

REPORT CARD ON FAMILY CAREGIVER SERVICES IN MARIN

INTRODUCTION

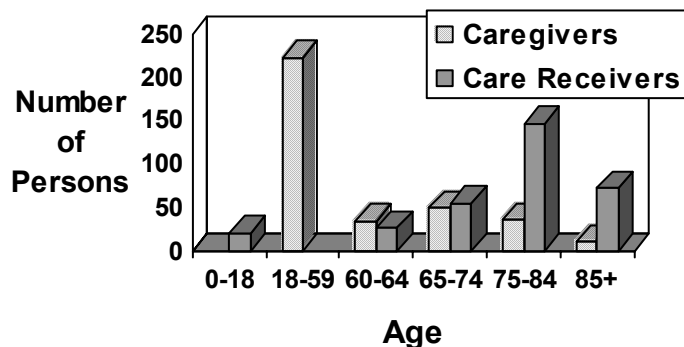
Family members and friends unquestionably provide the major proportion of care to those in need. Frequently, caregivers continue caring for dependent family members until their own mental and physical resources are drained. Nationally, adult children account for 42% of all caregivers, followed by spouses who represent 25% of caregivers. Most families do not want to give up on their caregiving responsibilities. However, with a little professional support and occasional respite care, they are able to be much more effective caregivers.

The National Family Caregiver Support Program was enacted as part of the 2000 reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. The program was designed to provide family caregivers with a comprehensive set of support services, including information, counseling, support groups, training and respite care.

PROFILE OF CAREGIVERS SERVED IN MARIN

In January 2002 the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Aging implemented caregiver support services in collaboration with six competitively selected community agencies and funding of \$131,006. In the first six months, 219 caregivers received help caring for 187 care receivers. Between July 2002 and June 2003, we served 351 caregivers and 320 care receivers. Following are some demographic characteristics of those served in FY 2002/03.

Age of Caregivers & Care Receivers



- ◆ 64% of caregivers were under age 60.
- ◆ 69% of care receivers were age 75 and over.
- ◆ 66% of caregivers were married; 20% were taking care of their spouses.
- ◆ 61% of caregivers worked; 46% worked full-time.
- ◆ 5% of caregivers care for more than one person.
- ◆ 3% of caregivers and 7% of care receivers live at or below the federal poverty line.
- ◆ 13% of care receivers lived alone.
- ◆ 7 care receivers were at risk of abuse.

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

New funding and an open competitive process allowed us to be creative in providing services to address caregiver needs. A few highlights of the innovative approaches that were implemented over the past 18 months follow.

- The Division of Aging collaborated with the Marin Community Foundation, receiving matching funds of \$50,000 each year for two years.
- The Division of Aging, in collaboration with the County Department of Human Resources and Child Care Commission, conducted a survey of all 2,500 County employees on their caregiving responsibilities. A third of County workers had elder care needs, providing a variety of assistance for those they care for, from emotional reassurance to personal care, such as help with feeding, dressing and bathing. Annual costs to the County in terms of lost productivity amounted to \$479,493 for child and elder caregiving combined.
- Senior Access provided a respite weekend for those caring for a family member with Alzheimer's Disease or other dementia.
- In rural West Marin, elders do not have social day options that allow their caregivers a break from their responsibilities. West Marin Senior Services created a half-day a week social "day care" alternative for elders in order to support their primary caregivers.
- The grandparent caregivers of Marin City were helped with case management, counseling and respite trips with therapist and grandparent support group leader, Marcus Small.
- Outreach, training and companionship visits were provided to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender caregiving community by Spectrum Center.

CHALLENGES

There are barriers to implementing these new services. Caregivers do not always self-identify as such; they are just helping a family member. They may not reach out for help; many caregivers work and have other family responsibilities. They may not take the time to seek support services. This is especially true for grandparent caregivers who face many challenges, but are often invisible to agencies receiving funding. There is little awareness in the community that these services exist. Community agencies who traditionally serve "clients" are not always oriented to identifying caregiver needs. There is inadequate funding to meet the need for respite care services. The legislation failed to address the needs of caregivers of adults aged 18 to 59, such as the brain-injured or developmentally disabled.

Families are not as closely knit or as large as they once were. Yet family members continue to care for the vast majority of dependent people at home.

Rosalyn Carter