

## Idaho Lifespan Family Caregiver Action Plan



Family bonds and support are hallmarks of the State of Idaho and cornerstones of independence for older adults and individuals with physical or emotional disabilities, or chronic illnesses. The support provided by families is often fundamental to this independence and the value of unpaid family caregiving is receiving increased attention in Idaho and throughout the United States.

### Why this attention now?

- In part, it is due to demographic change – 10 years ago, the ratio of working age adults to older adults was 6 to 1. By 2020, this ratio will be 3 to 1. In addition, more families of children and adults with disabilities are opting for home-based care. There are and will be fewer and fewer caregivers for a rapidly increasing number of people needing care.
- Family caregivers manage increasingly complex medical and/or psychological conditions without the support and training they need. The supports that do exist are fragmented and difficult to access.
- Family caregiving is not free. The costs include lost income to the caregiver and lost productivity to an employer. For example, the income generating potential for a caregiver is projected to be \$600,000 less over a lifetime and employers lose an estimated \$33.6 billion annually related to employee caregiving responsibilities.
- Caregiving takes its toll on caregiver health and wellbeing and impacts the entire family.
- Support from family caregivers can delay the need for costly institutional care. In 2014, Idaho spent \$271,522,099 or 48% of its Medicaid budget on care in nursing facilities, intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ICFs/ID) and inpatient psychiatric hospitals.

The absence of a solid support structure for caregivers takes a serious toll on the economic and social wellbeing of families, businesses, and communities across Idaho.

### What can Idaho do to support caregivers?

The Idaho Caregiver Alliance has developed the **Idaho Lifespan Family Caregiver Action Plan**. The Plan offers an evidenced-based set of recommendations to put Idaho ahead of the caregiver crisis curve and set a course into a future that is economically viable for caregivers, employers, and service systems. The plan proposes:

**Goal 1: Ensure a streamlined, coordinated system of supports for caregivers across the lifespan, recognizing the unique needs of Idaho's diverse population.**

- *Develop statewide respite resources.*
- *Ensure culturally appropriate information and resources are available to caregivers across the lifespan.*

- *Establish training resources for family caregivers on caregiving responsibilities, techniques, and strategies for self-care.*
- *Establish a statewide network of experts equipped to serve as information and support navigators or guides for family caregivers across the lifespan.*

**Goal 2:** Increase public awareness about unpaid family caregiving and help people within our communities identify as caregivers.

- *Family members recognize themselves as caregivers and the general public is aware of the needs and contributions of family caregivers across the lifespan.*

**Goal 3:** Recognize the importance of family caregiving and embed the voice of family caregivers in policy and system changes.

- *Recognize family caregivers as part of their family members' health care and social support team.*
- *Embed family caregiver perspective and involvement in Idaho's efforts to transform its primary care, long-term care, and behavioral health systems.*
- *Include family caregivers in Idaho's efforts to enhance employment opportunities and tax policies that support families and the state's economic vitality.*

**Goal 4:** Ensure a coordinated voice for family caregivers in Idaho through the development of a sustainable structure for the Idaho Caregiver Alliance.

- *Build on the established foundation of the Idaho Caregiver Alliance and ensure that the Idaho caregivers across the lifespan have a coordinated voice.*
- *Assure data are available to inform decision-making related to family caregiver supports and services.*

### **What are the Next Steps?**

The perspectives and expertise of caregivers and individuals from public and private organizations in Idaho provide the foundation for the Idaho Caregiver Action Plan. The Plan, to be available on the Idaho Commission on Aging and Center for the Study of Aging, Boise State University websites, is designed to identify and enhance local supports for family caregivers.

The aim of the **ACTION PLAN** is to be proactive; to prevent or delay the need for costly institutional care, maximize independence, and keep families together in their communities. Implementation of the **ACTION PLAN** will require an investment of resources, but as demonstrated by caregiver initiatives in other states, the effort will yield significant dividends.

For more information, contact:

Sarah Toevs, Ph.D. – [stoevs@boisestate.edu](mailto:stoevs@boisestate.edu)

Pam Oliason - [Pam.Catt-Oliason@aging.idaho.gov](mailto:Pam.Catt-Oliason@aging.idaho.gov)

For access to the plan, visit: <https://hs.boisestate.edu/csa/idaho-lifespan-family-caregiver-action-plan/>