



Idaho Caregiver Alliance Gives a Voice to Family Caregivers

More than one in four adult Idahoans assume critical responsibilities that make it possible for children and adults living with disabilities, long term illnesses and frailty to live in their home and community.

These “family caregivers” are parents, grandparents, spouses, adult children and other family members who contribute more than \$2 billion per year to Idaho’s economy. They coordinate and provide complex medical and mental health services and navigate financial and legal challenges. The essential role of family caregivers is often overlooked, as are the negative health, employment, and emotional impacts experienced by caregivers. The Idaho Caregiver Alliance serves as a statewide voice, convener, and catalyst for sustaining and supporting these essential providers of care.

The Alliance brings together more than 50 public and private organizations and 200 individual members, many who are caregivers, from across the state. The inter-disciplinary, multi-agency nature of the Alliance serves as a catalyst for innovations and efficiencies difficult to realize under traditional institutional boundaries.

Since the inception of the Alliance in 2013 it has accomplished the following results:

- Completion of a statewide respite capacity and needs assessments
- Implementation of Caregiver Summits in northern and eastern Idaho to engage local communities and caregivers;
- Development of partnerships with 2-1-1-Careline, Idaho No Wrong Door (NWD), and Statewide Healthcare Innovation Plan (SHIP) to assure representation of family caregivers in statewide initiatives;
- Implementation of a pilot program of Emergency Respite in collaboration with the Idaho Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health;
- Passage of the House of Representatives Concurrent Resolution 24 endorsing the Idaho Caregiver Alliance;
- Convening of a Caregiver Task Force that brought together more than 50 individuals who identified caregiver concerns, researched resources and programs across the country, explored opportunities for partnerships in Idaho, and developed recommended strategies to better support Idaho caregivers. The report of this Task Force was presented to the Health and Welfare Committees of the 2016 Idaho Legislature. Caregivers in Idaho report available at <http://hs.boisestate.edu/csa/caregivers-in-idaho-report-2016/>.

Funding for the work of the Alliance has been provided by the Administration on Community Living through a Lifespan Respite Grant to the Idaho Commission on Aging. That funding will end this year but the work is far from done. ICA members are partnering with various systems-change initiatives to imbed Task Force recommendations in those efforts, developing a three-year state plan to accomplish the recommendations, and pursuing funding opportunities to allow this important work to continue.

For information on the Idaho Caregiver Alliance, contact Dr. Sarah Toevs, Center for the Study of Aging at Boise State University at 208-426-2452 or stoevs@boisestate.edu.