



October 2024 Newsletter

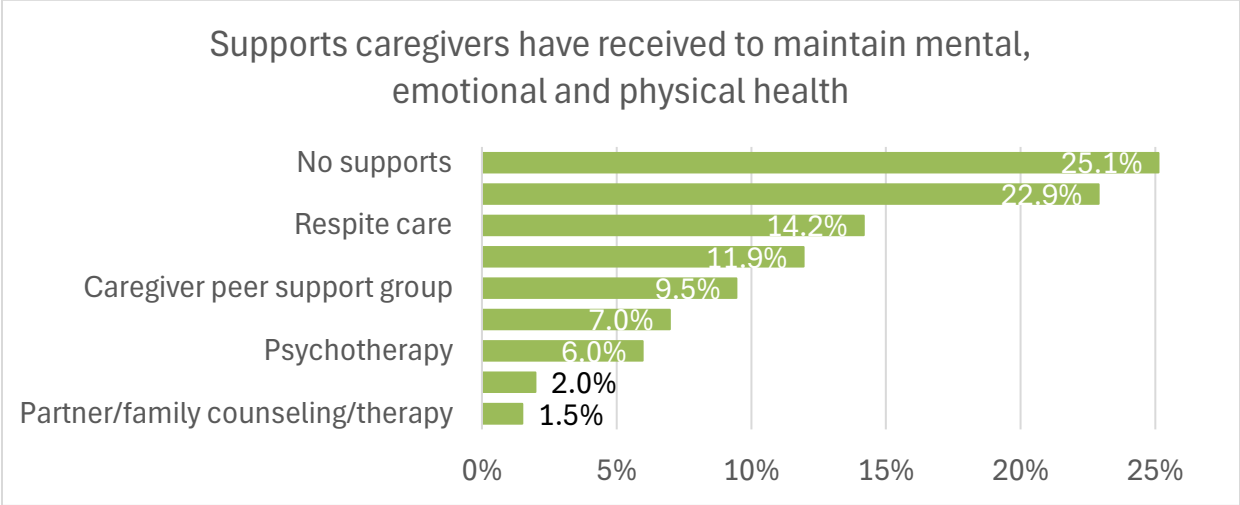
At the OCC

Upcoming Policy Brief on Providing Caregivers with Mental Health Supports

“A full-time caregiver living with the person they care for needs regular, reliable service which includes specific service for the caregiver such as emotional support in the form of counselling. Living with anticipatory grief and the stress of complex medical needs take an enormous toll.”

The impact of caregiving on their mental and physical health was the top concern of respondents to the Ontario Caregiver Coalition’s 2024 Caregiver Survey, with 56% of survey respondents selecting this as a key issue. Those caring for their spouse or partner are at a particularly high risk for mental and physical health issues, with more than double risk of other caregivers. Risks are also elevated for caregivers who are foreign-born, speak English as a second language, are Indigenous, or are racialized.

The pressures of caregiving, together with the lack of effective supports for caregivers, can have a significant impact on the mental health of caregivers. However, very few caregivers have meaningful access to mental health supports. They face a fragmented and confusing landscape of limited options and out-of-pocket costs.



Improving access to mental health supports is a key element of any strategy to support and sustain caregivers in their essential role. This is why the third in the OCC's series of Policy Briefs will focus on how to better support the mental health of caregivers. Caregivers need supports that are specifically designed to address to their unique needs and experiences, and that are easy to find and access. Our Policy Brief on access to mental health supports will be released in November. Please keep an eye out for our launch email and be sure to share with your networks!

Member Initiatives

Upcoming Regional Learning Centre Caregiver Education Events

The Mississauga Halton Regional Learning Centre is hosting [virtual education events for this fall](#), for caregivers in the Mississauga/Halton area. Topics include learning about new health care navigation services, and an opportunity for caregivers to understand dysphagia (difficulty swallowing), as well as how to best assist those living with the condition.

Their [event on the new Mississauga Health Seniors Navigation Portal](#) is taking place on Thursday, October 31st, from 1 to 2 pm. The portal was designed to help seniors and caregivers in the Mississauga/Halton area better access local health care supports. At the event, participants will learn about how to access and use the service.

Their [next event is on the Connected Care Halton Ontario Health Team Navigation Line](#), which is designed to increase caregiver access to health care, mental health, and social services. This virtual webinar, taking place on Tuesday, November 12, from 1 to 2 pm, will teach attendees how to access the navigation line, with examples of how the service connected caregivers to the right care.

