is older and more frail themselves and who can only be asked to do so much.

In the role of caregiver you can encourage these discussions but you only have control over your own circumstances. Find out what kind of leave your employer offers for elder care and learn the parameters of the *Family and Medical Leave Act* if you are an eligible employee of a covered employer.

Most critical is to have Health Care Powers of Attorney in place along with a will and specific spelling out of their end-of-life wishes. It is also important to know if your care partner has long-term care insurance in place.

## Do a Resource Reality Check

Shortages of in-home care providers for older adults aging in place have been the norm for years now. What is available in the community where your loved one lives, particularly if their home is in a rural area? What are the costs for services? Transportation is also a critical topic to discuss. Is there public transportation available? Is the neighborhood at all walkable?

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What options exist if your care partner is no longer able to drive? What kind of community and social supports are available? Are there community centers with programming for older adults? What are ways your care partner can stay connected?

While individual situations vary, in general, everyone needs to keep their care partner's home safe, help them get around and avoid social isolation.

### **Know That Plans Can Change**

A caregiver's role accelerates when their care partner needs help maintaining their own independence and managing things they had always done on their own before. Perhaps the person who needs care is ill and requires more than companionship or help with general or seasonal chores at home. They may need personal care, from assistance with hygiene to preparing healthy meals. Additional housekeeping help—including more personal tasks like laundry—and more support for healthcare such as getting your care partner to appointments and managing medications may also be needed. As your care partner grows more frail they may also require more emotional support with safety checks and closer monitoring.

Sometimes the change in your care partner's health and ability is sudden and dramatic such as after a serious fall or an Alzheimer's or dementia diagnosis. The caregiver and care partner both may have strong feelings about what type and level of care is needed. The caregiver may have feelings about their own capacity to provide a more intense level of care and the care partner may feel strongly about what type of care they are willing to accept. If you have a basic plan in place, it will be less difficult to adjust when more support is needed.

If you haven't been able to have a detailed financial discussion earlier it becomes imperative when needs accelerate. You will also need permission to receive information from your care partner's healthcare providers and to access their electronic chart. You may need to talk more seriously about living arrangements and resources for longterm care if you weren't able to broach these topics in detail earlier.

### **Take Care of Yourself**

Family caregiving for older adults is often a years-long marathon averaging four to ten years. There is no way of knowing exactly how things will progress and the stages that you will move through with your care partner. This reality makes caregiving one of the most difficult roles we take on in life even while it can also be a loving, compassionate, and rewarding act. Because caring for someone else so easily pulls focus from your own needs it is important to prioritize your own wellbeing. Doing so will help you do a better job for your loved one while preserving your own health. Be sure to make time for adequate sleep and relaxation. Stay connected to friends and family. Join a support group if you need more structured support. Most importantly, set boundaries and limits on what you are realistically able to offer. An honest assessment of your own situation will go a long way to helping you solve problems as they arise.

Finally, consider getting involved in advocacy early on. We are hearing more about the Care Economy (includes paid and unpaid work through which care is provided for others) and activists are now working on behalf of caregivers who provide elder care much in the way they advocate for families caring for children. Let your representatives in state and local government know what you need.

*—Jane De Broux, Caregiver Specialist*



# CAREGIVER TELECONNECTION



[www.caregiverteleconnection.org](http://www.caregiverteleconnection.org)

Learning Sessions Online!

or on your phone



**Date Time Topic A LEADING VOICE FOR CAREGIVERS**

*All sessions will be available on Zoom and/or the telephone. Your choice!  
You may log in or call in to participate*

