



Respite Report

SPRING
2006

Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is a frightening and rising trend in Wisconsin.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, over 3,900 suspected cases of elder abuse and neglect were reported in 2004, with more than 337 cases involving life threatening circumstances, or tragically, death.

Elder abuse is defined by Wisconsin Statute (Ch. 46.90) and reporting protocols enforced by DHFS as any person aged 60 years or older suffering from one of these four types of abuse or neglect:

Physical Abuse

This form of abuse is defined as the infliction of pain, injury, unreasonable confinement and can also mean dispensing inappropriate medication or amount of medication. In addition, the reporting requirement includes sexual abuse, which occurs when a person has been forced, tricked, threatened or otherwise coerced into sexual contact.

Material Abuse (Financial Exploitation)

Material abuse is the misuse of an elder's money or property. It includes deception, diverting income, mismanagement of funds or taking money or possessions against a person's will. Indicators of possible financial abuse:

- Checks and other documents signed when the person cannot write
- Activity in bank accounts that is inappropriate to the person (i.e., use of ATM when the person cannot walk)
- Missing clothing, jewelry, or other items
- Recent will when the person is clearly incapable of making a will
- Power of attorney given when person is incompetent to grant power of attorney

Neglect

Neglect occurs when a caregiver's failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical or dental care results in significant danger to the physical or mental health of an older person in his/her care.

Self-Neglect

Self-neglect occurs when there is a significant danger to an elder person's physical or mental health because the elder person is unable or fails to provide him/herself with adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical or dental care.

Behavioral indicators in and of themselves may not always indicate the presence of abuse or neglect, but may be clues to encourage looking beyond the obvious. Some signs to watch for include:

- Fear
- Denial
- Anger
- Conflicting accounts of incidents by the family, supporters, victim
- Withdrawal
- Resignation
- Agitation, anxiety
- Depression

Training and education for respite care providers is critical because in Wisconsin, as well as other states, reporting suspected abuse is mandatory. For more information on responsibilities and procedures contact Respite Care Association of Wisconsin toll-free at (866) 702-RCAW.

To report suspected elder abuse, call the local Elder Abuse Helpline or the county's lead elder abuse agency for confidential consultation. Additional information can be found on the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services website:

www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov/aging/elderabuse/ ■



PRESIDENT'S C O L U M N

I am honored to be starting 2006 as the president of the board of directors of the Respite Care Association of Wisconsin. Like many of you, I have been in the respite field for years without even knowing it. I started out as a respite provider, working with a family and their son who had just had a liver transplant and a few years later, a daughter diagnosed with autism. I gave them a break for a few hours a couple of times a week, but didn't know what a valuable service I was providing because I enjoyed my time with the kids. Over 10 years have now passed and I am still involved with this family; my relationship with them has only grown stronger.

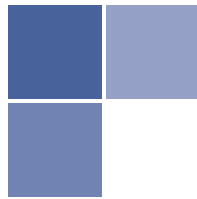
I work with families in southeast Wisconsin in my role as respite case manager for United Cerebral Palsy. Here it's easy to see the benefits of this program because I am involved with families who are receiving services and those who are on waiting lists. For others outside the caregiving world, respite can be a difficult concept to understand. Often times "respite care" is confused with hospice care, or in some cases inaccurately tagged "babysitting." Even among my peers there can be inconsistency in definition and understanding.

But the challenge of defining "respite care" for lawmakers and opinion leaders is where I see the most work, and the biggest opportunity.

Here's a myth-buster—respite is not "for the convenience of the parents" as one lawmaker said, but is a proven strategy to help reduce abuse and neglect. Let's use this analogy—how many times did your parents say "count to ten" when faced with an angry or stressful situation? If you are like me, counting to ten helps me cope with conflict and prevents me from saying or doing something I'd regret. Respite performs the same function by allowing a person to step away during times of crisis or stress.

