



*working together to advance the quality of
life of older New Yorkers*

TOPIC: CAREGIVERS

Congress recognized the contributions that informal caregivers of the frail elderly make and the challenges that they face when they passed Title III-E and established the "National Family Caregiver Support Program" as part of the Older Americans Act in 2000. This program is a beginning effort to provide support services to a rapidly growing population, those caring for elderly individuals aged 60 years of age and older.

According to a survey conducted in July 2000 by the National Family Caregivers Association (NFCA), 54 million persons or "26.6% of the adult population has provided care to a family member or friend during the past year", including help with activities of daily living and nursing care. They spend an average of 17.9 hours per week providing unpaid care, with 4.5 million spending over 40 hours per week. Studies have shown that family caregiving may directly affect household income, the health of the caregiver, and family relationships.

The New York Citizens' Committee on Aging finds that in New York City and State, caregivers face a wide range of situations from those who

are scarcely aware that they are caregivers to others who sacrifice their own health to provide round the clock care. Many are unaware of the entitlements and assistance available, experience guilt, or suffer from severe stress that can lead to elder abuse.

To address these deficits and achieve desirable outcomes, the NY Citizens' Committee on Aging recommends that

1. The federal government:

- Provide financial assistance to states and localities by
- increasing funding of Title III-E of the Older Americans Act to provide the respite, education, training and support that caregivers need.
- Increasing funding of research and new models of assistance to caregivers.
- Provide incentives to family caregivers, such as credits to Social Security and tax benefits for unpaid caregiving, flexible Medicaid options for respite, and expanded family leave.

2. New York State

- Provide permanent state funding for respite care for family caregivers.
- Enact innovative programs to address caregivers' economic situation, such as extending tax credits to informal caregivers.

3. New York City

- Increase the dissemination of information and broaden the RFP process for federal Caregiver Assistance monies to ensure a diversity of agency responses.
- Explore innovative and different approaches to assist family caregivers, such as the Powerful Tools for Caregiving series, developed by Legacy Caregiver Services in Portland, Oregon.
- Identify and reach out to caregivers to ensure their access to available supports.
- Promote awareness of the contributions, challenges and range of informal caregiving.

Approved May 2003