



Caring for the Caregiver

A Community Development Approach

Bonnie Hoffmann
Associate Director
Alberta Caregivers Association

Alberta Caregivers Association

a non-profit charity established in 2001

We seek to assist caregivers to maintain and/or regain balance in their caregiving journey. We accomplish this through information, education, support, networking, advocacy, and community development.

Mission: To empower caregivers and promote their well-being

Vision: An Alberta where caregivers are valued and supported

Caregiving is a Timely Issue

- Our population is aging
- Medical advances are allowing more people to live, and live longer, with illnesses and disability
- Moving away from institutional care
- Aging in place moves greater amounts of care into the community and onto family and friends

Caregiving Trends

- At some point in their lives, nearly half (46%) of Canadians aged 15 and older (13 million people) have provided care.
- Age related needs were identified as the single most common problem requiring help from caregivers.
- In 2012, 60% of caregivers reported juggling of employment responsibilities, raising children under 18 and caring for aging parents.

By the numbers:

- In 2002, seniors comprised 15% of all family/friend caregivers aged 45 and older.
- About half (48%) of caregivers reported caring for parents over the past year.
- Spousal caregivers report providing an average of 14 hours/week of care
- In 2012, 60% of caregivers reported juggling of employment responsibilities, raising children under 18 and caring for aging parents.

Health & Social Impacts of Caring

- Up to 70% of caregivers have the symptoms or a diagnosis of depression.
- Physical consequences reported include sleep disturbances, physical strain and declines in general health.
- Changing social activities often leave caregivers isolated.

2003 Shining A Light Findings

1. Handling Negative Thoughts & Emotions
2. Disturbed Sleep
3. Physical Demands
4. Physical Environmental Barriers to Social Interaction
5. Coping with Difficult Family Dynamics
6. Adjusting Perceptions of the Relationship with the CR
7. Navigating the Service Systems
8. Financial Hardships

Handling of Negative Thoughts and Emotions

Being on an emotional roller coaster

“I feel angry- blow up and then I feel guilty –it has destroyed myself esteem”

Constant Guarding/Apprehension/Fear

“I feel on edge...everything comes from left field”

Guilt and Self-berating

“I feel guilty going without him...what kind of wife would leave a husband at home and go for dinner?”

2003 Shining A Light Findings: Caregiver Strengths & Internal Changes

1. Evolving World View / Perspective
2. Increasing Assertiveness
3. Becoming System Savvy
4. Developing Caregiver Wisdom

2003 Shining A Light Findings: Main Recommendations

1. Peer education and peer support for primary caregivers.
2. Focused information and resources for and about caregivers.
3. Increase societal understanding of caregivers' roles.
4. Educate health professionals.
5. Advocate for system changes.

So, HOW did we decide to proceed?



COMPASS for the Caregiver

Caregiver Orientation for Mobilizing Personal Assets and Strengths for Self-care

“Lacking a coherent intellectual and moral commitment, (he) was forced to find his compass in personal experience”

(Doris Kearns Goodwin)

As a compass is used by explorers to navigate their way through the unknown wilderness, this **COMPASS** program has been designed to assist caregivers navigate their way through the unknown situations that are ahead of them in their caregiving journey.



“Made me more aware of my own short comings, gave me ideas to help me cope better.”

“I better understand some of the feelings that come up - how to deal with guilt - and that makes me healthier.”

“I'm not responsible for my recipient's happiness. I am only responsible for meeting her needs. Anticipating future needs is not beneficial, other than general planning.”

“I learned to be kind to myself.”

“It was wonderful to be able to talk to others who understand and don't judge. “

Caregiver Advisor

- Dedicated position within the organization
- Family dynamics
- Burned out caregivers
- Information Sessions

1. Peer education and support.
2. Focused information and resources for & about caregivers.

Information Sessions

In it's third season of topics applicable to caregivers:

- Stress Management
- Setting Healthy Boundaries and Limits
- Caregiving from Your Strengths
- Advocating for Yourself and Others: Get Results
- Financial Planning Around Caregiving
- What's in Your Care Package? Being Ready for Difficult Days

