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## **Helping Caregivers to Care: In Search of Public Policy to Support Family Caregivers**

Executive Summary from a Policy Paper from the New Jersey Foundation for Aging

January 2003

"Life changes totally- relationships with family and friends change. This [caregiving] is not always negative- only the stress of constantly predicting what needs to be done in order to stay ahead of a crisis".

A glimpse into the dilemma of family caregiving is articulated in the comment above. Roles change, relationships change, time demands change and yet many families and friends provide the bulk of care to those chronically ill in this country. Cultural competency, complicated bureaucracies, access to appropriate care, etc. all roll into making caregiving a true labyrinth for all those who enter in an effort to provide care for their loved ones. The New Jersey Foundation for Aging set out to explore, illustrate and design a path to improve the system that family caregivers must face each day. The Foundation is partially supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which is committed to improving access to health care for all Americans.

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### **Policy Recommendations**

#### ***Public Education and Advocacy***

Improve the public's understanding of the role family caregivers provide within the health care network

Improve the understanding within the workplace of the role of family caregivers

Improve the public's understanding and recognition of and the need for assistance for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren

Establish statewide and county based task forces focusing on public understanding and education on the needs of caregivers including the professional network but also giving significant weight to participation from family caregivers

Improve the public's understanding of the availability of caregiver services within the community

Development of marketing materials that address ethnic diversity

Increased outreach efforts

Advocate for increased financial support for the formalized network of care as well as caregiver options and supportive services

### ***Professional Education and Policy Development for Systemic Change***

Establish statewide and county based task forces focusing on the professional providers' awareness of caregivers' concerns to identify gaps in services and to promote collaborative opportunities to improve the provision of care

Promote a dialogue among provider networks aimed at addressing new approaches for outreach to caregivers, technical assistance to faith based organizations and hospital discharge planners, poly-pharmacy issues, collaborative approaches for respite, mental health and other supportive services and the discussion of a priority system response to vulnerable caregiver needs

### ***Service Provision and Related Policy Issues***

Advocate for increased financial remedies and options including LTC financing subsidized insurance, private insurance tax credits and stipends for family caregivers

Establish statewide and county based task forces focusing on identifying gaps in services and promote collaborative opportunities to offer accessible, affordable, and culturally sensitive programs for caregivers

Advocate for services that address diverse cultural competency in staffing, outreach materials, and specialized services

Seek to improve the current service delivery system by:

- increasing the services available within community setting;
- increasing multidisciplinary approaches to service provision;
- increasing accessible settings to reduce barriers to caregivers;
- considering a priority system response to serve the vulnerable caregiver

Advocate for increased funding for caregiver services including respite, at home case management and mental health, supportive services like caregiver call lines, at home learning modules, facilitated self-help groups, laundry services, grocery and meal delivery, and subsidized escorted transportation

Advocate for increased funding to provide preventive health services for immigrants, the uninsured and the underinsured

Advocate for supplemental funding programs for family caregivers who historically under utilize the formal network of care