

# Care Services Navigation & Care Skills Development

## Summary

- As New Brunswick's senior population grows rapidly, the government has proposed an "aging in place" strategy, which aims to provide seniors with the support needed to stay at home and live independently for as long as possible.
- When seniors face health problems or have specific independent living needs, family and friends often come to their aid. These "informal caregivers" need support and training to meet the needs of seniors.
- In New Brunswick, general knowledge about caregiving is not easily accessible and many people struggle to navigate the systems for senior caregiving support.
- A four-day workshop was carried out to provide informal caregivers with information that would help them in their caregiving roles and in navigating and using available resources in New Brunswick.
  - The workshop was led by two professionals in senior care and supported by healthcare students from New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) and the University of New Brunswick (UNB).
  - Participants had the option to attend virtually or in person.
- The project evaluated the impact of the workshop initiative on caregivers' quality of life, preparedness for caregiving, and overall workshop experience.
- 134 informal caregivers attended the workshops and 113 of them were included in the evaluation analysis: 80% women, 98% Caucasian, 58% aged 65 years or older (M = 66.8 years, range = 31-86 years).

**HSPP Focus Area**  
**Project Start & End Date**  
**Organization/Agency**  
**Location**  
**Principal Investigator(s)**

Improving social built environments to foster healthy aging  
February 28, 2022 – March 31, 2024  
New Brunswick Community College  
Saint John, New Brunswick  
[Tammie Black](#), [Dr. Kyle Brymer](#)

Indicator	Impact / Outcome / Result
Caregiver role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediately after the workshop and more than 6 weeks later, the informal caregivers:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Felt more <b>prepared</b> for their caregiving role (<math>p &lt; .001</math>).</li> <li>◦ Felt more <b>comfortable</b> and <b>competent</b> in all 13 areas targeted by the workshop (<math>p &lt; .002</math> for all areas). This includes understanding the importance of self-care for caregivers, outlining and using a care plan for senior care, identifying various needs and obstacles during the aging process, supporting activities of daily living, promoting independence for seniors, and being aware of and using available services for seniors and their families.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Caregiver quality of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caregivers experienced improved <b>quality of life</b> immediately after the workshop and more than 6 weeks later (<math>p &lt; .001</math>).</li> <li>• Supplementary analyses showed that caregiver quality of life is directly related to both loneliness and to preparedness for caregiving:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Caregivers that experienced some form of <b>loneliness</b> tended to have <u>lower</u> caregiver <b>quality of life</b> (<math>p &lt; .05</math> for all measures).</li> <li>◦ Caregivers that felt <b>prepared</b> for their role tended to have a <u>higher</u> caregiver <b>quality of life</b> (<math>p &lt; .001</math>).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Workshop Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The workshop evaluation revealed that the majority of participants expressed favorable views of all components of the workshop:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Workshop education relevance:</b> more than 87% of participants rated it favorably</li> <li>◦ <b>Training for caregiving role:</b> more than 93% of participants rated it favorably.</li> <li>◦ <b>Workshop contextual factors:</b> between 52 and 95% of participants rated it favorably. Most highly rated were the <b>handouts</b> (95%) and <b>workshop topics</b> (91%).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 97% of participants would recommend the workshop to others providing care for a senior.</li> <li>• These results suggest that the workshop <b>met the needs</b> of the informal caregivers and that they believed it was a <b>valuable experience</b>.</li> </ul>

Indicator	Impact / Outcome / Result
<b>Return on Investment (ROI)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately 6.5% of seniors end up in long-term care, and the cost of long-term care per senior is approximately \$3,437.08 per month.</li> <li>• If the workshops delayed the entry of 9 participants (or 6.5% of the sample) by one year, the savings are estimated to be \$371,000 to the province.</li> <li>• If all 134 participants were at a high risk of requiring long-term care services, and our program delayed their need for institutionalization by one year, then the estimated cost-savings could be as high as \$5.6 million.</li> </ul>

### Methods and Comparison

- The thirteen caregiver role target areas were measured before, immediately after and six weeks after the four-day workshop.
- Caregivers completed validated and reliable questionnaires before, immediately after and six weeks after the workshop to measure changes in and the relationship between preparedness for caregiving, caregivers' quality of life and loneliness.
- Caregivers also evaluated the workshop immediately following participation.
- All data was analyzed statistically.

### Conclusions and Lessons Learned

- Results demonstrated that a four-day workshop increased caregivers' quality of life and preparedness for caregiving.
- Loneliness negatively impacted caregivers' quality of life suggesting that interventions targeting loneliness might also increase caregivers' quality of life, which has potential to promote environments where seniors can age successfully in place.
- Preparedness for caregiving was positively related to caregivers' quality of life, highlighting the importance of providing caregivers with knowledge and resources to support their caregiving role.
- It is possible that the four-day workshop led to an increase in preparedness for caregiving that improved quality of life but, in addition to this, it is also possible that the workshop served as a space where caregivers increased their social supports, which in turn reduced their sense of loneliness.

### Recommendations

- As most caregivers recruited were older and retired adults, future deliveries of the program would need to be adjusted to attract younger caregivers.
- To reduce the time commitment required from caregivers, future evaluations could investigate whether shorter versions of the workshop, such as a two-day format, are sufficient.
- Determine whether the improvements in caregivers' quality of life and preparedness for caregiving reduce burnout, as burnout prevention is key for sustaining an "aging in place" strategy.

### Next Steps

- The project was unable to secure funding to maintain or scale up the program beyond the end of HSPP funding. The team is currently working to secure future funding.
- NBCC, UNB – Saint John and the University of Manitoba have established a strong research-oriented partnership to better understand informal caregivers, their needs, and how to better prepare caregivers to help seniors to continue to age in place.

### Disclaimer

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

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