**Burlington Action Plan for Aging Well**

**Family Caregiver Support**

**Goal**

The essential role of family caregivers is recognized, supported, and valued in our community, in both the public and private sectors. Family caregivers need easy access to culturally appropriate education, resources, and support, particularly for the care of seniors living with various forms of dementia. Employers need education and resources to provide accommodations for employees to help balance the needs of work with the needs of older family members. Health care providers need to recognize and care for the unique needs of family caregivers. Support services need to be robust and sustainable to provide respite for family caregivers.

For those seniors who need assistance with daily care, family caregivers provide the preponderance of care. According to the AARP Public Policy Institute, Vermont’s 70,000 family caregivers provide approximately $1.23 billion in unpaid care annually (March 2023). In addition to being unpaid, family caregivers report feeling isolated, needing more support/connection from peers and experts, and needing help balancing the demands of their workplace and the needs of their older family member, and often the needs of their own children as well*.*

**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. Increase the percentage of family care partners who report knowing about respite options and how to access them. (State goal by 2028 is to increase to 80%). Reduce the number of family care partners reporting a negative impact on their financial security due to caregiving. (State goal is to reduce from 32% to 10%).

3. Service providers, community partners, employers and family caregivers will create 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. The City of Burlington will create policies to accommodate the needs of city employees who are caregivers. Provide these as a model that other employers in the city can follow. Employers that follow these policies will be recognized for their contributions to making Burlington a more Age-Friendly City.

5.The City of Burlington will work with partners to increase the workforce for in home supports / Personal and Home Health Aides who can make a big difference in respite/caregiver support needs.

**Recommended Strategies:**

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, Vermont Alzheimer’s Association Chapter, Age Well) 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 and Fletcher Free Library to support libraries as “third spaces” for the support of family caregivers and their family members. Center on Aging will assist in the development of the “third space” concept with local libraries, parks, senior centers, community centers, and wellness centers. In addition to support networks, such “third spaces” can be used for educational offering and opportunities for family caregivers on relevant topics. Additionally, this objective will include working with local BIPOC, New American, LGBTQ+, and other groups to implement culturally informed third spaces for caregivers of various backgrounds.

3. City Staff working on Age-Friendly City efforts will compile a 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. Lists and links are checked and updated as needed monthly. Print and translated alternatives with monthly updates will also be available with provision in accessible locations.

4. The City of Burlington will review policies that affect accommodation for city employees who are family caregivers and report to the Burlington Aging Council with recommendations and a timeline for what modifications and enhancements can be made to flexibly meet the needs of the city and the employee. The recommended changes and how the changes support family caregivers will be reported out and shared with employers in the city to encourage them to develop similar flexible policies. The definition of family caregivers will be all-encompassing to include the diversity in familial structures and living situations across all cultures.

5. In partnership with BIPOC and New American 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 respect for 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 team providing care. 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. Evaluate and consider additional funding for the CEDO/Age Well pilot to train / develop PCAs to increase workforce for in home supports/Personal and Home Health Aides to support groups of caregiver programs.

8. Increase the awareness of opportunities and resources to provide respite to caregivers, such as Age Well’s volunteer services hotline. Respite Volunteer programming at Age Well (through an innovative pilot with DAIL) is training more people to become “Respite Squad Volunteers” who provide needed support to caregivers. This should be leveraged further and advanced. 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). Evaluate innovations such as Trualta (an online evidence based caregiver support platform) with Stakeholders to determine if this is effective support for caregivers.

9. Develop strategies to create day care and programming for seniors who require constant supervision, in order to provide respite opportunities for family caregivers.

**Summary Chart**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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.
* BIPOC and New American groups will be included to ensure the provision of culturally relevant and informed resources for each objective outlined within the action plan. It is also essential that resources be made available in a variety of languages.
* Those caring for individuals with various forms of dementia or significant cognitive decline may need additional or diverse 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, Senior Centers, 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
* Partnering with BIPOC advocates and associations, Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, New American groups
* Funding for expanding PCA training and education.

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 appropriate 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.