Respite care is my passion and I intend to work hard for families who depend on respite services. As president, it is my honor to help RCAW create fresh and simple strategies that communicate the value of respite care. I am excited to see what this year will bring for respite care in the state of Wisconsin. ■

—Nichole Hunkins



Linda Blohowiak Honored

The board of directors of the RCAW honored founding board member Linda Blohowiak with the title "emeritus director" at their annual meeting in December.

Linda Blohowiak has served on the board of directors since the organization was founded in 1987. "Linda Blohowiak has been a committed board member since the early days when this was just a group sitting around the kitchen table," said Jim Schroeder, executive director. "Linda has a sense of fairness which makes her a consistent leader, both within the Association and the respite community."

At the annual meeting of the board where Blohowiak ended her term, outgoing President Kathryn Franke honored her work on behalf of the RCAW with the designation "emeritus director," a privilege rarely bestowed by the board. "It is because of the commitment of Linda that the RCAW is strong, and that we are helping to meet the need of Wisconsin's family caregivers," stated Franke. ■

PBS DOCUMENTARY CHRONICLES Aging and Family Caregivers in Wisconsin

This month an important documentary will air on PBS. "Almost Home" tells the story of a year in the life of Saint John's On The Lake, a retirement community morphing from a predictable medical model of care to cultural or social model of care. Airing on April 4, the film explores the challenges of long-term care through the eyes of residents, staff and family.

Founded more than 130 years ago, Saint John's On the Lake recognized that the wave of retiring and aging baby boomers will force change in the way care is delivered to seniors, and in what form. Cultural needs of this generation are unlike any before—collaboration, creativity and flexibility are the change agents for this facility.

Exploring the living environment and its subsequent effects on resident behavior, the documentary dissects the lives of five residents and illuminates key issues facing society today, such as long-distance caregiving, how life changes when a spouse has Alzheimer's, living with guilt and how a member of the "sandwich" generation (see RCAW newsletter Vol. 7.4) balances care for aging parents and young children.

To learn more about the film and PBS broadcast schedule in your area, check the website at www.almosthomedoc.org. ■

Calendar of Events:

Board of Directors Meeting

May 4, 2006 - Madison

Respite Providers, Independent Contractors, and Unemployment Compensation

RCAW recently met with a Wisconsin respite care program which was addressing a rather frustrating problem.

The program had created a system whereby the respite provider would be treated as an independent contractor, rather than employee of the agency. This can be a great way to make it easier for families to access respite care. Under the independent contractor system, the family deals directly with the respite care provider, not the agency. It can be a great way to reduce red tape and expedite services so families get the support they need.

However, in this instance, a former provider later filed for unemployment compensation and an administrative law judge ruled in the former provider's favor.

We have identified the issues that resulted in the ruling, and found a way to solve the problem. If other programs have experienced similar issues please contact executive director Jim Schroeder at (608) 222-2033. ■

Statewide Respite Care Meeting in the Works

Several programs expressed interest in having RCAW organize a meeting of respite care programs from around the state. To assist in gauging the interest and identifying topics for such a meeting, RCAW distributed a survey to state programs and agencies. The response rate to the survey was incredible—here's what we found:

- 82% of respondents would prefer a one-day meeting, rather than two days.
- The opportunity to network surfaced as a critical need, more than 69% cited this element as important.
- More than three-quarters of respondents like a keynote speaker and breakout sessions included in the day.

- Spring is by far the most requested time for a meeting, followed shortly by summer. Winter and fall requests did not meet the test for a viable time of year.
- The most requested topics to include in any conference are fundraising, grant-writing, community awareness, and provider recruitment, retention, and training.

Thank you to those who completed the survey. As we begin planning this statewide meeting your input will be valuable. For more information, contact RCAW at (608) 222-2033. ■

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

In April of 2004, I participated in Governor Jim Doyle's Summit to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect: A State Call to Action. Following the two-day summit, which was organized by the Child Abuse Prevention Fund of Children's Hospital and Health System, Children's Trust Fund of Wisconsin and Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin, I joined two of the six workgroups organized to make recommendations for short and long term policy recommendations for preventing child maltreatment in Wisconsin.

