

Caregiving is What New York is All About



Whether during a global pandemic or a national disaster, to find employment, or volunteer at a local non-profit, New Yorkers take care of one another. We also look out for one another through the care we provide to those closest to us. Sadly though, not enough of us are taking advantage of the help available to us and our loved ones. We give this love and care while also managing other tasks, and are rarely aware we too can be supported.

While leading the Department

I am also one of the estimated 1.3 million caregivers living in the city, taking care of my mother. In many cultures it is natural to take care of a relative and each generation continues the tradition. But an older adult can also be the primary caretaker of their grandchild or another individual they are close with. But most people do not even realize they are caregiver.

The fact is though, if you are like many of us who look after a loved one or someone who is unable to care for themselves, you are a caregiver.

The Department for the Aging's Caregiver Support Program is designed to help balance a caregiver's obligations. Care specialists across the city get asked many of the same questions such as how do I keep the person I'm caring for safely at home? Or, what benefits are I and my grandchild eligible for? These are questions they can get answers to. The Program also includes respite so you can make sure those you are responsible for are receiving care at home or in a safe environment while you take a break. Services may also include financial support for some types of assistive technology like medical alert systems, minor-home modifications and supplies, and long-term care planning in case anything were to happen to you or the one you are responsible for.

Just as importantly, Caregivers can also participate in trainings and support groups, and receive counseling so you can speak with others who understand what you are going through, and realize you are not alone.

With older New Yorkers outnumbering school-aged children, opportunities like

these will become even more important.

It has been estimated that because of their increased responsibilities, caregivers can lose around \$412,000 in income and benefits. If we want live in an equitable society, we must give caregivers the opportunity to support themselves and their families by expanding the resources that are available to them.

Between the years 2015 and 2020, the number of caregivers across the country grew from 18 to 21 percent, and it was encouraging to hear President Joe Biden say in his most recent State of the Union speech, that our country should be "giving more breathing room to millions of unpaid, informal family caregivers looking after loved ones." Mayor Eric Adams and I are advocating to change the definition of a caregiver in the Older Americans Act (OAA). This legislation helps fund older adult centers and home delivered meals, as well as programs for caregivers. By changing the definition of what a caregiver is, more

Americans can identify as one and take advantage of the resources that are available to them.

If you are looking after someone close to you and need help, call Aging Connect at 212-AGING-NYC (212-244-6469) or visit www.nyc.gov/aging to be connect to a Caregiver Support Program in your neighborhood.

These resources are here because this is how we Get Stuff Done in New York City - we support one another. Especially those who are providing multiple types of care, but caring for one another is what New York is all about.



*NYC Department for the Aging
Commissioner
Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez*