

7 FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT

Assess the needs of family caregivers and provide them with training and resources to support the care needs of seriously ill members.

Caregivers of people with serious illness are often overwhelmed and experience significant levels of stress and burden, which can directly impact their ability to provide quality support to the people in their care. Currently, most specialty palliative care teams address some caregiver needs through the team's social worker, but often these supports are not comprehensive and/or are highly dependent on individual social worker knowledge, skills, and competing priorities.

Whether administered by a health plan itself or through requirements for contracted palliative care teams and other providers, offering a more comprehensive and consistent additional layer of support to family caregivers has the potential to improve member outcomes. These outcomes may include reducing emergency room visits and hospitalizations, addressing medication-related issues, and ultimately, improving member satisfaction. Supported caregivers also contribute to helping members stay at home, thereby reducing the need for skilled nursing facility placement.

Additionally, caregiver support programs provide the added benefit of improving outcomes for the caregiver, who might also be a member. This includes a decrease in caregiver depression and anxiety, prevention of injuries, and better management of the caregiver's own chronic conditions.

Caregiver support can manifest in various forms tailored to the specific needs of caregivers. This may include resource navigation and problem solving, emotional support and counseling, social-emotional skills training, medical skills training, respite, financial aid opportunities, and bereavement support.

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ACTION ITEMS



THE ESSENTIALS

At the very least, start here →



PROGRESSING FURTHER

Take the next steps →



SETTING THE STANDARD

Strive for excellence →



THE ESSENTIALS

Ensure the health plan adopts a structured approach to supporting family caregivers of seriously ill members. Family caregiver support can be delivered by palliative care providers, community organizations, or with health plan internal resources. This support could include assessment, navigation, medical and non-medical skills training, and respite.

Require contracted palliative care providers to have a structured and comprehensive approach to supporting family caregivers. Consider the effort required to do this work when calculating payment amount for palliative care providers.

Ensure that family caregiver support resources, whether delivered by the palliative care team or other partners, **are cataloged** and easily accessible to caregivers and all relevant contracted providers.

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PROGRESSING FURTHER

Require contracted palliative care providers to reassess caregiver needs on a regular basis (e.g., Zeit Burden survey administered every 60-90 days).

Develop a comprehensive suite of caregiver programming, either administered through the health plan or through a provider network (beyond palliative care providers), to fill gaps in existing programs.

Ensure that programs incorporate culturally and linguistically tailored support, preferably through partnerships with trusted community-based organizations.

Develop and implement a mechanism to collect feedback on caregiver support interventions to facilitate quality assessment and improvement.



SETTING THE STANDARD

Offer a respite benefit for family caregivers of seriously ill members.

Ensure that the suite of caregiver programs incorporates flexibility and variety to address the full spectrum of caregiver abilities and needs at different points along the caregiver journey.

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Table 7: Resources

TYPE OF RESOURCE	RESOURCES	DESCRIPTION
Assessment Tools	Caregiver Assessment Tools (Family Caregiver Alliance)	Examples of caregiver assessment tools used by state agencies.
	Zarit Burden Interview	Widely used assessment tool. 22- or 12-question caregiver burden assessment that can be self-administered or administered by trained staff as an interview.
	Caring for the Caregiver (Center to Advance Palliative Care)	List of six caregiver assessment tools.
Database of Programs	Best Practice Caregiving Database (Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging and Family Caregiver Alliance)	Over 40 evidence-based dementia-focused Caregiver Support interventions, some with extensive implementation support and many that also support caregivers of people with other conditions.
Program Example	Veterans Affairs (VA) Caregiver Support Program	The VA provides an example of more comprehensive offerings to caregivers through their Program of General Caregiver Support Services and Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.
Payment Model	Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience (GUIDE) Model	Medicare dementia-focused care model that includes care coordination and care management, caregiver education and support, and respite services.

THANK YOU

**For more information,
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