



Powerful Tools for Caregivers

Improving Well-Being of North Dakota Family Caregivers

Public Value Statement

Improving the health and well-being of family caregivers can save North Dakotans money by helping them keep their loved ones at home longer and delaying more costly levels of care. Aging in community preserves quality of life for residents and saves money for taxpayers.

The Situation

The vast majority of older North Dakotans want to stay living in their home as they age. In 2017, North Dakota had 68,000 family caregivers who provided 57 million hours of unpaid care valued at \$980 million. These family caregivers provide a range of daily activities, such as transportation, personal care, managing finances, grocery shopping, and much more. Caregiving can be a rewarding experience but can also be filled with enormous physical, emotional, and financial challenges. It is essential for caregivers to maintain their own health and well-being while managing caregiving responsibilities. Yet, most caregivers receive little or no training to care for themselves.

Extension Response

The *Powerful Tools for Caregivers (PTC) Program* is a national evidence-based program which was brought to North Dakota by the NDSU Extension Service. Extension Agents, along with their local community leaders, have been trained as Class Leaders to offer 6-week workshops to two audiences: family caregivers caring for adults with chronic illness and family caregivers of children with special needs. In response to COVID-19 classes were offered online.

Impacts

In 2020, 14 workshops were offered with 108 participants attending. Two of the workshops were for caregivers of children with special needs. Participants who completed the PTC workshop evaluations reported improvements in the following areas:

- 43 percent increase in their confidence in asking for help with tasks needed for caregiving.
- 39 percent increase in understanding that emotions are a normal response to caregiving.

- 45 percent increase in finding positive ways to cope with the stress of caregiving.
- 53 percent increase in their ability to find caregiving resources in their area.

Survey results indicated participants' plans to use newly learned "tools" in the future:

- 85 percent plan to use Action Plans
- 85 percent plan to use Positive Self Talk
- 82 percent plan to use relaxation tools
- 85 percent plan to use "I" messages
- 71 percent plan to use long range goal setting

Feedback

"I now make myself do things for myself and practice self-care. I'm starting to recognize my stress signs"

"I'm not wrong when I feel overwhelmed, exhausted or sad. It is a very hard job caretaking..."

"The instructors were amazing! I enjoyed the online version of class."

"[the class] validates emotions of caregiving and helps you find solutions."

Class Leader Trainings

A virtual class leader training format was used for the first time to train 10 new class leaders in 2020. In addition, another class leader became trained as a Master Trainer, bringing this group to four.

Primary Contact

Jane Strommen, Extension Gerontology Specialist
jane.strommen@ndsu.edu or 701-231-5948
www.ag.ndsu.edu/aging/family-caregivers

Collaborators

ND Dept. of Human Services – Aging Services
 Numerous Community Partner Organizations