

# Caregivers in Idaho

A Report from the Idaho Family Caregiver Task Force and the Idaho Caregiver Alliance

December, 2015

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every day, thousands of Idahoans work 24/7, with love and dedication taking care of a family member who is elderly or has a physical or intellectual disability or mental illness. For some, caregiving lasts a few years. For others, particularly parents of children with physical or emotional disabilities, it lasts a lifetime. These caregivers are the largest workforce in Idaho and, while they find joy in their role as a caregiver, they are exhausted and burning out.

In response to this need and House Concurrent Resolution 24, passed by the Idaho Legislature in 2015, the Idaho Caregiver Alliance formed a Task Force comprised of a wide array of individuals, many of whom had not worked together before, to examine policies, resources and programs available for caregivers in Idaho and other states. The Task Force also studied innovative ways to support unpaid family caregivers.

What the Task Force discovered was that although there are well-intentioned efforts across the state, they are fragmented, siloed, and often limited to specific conditions or geographic areas. In short, **the supports for unpaid family caregivers are inadequate to meet the present and forecasted needs.** Caregivers in Idaho must manage multi-faceted and complex care on behalf of their loved one, and they must do this without the information, training, and support they need. The result of this is caregiver burnout, costly hospitalization, or institutional care for the care recipient.

### Task Force Findings:

- ✓ Family caregiving impacts all aspects of a family's economic, physical, cultural, and social wellbeing.
  - Most caregivers are juggling paid work and caregiving
  - Caregiver stress has costs.
- ✓ Assistance is fragmented and mostly focused on the care recipient
- ✓ Demographics are changing; 23 % of Idaho's population will be over age 60 by the year 2030, an increase of 33 % from 2012 (US Census Bureau, 2009 Projections)
- ✓ Non-profit organizations have not been a sustainable source of support for caregivers
- ✓ Respite care is inadequate

**We can and must do better.** The Task Force offers the following recommendations to begin the process of supporting these caregivers. Recommendations focus on three areas of need: family caregiver supports; community awareness and engagement; and systems change.

## FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORTS

- ***Priority #1 - Equip and expand a network of individuals who assist family caregivers to understand, access, and arrange complex services.***
- ***Priority #2 - Provide access to training for caregivers on fundamental care responsibilities and self-care strategies***

## COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

- ***Priority #1 - Increase public awareness about caregiving including helping people identify as caregivers.***

## SYSTEMS CHANGE

- ***Priority #1 - Influence health care providers to recognize family caregivers as integral members of the health care team***
- ***Priority #2 - Build community resources within the medical-health neighborhood to support those in a family caregiver role through the seven State Health Innovation Plan (SHIP) Regional Health Collaboratives.***
- ***Priority #3 - Integrate the needs and contributions of unpaid family caregivers in other system transformation efforts***

**But this is just the beginning.** Addressing the priorities identified by the Task Force will not happen without a coordinated and sustained effort. The Idaho Caregiver Alliance has made progress but developing the supports caregivers need and deserve will require the involvement of policy makers and private and public funding. We know an investment in family caregivers will save the state of Idaho money, jobs, and lives.

### **We ask that you:**

- ✓ Learn more about the issues facing unpaid family caregivers in Idaho
- ✓ Identify the caregivers in your life
- ✓ Partner with the Idaho Caregiver Alliance to identify resources for family caregivers
- ✓ Endorse the collaboration between the Idaho SHIP and the Caregiver Alliance
- ✓ Support the development of a plan to implement the recommendations identified in this report
- ✓ **Become a caregiver champion!**

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