<b>Tuesday November 5</b>	<b>2:00 pm Eastern 1:00 pm Central 12:00 pm Mountain 11:00 am Pacific</b>	<b>Ask Dr. Tam Questions with Tam Cummings, PhD</b> <i>What kind of questions do you have about dementia? As a caregiver, how do you survive the journey? Dr. Tam Cummings will cover quick stress relief tips and answer any questions you have about dementia.**Sponsored by VITAS Healthcare**</i>
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<b>Wednesday November 6</b>	<b>2:00 pm Eastern 1:00 pm Central 12:00 pm Mountain 11:00 am Pacific</b>	<b>Asuntos legales de los cuidadores, a cargo de la empresa profesional con Aleida A Villarreal, PLLC</b> <i>La Lic. Aleida Villarreal es una abogada especialista en asuntos legales de los adultos mayores, reconocida dentro de su campo como ferviente defensora de los adultos mayores y familiares que les cuidan. Escuche a Aleida hablar sobre las cuestiones legales y los documentos importantes que los cuidadores y las personas mayores deben conocer.</i>
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<b>Monday November 11</b>	<b>1:00 pm Eastern 12:00 pm Central 11:00 am Mountain 10:00 am Pacific</b>	<b>Caregiving and the Holidays: Practical Tips for Thriving with Paula Hill and Zanda Hilger, MEd, LPC</b> <i>The holiday season can be a challenging time for caregivers. In this session, Paula Hill and Zanda Hilger will share practical tips to help you navigate the festivities while maintaining your own well-being. Topics will include:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Redefining Family Traditions: How to adapt traditions to accommodate caregiving responsibilities.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Communicating Expectations: Setting clear boundaries and expectations with family and friends.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Planning for Health Needs: Scheduling appointments and ensuring medication refills are up-to-date.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Managing Stress: Effective strategies for coping with the emotional and physical demands of caregiving.</i></li> </ul> <i>Join us for this informative session and discover how to make the holidays a time of joy and connection, even in the midst of caregiving challenges. **Sponsored by the North Central Texas Caregiver Teleconnection**</i>
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<b>Thursday November 21</b>	<b>11:00 am Eastern 10:00 am Central 9:00 am Mountain 8:00 am Pacific</b>	<b>What You Need to Know about Medications: The Benefits and Risk for Seniors and Caregivers with Lucy Barylak, MSW</b> <i>Join Dear Lucy as she shares information on medication safety. Lucy will discuss some common mistakes that are made when using some medications and how to avoid them. She will also discuss what side effects to be aware of, such as the increased risk of falling that can happen and how to manage these side effects.</i>
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**November 14, 2024**

English

**November 19, 2024**

Spanish

Register now



To register go to our website: <https://www.wellmedcharitablefoundation.org/caregiver-support/summit/>

Or give us a call at 866-390-6491 to register via phone.



A program of the WellMed Charitable Foundation  
Register online at [www.caregiverteleconnection.org](http://www.caregiverteleconnection.org) or call 866.390.6491 Toll Free

# Monthly MIPPA Moment: Long-Term Care Awareness Month

*MIPPA (Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act) has a goal of educating older adults on Medicare's cost-saving benefits & preventive services.*

November is National Long-Term Care (LTC) Awareness Month in the United States. The number of people in need of long-term support services in the United States is already at 14 million and estimated to grow to 27 million by 2050. It is important to know what our LTC options are as we age. It is also a good time to check on loved-ones in LTC to ensure needs are being met.

Often times, people mistakenly believe that Medicare will cover nursing home care for the long run. Outside of Medicare coverage for limited rehabilitation coverage in a Skilled Nursing Facility with certain other requirements being met after a hospital stay, Medicare does NOT cover “custodial” LTC which is traditional nursing home care, not meant as rehabilitation. IF someone does not have the resources to self-pay, Medicaid, a needs-based healthcare program, *may* cover the cost of LTC for seniors and disabled individuals who *meet their state's eligibility requirements*. If people meet certain financial and functional requirements, they may qualify for Long Term Care Medicaid. An applicant must:

- Be a resident of the state in which one is applying for Medicaid benefits.
- Be 65 years of age or older, permanently disabled, or blind.
- Have monthly income and countable assets under a specified level.
- Have a functional need for long-term care.

You can learn about Wisconsin LTC Medicaid programs here and apply at [access.wisconsin.gov](https://access.wisconsin.gov). Information on functional screens can be found through your Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC); call 608-240-7400 in Dane County.

