

# Alaska Commission on Aging

## National Family Caregiver Support Program DHSS Division of Senior & Disabilities Services Senior Community-Based Grants Component Recommended FY2015 Budget Increase: \$325,000



**Recommendation:** The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) recommends a \$325,000 increase to the National Family Caregiver Support Program to allow for support to be provided to additional family caregivers. This is an existing grant program administered by the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services Senior Grants Unit that serves (1) unpaid caregivers caring for elderly individuals (age 60+) with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia (ADRD) and other chronic health conditions and (2) unpaid grandparents caring for their “at risk” grandchildren. The goal of the Family Caregiver Support Program is to provide respite, case management, training, counseling, and other supports to caregivers so they can successfully care for their loved ones at home. These services support families which help to postpone the need for higher cost care and promote greater efficiencies in public spending.

### WHY DO WE NEED FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT SERVICES?

Family caregivers are the heart and soul of Alaska’s long-term care support services for older Alaskans living at home needing assistance due to Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia, physical disabilities, and chronic health conditions. These caregivers provide a significant portion of long-term care. When unpaid family caregivers receive supports and training, research shows they feel less stressed and better able to care longer for their loved ones at home. Without family caregivers, paid in-home services or nursing home care may be the only long-term care alternatives shifting substantial cost and burden to the state.

### WHO ARE FAMILY CAREGIVERS?

- Adult children caring for an elderly parent, spouses caring for their spouse, and other relatives or friends caring for elderly loved ones. They provide elderly loved ones with assistance in activities of daily living including feeding, bathing, dressing, toileting, and managing incontinence in addition to instrumental activities of daily living such as shopping, preparing meals, and household chores.
- Grandparents caring for grandchildren whose parents are not present in the household due to substance abuse, mental illness, incarceration, economic hardship & other challenges. In Alaska, there are an estimated 7,725 grandparents who report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them. Almost 12% of these grandparents live in poverty (U.S. Census 2010). Approximately 2,633 of Alaskan grandparents who are raising their grandchildren live in the Anchorage Municipality.

Alaska Commission on Aging  
P.O. Box 110693 Juneau, Alaska 99811-0693  
Phone: 907-465-3250 / Fax: 907-465-1398

[www.alaskaaging.org](http://www.alaskaaging.org)

*Ensuring the dignity and independence of all older Alaskans and assisting them through planning, advocacy, education and interagency cooperation to lead useful and meaningful lives.*

## FAMILY CAREGIVERS SERVED IN FY13 BY SERVICE TYPE

- A total of 1,053 family caregivers were served by the National Family Caregiver Program of which 1,015 were caregivers of elderly persons and 38 were grandparents caring for grandchildren.

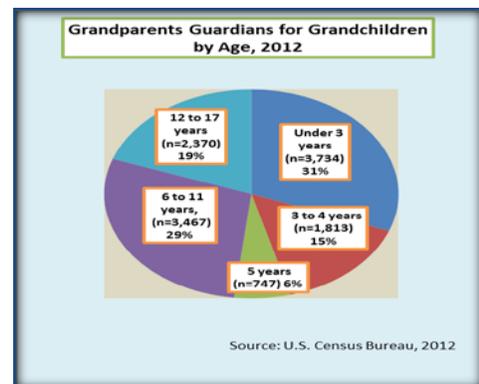
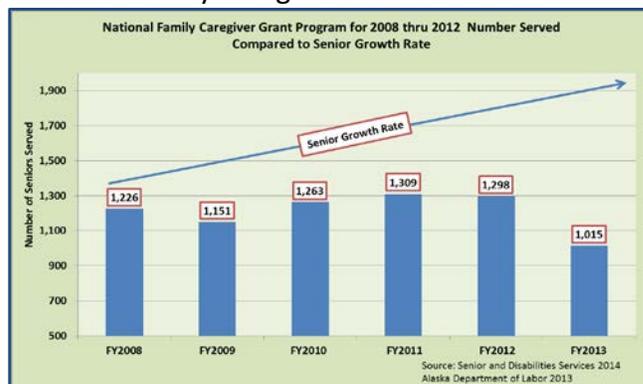
## HOW DO WE KNOW THESE SERVICES WORK?

- According to the U.S. Administration (2011), 41% of caregivers surveyed said that without National Family Caregiver Support Services, the care recipient would not live in the same residence; 32% reported that the care recipient would be in an assisted living or nursing home.
- Based on other research findings, caregivers of persons with dementia reported that respite, training and other supports helped to relieve their stress and provide care at home on the average of 18 months longer (Mittelman 2008).
- Based on findings from the ACoA 2013 ADRD Family Caregiver Survey (n=54), 100% of respondents reported benefits from one or more of the caregiver support services funded by the state and expressed a desire for additional services.

## WHY ARE ADDITIONAL FUNDS NEEDED?

- Family caregivers provide the foundation for Alaska's long-term care system. This work is hard and carries a heavy price in terms of the financial, physical and emotional demands it places on the caregiver. Without supports, vulnerable Alaskans cared for by untrained and exhausted caregivers may be at risk for premature institutional placement or harm.
- Family caregiver training and support was identified as a critical priority at statewide ADRD community forums and by respondents to the Family Caregiver Survey (ACoA 2013).
- AARP's 2011 State Long-Term Services and Support Scorecard ranked Alaska 41 out of 50 states in providing adequate supports for family caregivers.
- Respite (temporary relief from caregiving responsibilities) has declined in the number of family caregivers served (32%) and by the number of hours provided (15%) by the Family Caregiver Support program, comparing FY11 and FY12 grantee reports (SDS 2013).
- Family caregivers provide 80% of the care at home for loved ones with dementia. There has been a 15% increase in the number of caregivers caring for elderly family members with dementia receiving supports from this program (21% in FY08 to 46% in FY13, SDS Senior Grants Unit 2014). The increasing elderly population with dementia will depend on family caregivers who are trained and supported to postpone admission to institutional settings, which will bring a cost savings to the state (Alzheimer's Association 2013).

**FUNDING GOAL:** Additional funding will be used to provide training, respite, counseling and other supports to increase the number of family caregivers served.



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