

Cuts, rural challenges strain service

## Help for Caregivers

**C**ristina Fox describes her life as a caregiver as being torn between two generations.

“Calling it the ‘sandwich generation’ is just a nice way of saying you’re caught between your parents and your own children,” said Fox, 43, of Milwaukee, who took in her ailing mother two years ago while parenting two teenagers.

Although her mother, Sara Muhammad, 66, does not drive and has difficulty walking, Fox never considered rejecting the caregiver role.

“I did it out of not wanting my mother in a nursing home or around strangers,” she said.

Her experience reflects the difficulties faced by half a million other Wisconsin caregivers.

### ‘One-stop’ resource centers

Wisconsin has long prided itself on above-average services for older people, people with disabilities and their caregivers, although recent budget cuts have stalled key programs, including the Family Care Partnership program for in-home caregivers.

Government programs are boosted by nonprofit organizations, skilled at spreading information and recruiting volunteers.

For example, the Alzheimer’s Association has several branches in Wisconsin offering support groups, advice and help in tapping community resources.

“Wisconsin is aging, and more people will be caregivers for a parent or other family member,” said Krista Scheel, program director for the Alzheimer’s Association South-eastern Wisconsin chapter.

Wisconsin’s larger cities have significant Hispanic and African American populations. Providing support services for those populations has unique challenges because there can be a greater stigma and reluctance to seek help for dementia, Scheel said.

“The word ‘dementia’ translated into Spanish means ‘crazy,’ so we use the phrase ‘*pérdida de memoria*,’ or ‘memory loss,’” she said.

Thirty-seven Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC) have been set up in 68 of Wisconsin’s 72 counties to offer a one-stop resource that can connect caregivers to services. The ADRCs have replaced the old system of dividing services among county offices.

The private, nonprofit Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources provides technical services at ADRCs and offers a statewide toll-free number (866-843-9810) and a website ([wisconsinacaregiver.org](http://wisconsinacaregiver.org)) to help people find local resources.

AARP Wisconsin is taking a lead in advocating for caregivers and helping them access community services, said state director Sam Wilson. AARP Wisconsin offers presentations on caregiving, such as “Powerful Tools for Caregivers,” maintains a website ([aarp.org/wi](http://aarp.org/wi)) and toll-free help line (866-448-3611) and lobbies for legislation and funding to provide services and respite care.

While most support services are provided in southern Wisconsin’s urban areas, the percentage of older people is growing fastest in rural areas where home-delivered meals and transportation are harder to provide.

### Retiree influx up north

Lynn Gall of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services estimates that the percentage of residents 65 and older in most northern counties could surpass 30 percent by 2035.

“The phone’s been ringing off the hook,” said Geri Heppe, a gerontologist hired as a program specialist for the newly formed ADRC of the Northwoods, which serves four rural counties and three Indian tribes. An influx of retirees has already boosted the over-60 population to 34 percent in Vilas County and 29 percent in Oneida County, she said.

Although the state plans to set up more rural ADRCs, they often have little money, have a smaller pool of volunteers and face transportation hurdles, particularly on wintry rural roads.

—By Kay Nolan



For more information on and assistance with caregiving, visit the AARP Caregiving Resource Center at [aarp.org/caregiving](http://aarp.org/caregiving) or scan the code into your smartphone.

For other state news, go to

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## DatabankUSA



## Veterans’ Volunteer Rates

Average yearly percentage of veterans who volunteered in each state and D.C., 2008-2010.

Ala. 22.6%	Ky. 17.4	Ohio 24.4
Alaska 31.7	La. 22.0	Okla. 24.1
Ariz. 22.9	Maine 29.4	Ore. 25.3
Ark. 19.5	Md. 33.9	Pa. 23.5
Calif. 26.6	Mass. 25.6	R.I. 21.9
Colo. 29.2	Mich. 26.2	S.C. 25.5
Conn. 31.4	Minn. 35.0	S.D. 34.2
Del. 22.4	Miss. 28.4	Tenn. 28.3
D.C. 23.4	Mo. 27.1	Texas 25.8
Fla. 21.1	Mont. 28.0	Utah 35.4
Ga. 26.7	Neb. 35.9	Vt. 33.5
Hawaii 24.4	Nev. 19.5	Va. 34.3
Idaho 29.5	N.H. 25.1	Wash. 29.6
Ill. 27.5	N.J. 25.3	W.Va. 22.0
Ind. 24.7	N.M. 28.9	Wis. 30.0
Iowa 34.3	N.Y. 23.4	Wyo. 26.7
Kan. 34.0	N.C. 27.4	
	N.D. 24.3	

SOURCE: VOLUNTEERING IN AMERICA