*Adapted from [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov). For more MIPPA Program information, call MIPPA Program Specialist, Leilani Amundson, at 608-240-7458. This project was supported by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services with financial assistance, in whole or in part, by grant number 2101WIMIAA, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201.*

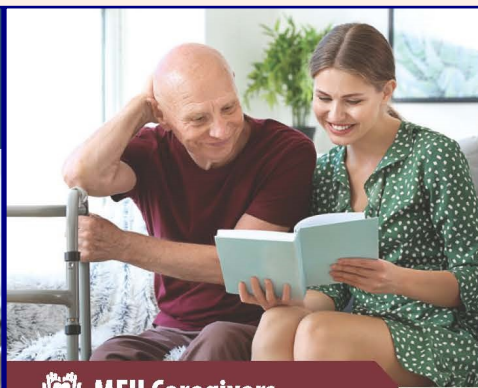




**VA** |  U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital



# Medical Foster Homes

 **MFH Caregivers**

**Caregivers must:**

- Be financially stable
- Own/rent and live in the home
- Care for no more than three residents
- Pass a background check
- Meet annual VA inspection requirements
- Follow a care plan and medical orders
- Provide a safe home and quality care
- Agree to monthly unannounced MFH coordinator visits
- Have a history of caring for others
- Have an interconnected smoke detector system that alerts the fire department
- Be at least 18 years old
- Complete a VA MFH application
- Have a written crisis and respite plan
- Attend required VA trainings



**Caregiver Support:**

- Training twice a year, along with education from MFH and HBPC (Home Based Primary Care) team
- Ongoing support from medical foster home program coordinator

**For more information:**



**Medical Foster Home Program Coordinator**

Jordan Miller

**608-830-6650**

## Aging veterans are finding a new place to call home through the Medical Foster Home Program.

Last year, the Madison VA became a program site that provides veterans the option to move into a residential home that has a live-in caregiver versus going to a nursing home. These residential homes have a maximum of three residents and are very family focused with individualized care. The expectation is of a long-term arrangement, where the veteran may live for the remainder of his or her life.

Another benefit of the medical foster home program is the Veteran's home-based primary care team, which consists of an interdisciplinary medical team that comes to the home so the veteran doesn't need to come to a clinic. Caregivers are paid each month, from Veterans funds, to provide the required care. Monthly rate and care includes room, personal care, three meals per day, medication management, activities, and 24-hour supervision. In almost all cases, medical foster homes are a lower-cost alternative to nursing home placement. These community homes are surveyed by an interdisciplinary VA Team annually and receive monthly unannounced visits from the program coordinator.



If you are interested in residing in a foster home or becoming a home please call Jordan Miller, Medical Foster Home Program Coordinator at (608) 830-6650.



**When living at home becomes difficult, most prefer to stay in homelike surroundings rather than move to a nursing home. In moments like this, a VA medical foster home (MFH) can help with a more cost-effective, long-term care option.**

MFH is a voluntary program offering a safe, affordable care housing alternative for Veterans within 40 miles of the Madison VA hospital.

### Admission Eligibility

#### Veterans must:

- Be enrolled in the VA health care system
- Have stable care needs
- Agree to having home-based primary care
- Need daily assistance of another for care
- Be unable to safely live independently

### MFH Rates

Medical foster homes are paid for by the Veteran. The rate is based on the Veteran's daily needs and negotiated between the Veteran or responsible party and the MFH caregiver prior to moving in. This process is overseen by the local MFH coordinator. Some Veterans may be eligible for additional benefits to help cover the cost.

### Medical Foster Homes

#### Provide Veterans with:

- Private/Semi-private rooms
- Medication management
- Personal care
- Supervision
- Customized living
- Consistent daily caregiver
- Home cooked meals/snacks
- Housekeeping
- Homelike family living
- Flexibility and choice
- Socialization and recreation
- Help with transportation



YOU'RE INVITED TO

# A DAY AT THE CLUB: A CAREGIVER RETREAT

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6TH, 9AM-4PM

FULL & HALF DAY OPTIONS AVAILABLE  
INCLUDING MORNING SPA & RELAXATION  
APPOINTMENTS; LUNCH & AFTERNOON SPEAKERS

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THE FORT ATKINSON CLUB - 211 S. WATER ST. E, FORT ATKINSON

COMPLIMENTARY EVENT  
REGISTRATION REQUIRED  
CALL KAREN @608/741-3615

HOSTED BY THE ADRCs OF  
JEFFERSON, ROCK & DANE  
COUNTIES

