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No time to be sick, no time to stay well: the physical and mental toll on family caregivers

Wisconsin advocates for people with disabilities, older adults and their families are sounding the alarm about how the increasing burden on the state's family caregivers is creating an unsustainable health crisis that threatens not only the health of caregivers themselves, but of the family members who rely on them for care. Three organizations, including the Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations, Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network, and the Wisconsin Family Caregiver Alliance are releasing the third of six short videos focused on the daily challenges faced by Wisconsin's family caregivers as part of November Family Caregiver Month.

This week's video exposes how caregiving impacts the family caregiver's physical and mental health.

Watch this three-minute video on [how family caregiving impacts the physical and mental health of caregivers: No time to be sick, no time to stay well](#)

"Family caregivers play a critical role keeping their loved ones healthy, out of hospitals, and out of institutions," said Janet Zander, public policy coordinator for the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network. "Too often, the stress and physical demands of caregiving comes at the expense of caregiver health."

"80% of care is provided by families. Wisconsin relies on caregivers being healthy enough to care," said Lisa Schneider, Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance Co-Chair. "When a main caregiver gets sick or has an acute health emergency, it sends families into cascading crises as they scramble to continue meeting significant daily caregiving needs as well as the caregiver's illness or chronic condition."

"Caregiving is stressful. It is time our policymakers recognize the mental health needs of family caregivers," says Lisa Pugh, Co-Chair of the Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations. "This is a tough role, with long hours, unpaid, that is done out of love. The work can be physically hard, emotionally difficult, and is often isolating."

States that value the contributions of caregivers provide targeted caregiver supports and are seeing savings of \$20 million annually in taxpayer dollars, mostly due to delayed nursing home placement.¹

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3202705/>
http://www.advancingstates.org/sites/default/files/Washington_%20State%20Plan%20on%20Aging.pdf

Meet Wisconsin's Family Caregivers

- **Watch:** No time to be sick, no time to stay well: the physical and mental toll on family caregivers (https://youtu.be/n5_46XwkXI4)
- **Watch:** Two Jobs, No Breaks: Employed and Caregiving (<https://youtu.be/I5g2RiOBgxs>)
- **Watch:** Family Caregiver Press Event (<https://youtu.be/YrC1mRLij3Mb>)
- **Watch:** trailer video: See Us: Wisconsin's Invisible Family Caregivers (https://youtu.be/_3-pLaEqaU)
- Read the [Governor's Proclamation for Caregiver Month](#).
- Family Caregiver Month events (<https://wisconsin-caregiver.org/wfacsa-in-the-news>)
- Policy solutions to support family caregivers (<https://arcwi.org/2021/09/23/support-for-family-caregivers-is-critical/>)

Quick facts about impact on family caregiver health:

- Family caregiving is associated with worse physical condition, compromised immune systems, elevated depression and anxiety, and increased risk of early death.
- An estimated 17-35% of family caregivers view their health as fair to poor.
- Higher hour caregivers are even more likely to rate their health as fair or poor
- Family caregivers often neglect their own preventative health.
- Nearly three quarters reported they had not gone to the doctor as often as they should; more than half missed doctors appointments.
- The average caregiver of a recipient 65 years of age or older is 63 years old. Of these caregivers, one third report being in fair to poor health.