**Drafting the Burlington Action Plan for Aging Well**

**Family Caregiver Support**

**Goal**

Family caregivers provide the preponderance of care for older adults in our community. In the March 2023 publication of the AARP Public Policy Institute, it is estimated that the 70,000 family caregivers in our state provided $1.23 Billion in unpaid care. Isolation is a common feeling among family caregivers. The desire to be understood and supported, to connect with other caregivers and find ways to reduce the feelings of isolation are common requests and needs of family caregivers. Family caregivers for individuals with Alzheimer’s and dementia may face additional challenges and require differing support needs. The role of family caregivers and their support needs to be elevated in the public and private sectors. To support family caregivers, education and resources will be made available in centrally located, easy to access places. Working family caregivers and their employers need available resources for accommodations to support working caregivers in being productive for their employer and continuing to provide care for their family members. To provide support to all our family caregivers in our community, educational resources will be made available to the network of service providers, with attention to the different cultures of caregiving among all members of our diverse community. This continues the City of Burlington’s commitment to inclusive community.

**Recommended Objectives:**

1. All residents can learn about family caregivers and the outsized role they play in the care of our community’s older adults.

2. Service providers, community partners, employers and family caregivers will work with the City of Burlington to develop support groups for caregivers and Memory Cafes to help support the many forms that caregiving takes in our community.

3. Creation of an easily accessible, age friendly, comprehensive collection of resources and a mechanism to work with community partners to assure distribution/access for family caregivers.

4. City of Burlington will create policies to accommodate the needs of city employees who are caregivers that other employers in the city can follow. Employers that follow these policies will be recognized for their accommodation of caregiver needs.

**Recommended Strategies:** These may include a mixture of initiatives already underway, easily implementable ideas, and those that would be impactful but would need policy change or funding allocated. Note if the strategy is likely short-term (1-3 years), medium-term (3-6 years) or long-term (7-10 years).

1. Family Caregiver Awareness Campaign – Beginning in November 2024 (Family Caregiver Month)
	1. Proclamation from Mayor/City Council with press release
	2. PSAs highlighting Family Caregivers, available resources and support (e.g. CARERS, Alzheimer’s Association, Vermont Chapter) on Radio, TV, social media
	3. Partner with Vermont Public and “Across the Fence” for longer form stories and public awareness pieces.

2. Center on Aging to consult with the State Librarian to support libraries as “third spaces” for the support of family caregivers and their care recipients. Center on Aging will assist in the development of the “third space” concept with local libraries, parks, community centers, and wellness centers. In addition to support networks, such “third spaces” can be utilized for educational offering and opportunities for family caregivers on relevant topics. Additionally, this objective will include work with local cultural groups to implement culturally informed third spaces for caregivers of various ethnic backgrounds.

3. As complete, as possible, list of family caregiver resources on an age friendly webpage on the City of Burlington website. The webpage will serve as a clearinghouse with links to local and state resources. List and links to be checked and updated as needed monthly. Print and translated alternatives with monthly updates will also be made available with provision in accessible locations.

4. City of Burlington to review policies that affect accommodation for city employees who are family caregivers. Following review, modify the policies that need attention to meet the needs of the city and the employee. Publicize the changes and how the changes support family caregivers and encourage employers in the city to do the same. The definition of family and close friend caregivers will all-encompassing to include the diversity in familial structures and living situations across all cultures.

5. In partnership with BIPOC advocates and associations in the city, resources will be developed to educate and sensitize service providers to the variety of cultures of caregiving in our community. This will foster understanding and destigmatizing of cultures, practices and values that may be different from the dominant culture.

6. In partnership with The University of Vermont Health Network Medical Group and the Vermont Medical Association, a campaign will be developed to heighten the awareness among medical professionals of the role of family caregivers and the importance of integrating these caregivers in the Community Health Team. The Vermont Blueprint for Health (2022) and Community Health Needs Assessment (2022) make no mention of family caregivers as integral members of the care receiver’s team. This same partnership will connect with AHS and UVMMC Community Health Improvement to request family caregivers be represented in future Blueprint revisions and Community Health Needs Assessments.

7. Increase awareness of opportunities and resources to provide respite to caregivers, such as AgeWell’s volunteer services hotline. Additionally, work with UVMMC to increase usage of system navigators to increase awareness about opportunities for respite included within the healthcare systems, such as [Medicare and Medicaid “prescriptions” for respite among family caregivers](https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/caring-for-yourself.html).

**Summary Chart**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategy** | **Short-term****(1-3 years)** | **Medium-term****(3-6 years)** | **Long-term*** 1. **years)**
 |
| 1. Family Caregiver Awareness Campaign
 | X |  |  |
| 1. Library as Third Space
 | X |  |  |
| 1. City of Burlington Resource List
 | X |  |  |
| 1. City of Burlington Accommodation Review
 | X |  |  |
| 1. Cultures of caregiving
 | x |  |  |
| 1. UVMMC Medical Group/VMA campaign
 |  | X |  |
| 1. Increase respite resource awareness
 | X  |  |  |

**Additional Questions**

How do the above objectives and strategies advance equity and inclusion? Please list any specific groups who are left out of these strategies?

* It is critical that items within the action plan are flexible to the changing needs of different groups, with special attention to historically marginalized groups and minorities.
* Minority cultural and ethnic groups will be collaborated with to ensure the provision of culturally-informed resources for each objective outlined within the action plan. It is also critical that resources be made available in a variety of languages.
* Those caring for individuals with Alzheimer’s dementia, or other conditions characterized by significant cognitive decline may need additional or different types of resources as compared to other familial caregivers.

Who are the key partners to accomplish these strategies?

* City of Burlington, State and City Librarians, Center on Aging, Vermont Public, WCAX, AALV, New American community groups of Burlington, Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, Age Well, Alzheimer’s Association, Vermont Chapter, UVMMC

What funding or resources will be needed to accomplish these strategies?

* Funding from the City of Burlington for the production and airing of PSAs
* Funding from the City of Burlington for printed material in English, Braille and languages reflective of our community members
* MSW Intern (working with COA) time to develop resource list and links for City of Burlington website
* Collaboration with Fletcher Free Library and Parks and Recreation for caregiver education, support groups and Memory Cafes
* Collaboration with BIPOC advocates and associations, Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, New American groups

What legislation or policy change (local or state) will be needed to accomplish these strategies?

* Potential policy changes to incorporate caregiver accommodation for city employees, with attention to culturally-diverse caregiving and housing arrangements

What data could be used to measure the success of these strategies?

* Number of people served by support groups, Memory Cafes and educational events (Y/Y)
* Number of times the resource page is accessed (Y/Y)

What existing programs or initiatives support these strategies?

* Dementia Family Caregiver Center, Community of Vermont Elders (COVE), Age Well, AARP, Center on Aging

How do these strategies reflect the input and priorities of Older Vermonters?

* Older Vermonters, their caregivers and community organizations that care for older Vermonters will be involved in the development and implementation of these strategies.

Additional Suggestions and Comments:

* Strategies for provide recipients of caregiving alternative places to go to allow for caregivers to receive respite to be included in other action plan categories.

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