Their [last educational webinar this fall is on Understanding Dysphagia](#), and how caregivers can best support their care recipients with the condition. Attendees will have the opportunity to learn about the signs of dysphagia, as well as have a chance to ask questions to a Speech-Language Pathologist on how to best help in managing the condition. This virtual event is taking place on Thursday, November 21, from 1 to 2 pm.

If you are interested in attending, [please click here to learn more and to register](#). While the events on navigation services are curtailed to caregivers in the Mississauga/Halton area, every webinar is open to all caregivers in Ontario.

Opportunities to Participate in Caregiver Focused Research

Sleep and Dementia Study

Are you a caregiver for someone with dementia struggling with sleep issues? The University of Waterloo is currently studying a lifestyle support program for caregivers of those with dementia, the [Nighttime Insomnia Treatment and Education for Canadians with Alzheimer's disease \(NITE-CAD\)](#), and are seeking participants to take part in a 6-week education program on sleep and dementia education.

The goal of the study is to develop an effective support program to improve the sleep of those with dementia, and their caregivers. A similar program to this already exists in the United States, but as Canadians, we have unique seasonal needs. This study hopes to address that gap by creating a support program relevant to Canadians.

Throughout the 6 week program, participants will attend three 1 hour in-person or virtual sessions. In these sessions, participants will learn about sleep and dementia, as well as work on relevant goal-setting. There will also be 2 check-in phone calls throughout the program. Outside of the sessions, participants will be encouraged to take part in physical activity and to increase either exposure to light.

At the beginning and end of the program, you will be asked to complete several questionnaires. Upon the end of your participation, you will be asked to take part in a focus group, where you will get to give your feedback on your experience with the program.

If you are interested in participating, or would like more information, please contact Tara Kuhn via email at nitecad@uwaterloo.ca.

Of Interest

Saskatchewan Party Proposes Increase to Caregiver Tax Credit Ahead of Election Victory

Increasing the support available to caregivers is a nationwide issue. The Saskatchewan Party, who won a majority of seats in the province during Monday's election, has [proposed increasing their Caregiver Tax Credit](#) ahead of their upcoming election on October 28, 2024.

Increasing the credit by 25% would make Saskatchewan the province with the highest Caregiver Tax Credit. The maximum amount of tax savings would increase from \$1,144 to \$1,430. Eligible families claiming the benefit could receive an additional \$1,144 over the next four years, on top of the increased credit.

While the proposed increase is a step forward in addressing caregiver support, there are criticisms of tax credits as a policy solution. Help is needed most by low-income families and caregivers, which a tax credit can struggle to address. These families often have difficulties claiming the full amount of the credit, defeating its purpose. [A proposed Caregiver Tax Credit in Michigan was recently criticized for this reason.](#)

This is why the Ontario Caregiver Coalition's Policy Brief on addressing the financial hardships of caregiving has instead championed the [Ontario Caregiver Support Benefit](#) (OCSB) which would pay all eligible caregivers a direct financial benefit. The Ontario Caregiver Support Benefit received a significant boost in May, with the introduction of [Motion 94 in the Ontario legislature](#). Proposed by the Ontario NDP, and supported by the provincial Liberals and Green Party, Motion 94 endorsed the development of an OCSB.

Together with the recent implementation of a Caregiver Benefit in PEI, this Saskatchewan initiative demonstrates the growing understanding of the need for policies to address the financial toll of caregiving. The OCC will continue to build on this momentum in our ongoing campaign for policy reform in Ontario.

[Survey on Schizophrenia's Cognitive Impact Seeking Caregiver Input](#)

Are you a person caring for someone with schizophrenia, and interested in sharing your experience? Sunnybrook, partnered with Schizophrenia Society of Canada and Boehringer Ingelheim is conducting a survey on how the cognitive impairment associated with schizophrenia impacts the lives of those living with it and their caregivers in Canada.

Cognitive impairment is when a person's thinking or cognitive skills, like remembering what was said, following a conversation, or problem-solving, are a struggle, making daily activities harder.

The survey will include questions on: demographic information, quality of life, costs, productivity, and caregiving responsibilities. There will be separate surveys for people living with schizophrenia and care partners. The survey is expected to take 20-30 minutes to complete.

All data collected will be kept completely confidential. If you are interested, [please click the link here to fill out the survey.](#)



If you have items that you would like to see included in future issues of this newsletter, please let us know. Sharing the accomplishments and activities of our members is part of our mandate. If you have received this newsletter in error, or no longer wish to receive it, please reply to this email to let us know, and we will remove you from our mailing list.