

Community Initiative Supports Family Caregivers

Seven UJA funded community agencies are joining forces to put the spotlight on caregivers who are looking after aging family members. Circle of Care, Baycrest, Bernard Betel Centre, Chai Tikvah Foundation, Jewish Family and Child, Jewish Immigrant Aid Services Toronto (JIAS) and Reena are committed to providing a collaborative approach in the delivery of family caregiver support services through the newly established Family Caregiver Connections project.



The project reflects the community's commitment to supporting seniors for whom diverting and delaying admission to long-term care facilities is possible. The program would offer appropriate community support services for caregivers, who are often overwhelmed by the pressures of caring for an ageing family member. Caregiver stress can also be a significant issue for families supporting individuals aging in long-term care facilities and retirement homes.

While caregivers are often an under recognized and silent population, United Jewish Communities, the umbrella organization representing Jewish Federations and independent Jewish communities across North America, reported that in 2005 there were 4.5 million Canadians providing unpaid care in our country. While attention is often placed on the seniors, the impacts of caregiving on the caregiver are significant.

Sandy Keshen, President and CEO of Reena explains that she is delighted with this project because it fosters mutual support across diverse boundaries in our community. "Coordination and collaboration are essential to ensure that caregivers are adequately trained to support the individuals they care for."

Romm Gurel, Community Integration and Outreach Worker at JIAS Toronto, describes the stress of caregiving on families who are recent immigrants: "After waiting years for a visa to come to Canada, seniors are dependent on their families for 10 years before they are eligible for government assistance. This reality puts a great burden on the caring families who are left with no choice but to have their aging parents live with them without many of the services offered to Canadian senior citizens."

Executive Director of the Chai Tikvah Foundation, Rochelle Goldman-Brown explains that, "seniors who have adult children with mental health problems need to plan for

financial support of their adult child to ensure they will have an income for the rest of their life, and they will be eligible for financial assistance. They need to plan for the future of their child before it is too late to access services.”

Goals of the project include coordinating between existing family caregiver support programs at the partnering agencies, enhancing existing family caregiver support services, outreach and service provision to previously unidentified family caregivers and the creation and implementation of new initiatives for family caregivers. To achieve this considerable goal, a project coordinator and outreach specialist have been hired through project funding, which has been provided by the province’s Central Local Health Integration Network through the Aging at Home Strategy.

Immediate plans include establishing a caregiver telephone line which will link caregivers to existing community resources, providing transportation and respite care to enable caregivers to utilize services outside of the home and educational workshops focusing on the caregiver.

For more information about the Family Caregiver Connections project, please contact Devora Schwartz-Waxman, 416-635-2900 x 413 or dschwartzwaxman@circleofcare.com.