4. Educate health professionals



Links 2 Caring: The Interagency Caregiver Support Team

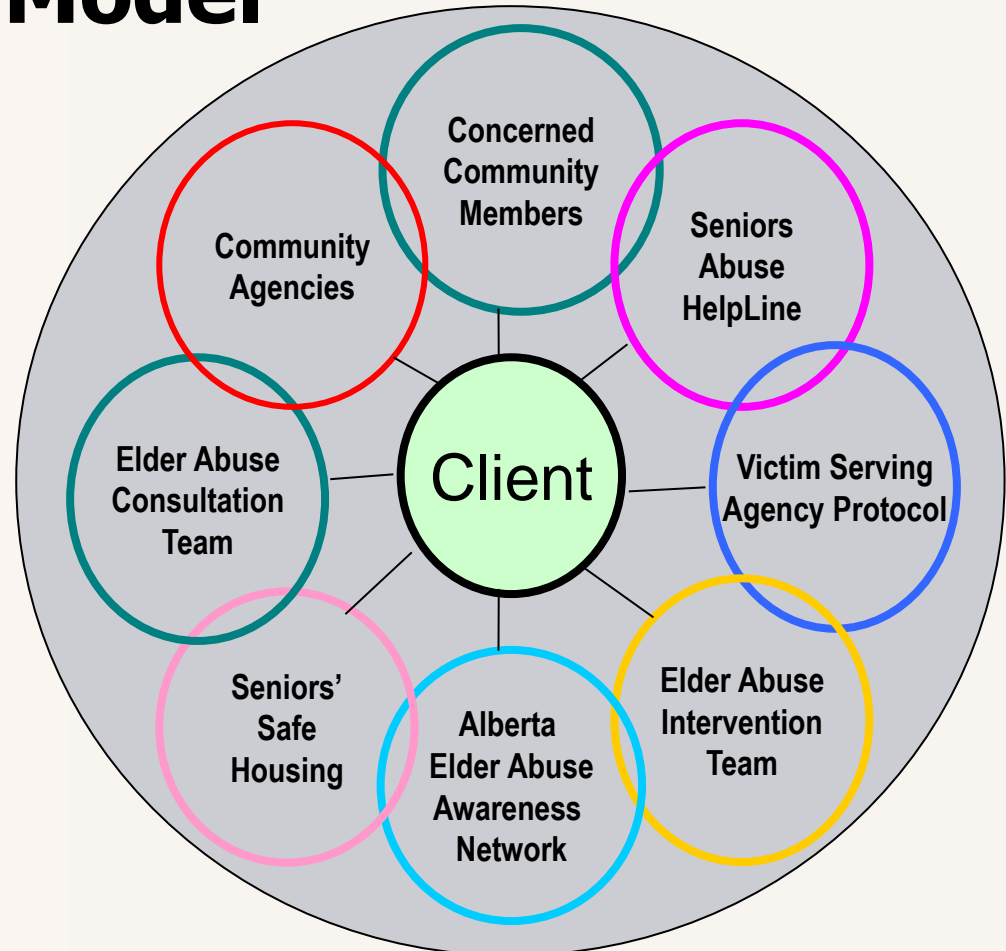
Presentation by:

ElderCare Edmonton & Alberta Caregivers Association

November 17, 2010



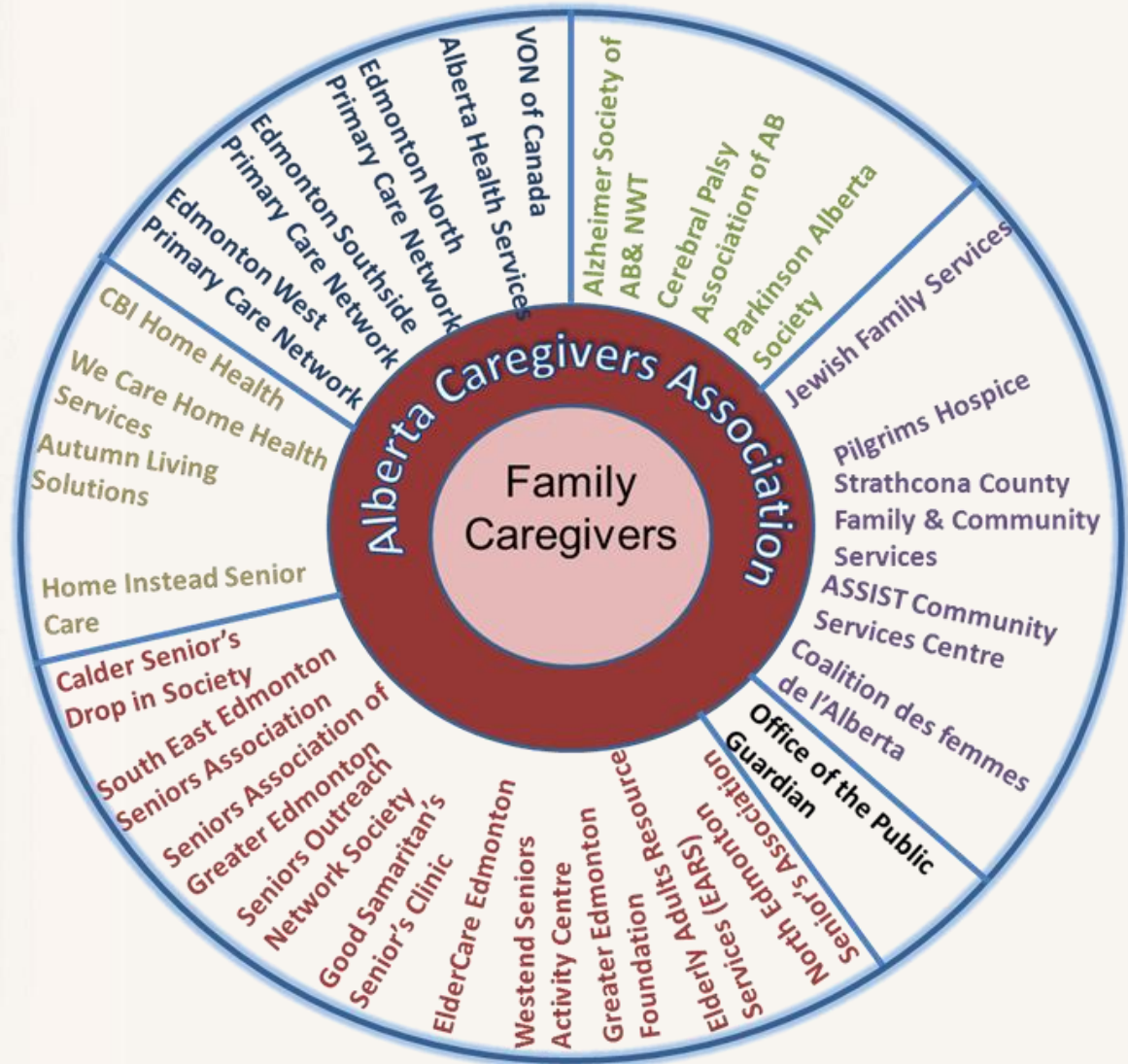
The Community Model



- 2. Focused information & resources for & about caregivers
- 3. Increase societal understanding of caregiver role
- 5. Advocate for system change



**Edmonton
Caregiver Support Team**

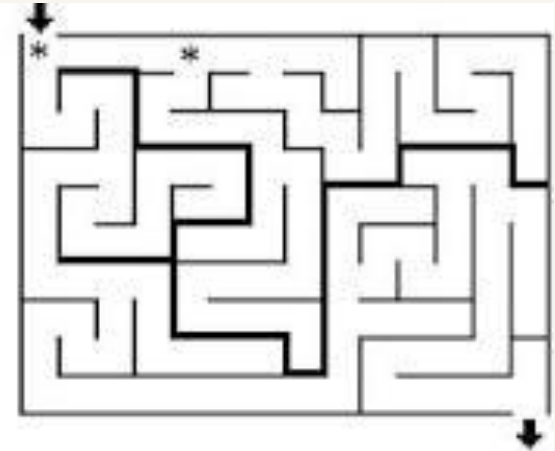


3. Increase societal understanding of caregiver role
4. Educate health professionals

Caregiver Navigator

The aims of the program are to prevent caregiver burnout and depression by increasing the capacity of health professionals and community agency staff to:

- Understand the caregiving experience
- Identify and assess caregivers' needs
- Support caregivers to adopt preventative, self-care practices.
- Facilitate caregiver access to timely and appropriate resources and referrals.



- *to educate*
- *to assist*
- *to encourage*
- *to provide*
- *to equip*

Caregiver Navigator

“a good awareness building experience – often we get over focused on the needs of the care recipient.”

“the components of the day were all relevant and helpful.”

“I enjoyed the learning environment – safe and relaxed.”

“I lost my parents 5 years ago. I was surprised to find myself revisiting that experience ... hmmm, what might I have done differently.

3. Increase societal understanding of caregivers' roles through raising public profile of caregiver issues, strengths and needs.



Caregiver Ambassadors

After caregiving comes to an end, how do we process the journey?

Caregivers coming together to share, shape, mold, heal and perhaps invest their knowledge and gained wisdom to others through pursuit of creativity.



Community Development Approach

something for everyone

- Community becomes more aware of caregivers overall
- Caregivers receive dedicated supports
- ACGA is able to meet our mission
- Other organizations are equipped with resources for their caregivers
- Decrease in duplication of services

Supporting Alberta Seniors

How might your community be involved?

Caregiver Support Project with Alberta Health

- Will pilot the project in a small number of communities this fall
- Looking to expand to a greater number of communities in 2014
- How could your organization or community benefit?
- Caregivers are an essential component of age-friendly communities



“Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.”

- Helen Keller