

## CAREGIVERS IN WASHINGTON STATE

### What We Know About Family Caregivers Served in the Caregiver Support Program

- **61%** of program participants are over the age of 60
- **24%** ended their employment due to caregiving responsibilities
- **59%** provided care for a minimum of two years; **29%** provided care for 5 or more years.
- **85%** are caring for individuals with memory/cognitive problems Alzheimer's disease or dementia
- **82%** are coping with challenging behaviors of care receivers
- **45%** of FCSP caregivers report their own health status to be Fair, Poor, or Very Poor
- **50%** scored high on depression scale

The estimated 850,000 unpaid family caregivers in Washington State are the backbone of our State's long-term care system. They provide 80% of the services their loved ones need to remain in home for as long as possible. Their caregiving efforts in WA are the equivalent of \$10.6 billion annually in paid care.

These caregivers need support to prolong their ongoing caregiver activities as well as ensure their own mental and physical health stays intact while coping with related challenges. Statewide data indicates that high-intensity caregivers are five times more likely than non-caregivers to have severely poor mental health.

If family caregivers become unavailable, it's likely that adults would need to use more costly in-home and residential services.

**A legislative advocacy message:** What is attractive to both Policy Makers and the Washington State Legislature is that Caregiver Support Program services (funded by non-Medicaid dollars) can help families delay the point at which they must turn to Medicaid. This delay not only helps Washington families stay together, it also benefits the State budget.

The current level of State funding allows the Caregiver Support Program to serve about 1% of the 850,000 caregivers in this State. Talk with your legislator about maintaining, or even expanding, funding for the Family Caregiver Support Program!