

Caregivers are essential to keeping seniors in their homes in Francophone minority and rural communities

Summary

- Caregivers play a vital role in enabling seniors to continue living in their homes and their community for the longest possible time; however, this does pose several challenges.
- Recognizing these challenges is essential to guarantee adequate support for caregivers and to improve their well-being along with that of the seniors and vulnerable persons they are assisting.
- The aim of the pilot project was to understand the requirements of caregivers in a Francophone rural area.
- Based on the needs that were identified, the Equipped Caregiver training program was developed and offered as part of the pilot project for caregivers in Tracadie and Bathurst.
- The training included five workshops with professionals, employees and an advisory committee to respond to the needs of caregivers.
- 18 caregivers were recruited (women: 100%, Francophone: 100%, average age: 68).

HSPF Focus Area	To increase autonomy, improve quality of life and promote healthy living habits
Project Start & End Date	January 2020 – March 2024
Organization/Agency	Association Francophone des Aînés du Nouveau Brunswick
Location	Chaleur Region (Tracadie & Bathurst), New Brunswick
Principal Investigator(s)	Julie Caissie

Indicator	Impact / Outcome / Result	Quote
Challenges and needs of caregivers	One-on-one interviews uncovered several challenges encountered by caregivers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No health care services available in French and no public transit; • Challenges in various areas: physical and mental health, professional, financial, service management; • Limited access to specialized care and necessary information. 	<p><i>"It's an entirely different matter for Francophones. I always feel at a disadvantage by not being able to speak English fluently (...) as the services are provided in English! We make do, but..."</i></p> <p><i>"There aren't any taxis, there are no buses, there's nothing! They don't have cars. It takes 40 minutes to pick up a prescription or personal items, and the like!"</i></p> <p><i>"Fighting the system ! That's a huge challenge for caregivers!"</i></p>
	The caregivers questioned did express the desire to receive actual support , particularly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and information services; • Financial support; • Respite services; • Psychological support; • Services to seniors: daytime nursing homes, appointment accompaniment services. 	<p><i>"That's what I need, really sharing with someone!"</i></p>
	The participants identified a need to have caregivers access support groups , an association and training .	
Training assessment	A statistical analysis of the questionnaires completed by 11 caregivers before and after the training (6 from Tracadie and five from Bathurst) revealed the following:	
	After training, statistically significant improvements were observed in some areas, but only among caregivers in Tracadie : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating in activities for oneself: the caregivers are devoting more time to their leisure activities. 	

Indicator	Impact / Outcome / Result
Training assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of resources: caregivers acquired better knowledge of available resources and services. • Mental health: the mental health of caregivers did improve. • Communication with the person receiving assistance: communication and exchanges between caregivers and the people they were helping did improve. <p>No significant change in the overall health of caregivers in Tracadie and Bathurst was noted after training.</p>

Methods and Comparison

Semi-directed interviews with 18 caregivers were conducted to determine their needs and challenges associated with their role. A training program was then developed and evaluated with the 11 caregivers, who completed questionnaires before and after the training to assess its impact.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

- The findings of the interviews with caregivers highlighted the numerous challenges confronting them and revealed the lack of support and dedicated services in Francophone minority and rural communities.
- The assessment of the Enhanced Caregivers training indicated that it effectively helped caregivers in their role, improved their well-being and strengthened communication with the people in their care.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the needs and interests of caregivers in Francophone communities are given proper recognition and made known to governments and to decision-makers, particularly through active representation on committees and working groups.
- Establish a provincial association for caregivers to close the gap between seniors and the work of caregivers that goes unnoticed, particularly through training and support groups.
- Recognize and support the role of caregivers by providing government funded support to cover expenses associated with their role.
- Develop more services that provide respite and psychosocial support to caregivers.

Next Steps

- The project did not obtain any additional funding for subsequent activities; however a funding strategy was developed, and the team is working toward acquiring financing.
- The additional funding could be used to provide training in various regions of New Brunswick.

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