

APA Caregiving Policy Statement

FEBRUARY 2025

That Council adopts as APA policy following the APA Caregiving Policy Statement:

WHEREAS over fifty million Americans, or 1 in 5 households, provide unpaid help to adults with health needs. On average, caregivers are 49.4 years old with a median age of 51.0 years, and most family caregivers are women. Over 3 million caregivers of adults with health needs in the U.S. are youth caregivers under the age of 18 (National Alliance for Caregiving [NAC] and AARP, 2020).

WHEREAS the need for family caregivers is expected to continue increasing due to the aging population and an escalating rate of chronic, debilitating health conditions (Schulz & Eden, 2016; Stone, 2015). However, the number of available family caregivers may decrease in the upcoming decades due to fewer available adult children, increased participation of women in the workforce, and other sociodemographic trends (AARP Research, 2023; Gaugler & Kane, 2021).

WHEREAS six in ten employed caregivers work full-time and another 15 percent work between 30 and 39 hours per week. About half of these working family caregivers report difficulties managing work schedules with caregiving responsibilities or are forced to use personal leave time to provide caregiving or take time off to provide caregiving (NAC & AARP, 2020).

WHEREAS lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning/queer (LGBTQ+) older adults are more likely to become caregivers than their non-LGBTQ+ peers and to provide care to families of origin or families of choice (Family Caregivers Online, 2024) and LGBTQ+ caregivers more often feel discriminated against at work due to caregiving than caregiver groups.

WHEREAS the family caregiver population is becoming increasingly racially and ethnically diverse, consistent with overall demographic trends (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016), the availability of resources and support, nature of demands, and resulting outcomes are shaped by unique social and environmental contexts in which caregiving occurs (Whitney et al., 2023).

WHEREAS girls and women may be involved in the care of all family members at all ages (National Alliance for Caregiving [NAC] and AARP, 2020). Women also provide the majority of nonmedical care for terminally ill persons. Women are less likely to be cared for by their spouses because they live longer than men and because

women do the most unpaid caregiving throughout their lives, they have fewer financial resources to pay for their own caregiving when they need it (Canetto, 2001). Women's social contact and self-care also decline, due to the unpaid caregiving overload (Canetto, 2001).

WHEREAS the intersectionality of caregiving, sociocultural factors, health care systems' factors, and care needs change across time, continued longitudinal research is needed on the reciprocal relationships between caregiver and care recipient due to significant changes in the physical and/or mental health status of one member impacting the other (Gallagher-Thompson, et al., 2020).

WHEREAS family members are the primary source of care for persons with dementia in rural areas and often care for multiple people simultaneously, gaps exist in support and service provision. Available services do not always meet families' needs and expectations (Roberto et al., 2022).

WHEREAS almost 5.5 million caregivers assist re-entering service members and care for Veterans, and 96% of those caregivers are women; 70% provide care to a spouse or partner; and provide care for an average of 10 years (VA Health Systems Research, Caregivers and Family Support, n.d.).

WHEREAS caregiving has significant consequences for the mental and behavioral health of family caregivers, including higher levels of stress and distress, depression, and emotional problems, than their non-caregiving counterparts (Haley et al., 2020; Schulz et al., 2020; NAC & AARP, 2020), and caregivers of people with dementia are more likely to experience more symptoms of depression and anxiety than non-dementia caregivers (The Alzheimer's Association, 2024; Ma et al., 2018; Sheehan et al, 2021).

WHEREAS evidence-based practice and health promotion programs are making a positive difference for the aging population, providing much-needed support, skills, and community connections that can help ease the caregiving journey (The Alzheimer's Association, 2024).

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT APA supports the mission and focus of the National Institute on Aging, which has and continues to provide vital funding support for caregiving research and training programs across disease contexts.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT APA encourages research on a) how factors of diversity, including age, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, place

and culture, family structure, and immigration status affect the caregiving experience, b) on the best mechanism to translate findings into effective services, and c) on how to evaluate services that are developed at the community level.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the American Psychological Association advocates for state and federal funding to promote the mental and behavioral health for women caregivers and advocates for physical issues for women such as menopause which impacts their mental health.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT APA supports the National Alzheimer's Project Act (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2021) and annual updates via the National Alzheimer's Plan and the instrumental increase in Alzheimer's research funding that has resulted in the last decade, which has been instrumental in advancing the design, testing, and dissemination/implementation of evidence-based psychological treatments/interventions with family caregivers.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT APA continues to train psychologists as policy advocates and facilitates opportunities to advocate for policies supporting family caregivers at the local, state, and federal levels, to advance strategies at the local, state, and federal levels to recognize, assist, include, support, and engage family caregivers of older adults as well as grandparents who are caregivers (The Recognize, Include, Support, and Engage [RAISE] Act Family Caregiving Advisory Council & The Advisory Council to Support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, 2022).

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT APA supports federal and state legislation that elevates and supports family care of people living with chronic conditions and to align the critical work of psychologists in the delivery and dissemination of evidence-based supports for dementia caregivers.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT APA continues to serve as a leader in raising awareness about the critical role that family caregivers play in our society and to inform and advocate for psychological research, interventions, services, and supports that promote optimal health, well-being, and quality of life for family caregivers and their care recipients.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT APA Services encourages the use of and will update as needed the *APA Family Caregivers Briefcase for Psychologists*, as well as the *APA Race and Ethnicity Guidelines*, as resources for considering how they might assist diverse professionals, family caregivers, and care recipients through individual and organizational practice, research, teaching, and community service.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT APA promotes the latest evidence-based psychological treatments/interventions for family caregivers, emphasizing community-based treatment approaches and approaches suited to health care settings.

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