Respite Care was identified as one of the major strategies which can be used to prevent abuse and neglect. As you know, respite has been shown to reduce caregiver stress and social isolation, which can be precursors to abuse.

We are now engaged in a project, in partnership with Children's Trust Fund of Wisconsin, which aims to identify gaps in the availability of respite care to families at risk, develop policy recommendations to close those gaps, and target respite care resources to families in need. As part of the project, we have contracted with Chamberlain Research Consultants, a respected research firm in Madison, to survey awareness of and attitudes toward respite care among Child Protective Services and Head Start personnel statewide. We will also gather information on availability of respite care county by county, as well as recommendations on how to deliver respite care to families at risk of abuse and neglect. We'll use the information gained from the survey to effectively target respite care to families including children that would benefit most from this valuable support service.

We are extremely excited about this project. Through the leadership of those who convened and organized the Summit, we have been given the opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of children and families statewide, by providing the supports families need to stay together and safe. ■

—Jim Schroeder

RCAW Elects Officers

The board of directors of the Respite Care Association of Wisconsin (RCAW) elected new officers at their annual meeting on December 1 in Johnson Creek, Wisconsin.

The new officers of the association are:

President: Nichole Hunkins - Waukesha County Outreach and Respite Support Manager, United Cerebral Palsy of Southeastern Wisconsin

Vice President/Treasurer: Nancy Marz, Bureau of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services

Secretary: Pat Bruce, Family Caregiver Support Network, Milwaukee

Also elected to the board:

Representing Respite Consumer: John Cram, Milwaukee

Director: Nan Upright-Sexton, Adoption Resources of Wisconsin

In addition, outgoing director Linda Blohowiak was awarded "emeritus" status in recognition of her dedication and commitment to the RCAW for more than 15 years. ■

RCAW Board of Directors

Nichole Hunkins, President
UCP-SEW

Nancy Marz, Vice President/Treasurer
DHFS-Bureau of Mental Health

Pat Bruce, Secretary
Family Caregiver Support Network

Kathryn Jalas Franke, Past President
Wisconsin Family Ties

Directors

John Cram
Respite Consumer UCP-SEW

Nan Upright-Sexton
Adoption Resources of Wisconsin

Elected Official - vacant

RCAW Staff

Jonie Bonfield, Mirabel Borski, Linda Zwicker
Projects Assistant
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(866)-702-RCAW

Visit us on the web at:
www.respitecarewi.org

Lifespan Respite Network Programs

Western Region

Program Contact: Terri Larson-Baxter
Coordinating Agency: United Cerebral Palsy of WCW
Phone: (715) 832-1782

Northeastern Region

Program Contact: Linda Kimple
Coordinating Agency: Creative Care Options
Phone: (920) 906-5174

Northern Region

Program Contact: Deanna Yost
Coordinating Agency: New Horizons North
Phone: (715) 682-7171 x 35

Southeastern Region

Program Contact: Nichole Hunkins
Coordinating Agency: United Cerebral Palsy of SEW
Phone: (414) 329-4500

Southern Region

Program Coordinator: Karla Jensen
Coordinating Agency: Epilepsy Foundation of SCW
Phone: (920) 356-9870

A Gift to RCAW Is a Gift to THOUSANDS of Wisconsin Families

Budgets are tight for non-profit organizations, and we are no exception. RCAW needs your help to sustain our efforts toward promoting, supporting, and expanding quality statewide respite care across the lifespan. Our efforts impact thousands of Wisconsin families caring for a family member with special needs. Please consider a gift to RCAW as a way of showing your support for our ongoing efforts. As we say, you don't have to give until it hurts, just give until it feels good! ■

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