



Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging



## **Illinois Aging Network Alert December 02, 2019** A report of the impact Area Agencies on Aging have on Illinois seniors.

### **Support Illinois Family Caregivers – Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders**

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly **1 in 5 Illinois adults are caregivers**. Of these caregivers, about **16% are 65 years of age or older themselves**, and almost a third provide care for at least 20 hours per week. In 2017 alone, **16 million family members and friends provided 18.4 billion hours of unpaid care to people with Alzheimer’s and other dementias in the US, at an economic value of more than \$232 billion**. The challenges of caring for persons with Alzheimer’s and other dementias can become difficult and overwhelming, especially when intensive care is needed for long periods of time. For many, however, caregiving is also a rewarding experience, bringing family members closer together in a time of great need. Supporting the caregivers of individuals suffering from dementia allows patients to remain closely connected to loved ones during the process of their disease while simultaneously reducing the overall Medicare funded healthcare costs of those patients.

For the State fiscal year 2020, an additional \$1 million in new funding has been included in the Illinois Department on Aging’s budget for the purpose of enhancing the Caregiver Support Programs. Evidence based group and educational programs, such as Savvy Caregiver (techniques for providing care for dementia patients), Stress Busters (group education and support for the personal needs of caregivers) and Matter of Balance (fall prevention education and planning) have been made available for family caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders (ADRD). The 13 Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) have developed specific policies for implementing service in their areas, allowing them to play a central role in offering advocacy, information, guidance, and supportive resources to caregivers and their families. The AAA’s also coordinate with education partners to facilitate access to affordable, evidence-informed services, programs, interventions, and supports to reduce stress and improve coping, self-efficacy, and overall health.

In addition, Gap funding is an important and available resource to help “fill the gaps”, where other funding may fall short. These funds may be used for respite care, emergency medication assistance, home modifications, personal alarms, etc. Recent state and national studies support the use of respite assistance in particular as a successful tool in reducing stress, improving quality of life for both care giver and care recipient and a means by which caregivers can be engaged in social activities and support communities. Gap funds can be utilized to address immediate safety and care needs which empower caregivers in their important roles.

**For more information, contact Susan C. Real, Legislative Chair (309-829-2065 ext. 218) or Marla Fronczak, I4A President (630-293-5990).**