

Burlington Action Plan for Aging Well

Family Caregiver Support

As an Age-Friendly Community, in Burlington:

The essential role of family caregivers is recognized, supported, and valued in our community, in both the public and private sectors. Family caregivers have easy access to culturally appropriate education, resources, and support, particularly for the care of seniors living with various forms of dementia. Employers have access to 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 recognize and care for the unique needs of family caregivers. Support services in the city and region are robust and sustainable providing respite for family caregivers.

We acknowledge that family caregivers provide the preponderance of care for those seniors who need assistance with daily 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. In Burlington this situation is made visible by the community's commitment to providing necessary support that results in better health outcomes for those in need, those caring for them, and for the **economic vitality of the city** as those who are employed and serve as family caregivers remain productive and supportive in their jobs at home and work.

Moving toward an Age-Friendly Community, in Burlington:

- ✓ All residents have easy access to learn about family caregivers and the outsized role they play in the care of our community's older adults.
- ✓ Service providers, community partners, employers and family caregivers work in concert with the City of Burlington developing support groups for caregivers and Memory Cafes to help support the many forms that caregiving takes in our community.
- ✓ Service providers, community partners, employers and family caregivers create an easily accessible, age friendly, comprehensive collection of resources and a mechanism to collaborate with community partners to assure distribution/access for family caregivers.
- ✓ The City of Burlington creates 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 are recognized for their contributions to making Burlington a more Age-Friendly City.
- ✓ The City of Burlington collaborates with partners to increase the workforce for in-home support / Personal and Home Health Aides who can make a significant difference in respite/caregiver support needs.

Actions: City Council & The Mayor's Office

1. **Family Caregiver Awareness Campaign** – Beginning in November 2024 (Family Caregiver Month). Provide a Proclamation with press release (see 2024 proclamation).
2. City Staff working with the BAC 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 will be checked and updated as needed monthly. Print and translated alternatives with monthly updates will also be available with provision in accessible locations.
3. **Review of City Human Resource 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.
4. Evaluate and provide additional funding to continue and expand the **CEDO/Age Well pilot to train / develop PCAs** to increase workforce for in home supports/Personal and Home Health Aides to increase this critical and skilled workforce in providing services in home and institutional settings.
5. Allocate funding to support the **education of the BIPOC and New American advocates and associations on family caregiving practices and supports**. Develop multilingual resources for Burlington residents, and support training and education for service providers to better understand and support the variety of cultures of caregiving in our community, fostering understanding and respect for practices and values that may be different from the dominant culture.

Summary of Key Investments:

- Funding from the City of Burlington for
 - Production and airing of PSAs.
 - Printed material in English, Braille and languages reflective of our community members
 - City staffing to develop and maintain an Age Friendly City Web site/page and provide facilitation/coordination to support BAC work with its partners.
 - Additional staffing (translators, graduate intern, outreach facilitation) to produce and maintain information for the website, develop public education materials (translated) and professional training and guidance materials, conduct comprehensive community outreach to assess need and evaluate impact.
 - Funding for expanding PCA training and education.
- Collaboration of Fletcher Free Library and Parks and Recreation for space and programming support for caregiver education, support groups, and Memory Cafes.
- Potential policy changes to incorporate caregiver accommodation for city employees, with attention to culturally appropriate caregiving and housing arrangements, with associated increased benefit costs.

Actions: Burlington Aging Council and Age-Friendly Organizational Network (including City Departments) with Staffing Support

1. **Family Caregiver Awareness Campaign** – Beginning in November 2024 (Family Caregiver Month)
 - a. Coordinate annual Proclamation from Mayor/City Council with press release (see 2024 proclamation).
 - b. PSAs highlighting Family Caregivers, available resources, and support (e.g., CARERS, Vermont Alzheimer’s Association Chapter, Age Well) on Radio, TV, social media.
 - c. Partner with Vermont Public and “Across the Fence” for longer form stories and public awareness pieces.
2. The **Age-Friendly City website** will host a list of family caregiver resources. This clearinghouse will host links to local and state resources. Lists and links will be checked and updated as needed monthly. Print and translated alternatives with monthly updates will also be available with provision in accessible locations.
3. The **review of City Human Resource policies** and 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. Information and resources from the AARP Employer Pledge Program will be used as a guide (<https://www.aarp.org/work/employer-pledge-companies/>). The definition of family caregivers will be all-encompassing to include the diversity in familial structures and living situations across all cultures.
4. Support the evaluation of the **CEDO/Age Well pilot to train / develop PCAs** to increase workforce for in home support/Personal and Home Health Aides. Research additional models and funding to support ongoing workforce expansion to meet local needs, and to coordinate with other programs in the state.
5. In partnership with BIPOC and New American advocates and associations, and in cooperation with REIB, support the development and distribution of resources for the **education of the BIPOC and New American advocates and associations on family caregiving practices and supports**, increasing community knowledge on the variety of cultures of caregiving in our community, fostering understanding and respect for practices and values that may be different from the dominant culture.
4. Provide support for **libraries as “third spaces” for the support of family caregivers** and their family members. The UVM Center on Aging will assist in the development of the “third space” concept with Fletcher Free Library, Parks & Recreation, 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. This will include working with local BIPOC, New American, LGBTQ+, and other groups to implement culturally informed third spaces for caregivers of various backgrounds.

5. 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 UVMCC 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](#). Evaluate innovations such as Trualta (an online evidence-based caregiver support platform) with Stakeholders to determine if this is effective support for local caregivers.
6. Examine the success and failure of **Adult Day Services** in Vermont and beyond to give respite opportunities to family caregivers. Work with other state partners in developing strategies to create sustainable day care and programming for seniors who require constant supervision.
7. In partnership with The University of Vermont Health Network Medical Group and the Vermont Medical Association, develop a **campaign 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 UVMCC Community Health Improvement to request family caregivers be represented in future Blueprint revisions and Community Health Needs Assessments.

We measure progress as we:

- 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%).
- Increase usage of the Burlington’s Age Friendly City Family Caregiver Web pages and resources.
- Conduct specific surveying and engagement with the community of caregivers to assess the need and impact of programming.
- Work with local employers to establish metrics for increased employee productivity when provided with caregiver supports.
- Coordinate with [Dementia Family Caregiver Center](#), [Alzheimer’s Association of Vermont](#), Age Well, AARP, UVM Center on Aging, local BIPOC and New American service groups, and local senior centers to build a framework for local data gathering and impact tracking.
- Increase the number of people served by support groups, Memory Cafes and educational events.