Who Is a Caregiver: A National Practice Module

Recognizing, including, and supporting all types of caregivers.

Why this module matters. About 1 in 4 U.S. adults is a family caregiver, and nearly 3.2 million people work as paid home care workers. Many family caregivers never identify themselves and miss support they are entitled to.

About this module

This module gives teams a shared, evidence-based approach to recognizing, including, and supporting all types of caregivers. It draws on current federal rules and national guidance, and it ends with a checklist that agencies, clinicians, and families anywhere in the United States can adopt.

Item	Details
Who it is for	Family caregivers, home care workers, agencies, and clinicians
Format	6 units, case scenarios, a knowledge check, and a national checklist
Time	About 1 hour
How to use it	Families use Units 1 to 5. Agencies and clinicians use Units 4 and 6 and the checklist.

Learning objectives

After completing this module, learners will be able to:

1. Describe who caregivers are.
2. Name the types of caregivers.
3. Describe what caregivers do.
4. Explain national laws and programs that recognize caregivers.
5. Help people identify as caregivers.
6. Help family and paid caregivers work together.

Scope. Aides and family caregivers observe, support, and report. Clinical assessments, medication changes, and treatment decisions belong to licensed clinicians. Follow your state scope-of-practice rules and agency policies.

Unit 1. Who caregivers are

A caregiver is anyone who helps another person with health, personal care, or daily tasks because of illness, disability, or aging. Many people do this work for years without calling themselves caregivers, and so they miss support they are entitled to.

Group	Size	Source
Family caregivers (unpaid and paid)	63 million; about 1 in 4 adults	AARP and NAC, 2025
Caring for adults / for children with illness or disability	59 million / 4 million	AARP and NAC, 2025
Family caregivers receiving some pay / paid only	11 million / 1.9 million	AARP and NAC, 2025
Paid direct care workers	Nearly 5.4 million, including nearly 3.2 million home care workers	PHI, 2025
Average family caregiver	Age 51; 3 in 5 are women; 1 in 5 live in rural areas	AARP and NAC, 2025
“Sandwich” caregivers caring for children and adults	29%	AARP and NAC, 2025

Unit 2. Types of caregivers

Type	Description
Family caregiver	Spouse, child, relative, partner, friend, or neighbor who helps, usually unpaid
Long-distance caregiver	Manages care, money, or appointments from far away
Paid family caregiver	Paid through some Medicaid, veterans, or state programs
Home care aide or personal care aide	Paid worker helping with daily activities, through an agency or hired directly
Home health aide	Trained aide working under nurse supervision, often in Medicare home health
Certified nursing assistant	State-certified aide, often in facilities and home health
Young caregiver	A child or teenager helping a family member

Unit 3. What caregivers do

Category	Examples
Daily activities (ADLs)	Bathing, dressing, toileting, eating, moving around
Household tasks (IADLs)	Meals, shopping, housework, transport, managing money
Medical and nursing tasks	Medicines, injections, wound care, equipment, monitoring
Coordination and advocacy	Appointments, insurance, talking with clinicians
Emotional support and supervision	Companionship, safety, especially in dementia

More than half of family caregivers perform medical or nursing tasks, but only about one in five has formal training.

Unit 4. National recognition and rights

Law or program	What it means for caregivers
RAISE Family Caregivers Act (2018)	Led to the 2022 National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers
National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers	Federal plan to recognize, support, and include caregivers; ACL awarded state grants in October 2026 and plans a 2026 update
CARE Act (43 states and DC)	Hospitals record the caregiver, notify them of discharge, and teach care tasks
Hospital discharge planning rule	Hospitals must include caregivers as active partners in planning
National Family Caregiver Support Program	Support, training, and respite through Area Agencies on Aging
Medicare caregiver training services	Clinicians can bill for training caregivers (since 2024)
Family and Medical Leave Act	Job-protected unpaid leave for eligible workers

Unit 5. Recognizing yourself as a caregiver

Saying “I am a caregiver” opens doors. Tell your clinician, employer, and the hospital. Ask to be listed as the caregiver in the medical record.

- ☐ I help someone with personal care, medicines, or appointments.
- ☐ I make sure someone is safe or supervised.
- ☐ I manage someone’s money or paperwork because they cannot.
- ☐ I have changed my work or life to care for someone.

If you checked any box, you are a caregiver.

Unit 6. Working together: family and paid caregivers

- Share the person’s routines, preferences, and history.
- Agree on who does what, written in the care plan.
- Use a shared notebook or app for updates.
- Respect each other’s roles and limits.
- Raise concerns with the agency supervisor, not in front of the client.

Case scenarios

Case 1. “I’m just his wife”

Mrs. K manages her husband’s medicines and appointments after his stroke but says she is not a caregiver.

- Why does the label matter?
- What could she ask for?

Discussion: Identifying as a caregiver helps her get training, discharge notice under the CARE Act, respite, and support groups.

Case 2. A long-distance son

A son in another state manages his father’s bills and calls the agency weekly.

- Is he a caregiver?
- How can the agency support him?

Discussion: Yes, a long-distance caregiver. The agency can share updates as permitted, include him in planning, and point him to the Eldercare Locator.

Knowledge check

1. How many family caregivers are there in the U.S.? *(63 million)*
2. How many paid home care workers? *(Nearly 3.2 million)*
3. What does the CARE Act require? *(Record the caregiver, notify them of discharge, teach tasks)*
4. What led to the National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers? *(The RAISE Family Caregivers Act (2018))*
5. Name two types of caregivers. *(Family, long-distance, paid family, home care aide, home health aide, CNA, young caregiver)*

National Caregiver Identification and Inclusion Checklist

This checklist turns national caregiver recognition laws and programs into one tool for agencies, clinicians, and families. The “National basis” column shows where each item comes from. Adapt it to your state rules and policies.

Name or ID	Date	Completed by and role
Agency or organization	Reviewed by	Next review date

A. Identify

Action	National basis	Done	Notes
Caregivers identified and recorded at intake	CARE Act; 42 CFR 482.43	☐	
Type of caregiver and tasks recorded	ACL National Strategy	☐	
Long-distance and young caregivers identified	ACL National Strategy	☐	

B. Include

Action	National basis	Done	Notes
Caregiver involved in care planning	42 CFR 482.43; 42 CFR 441.301(c)	☐	
Roles of family and paid caregivers written in the plan	Best practice	☐	
Shared communication method agreed	Best practice	☐	

C. Support

Action	National basis	Done	Notes
Training offered for tasks they perform	Medicare caregiver training services; CARE Act	☐	
Referral to Area Agency on Aging	Older Americans Act	☐	
Information on leave and employer benefits	FMLA; state law	☐	

Completed by: signature	Printed name and title	Date
Reviewed by: signature	Printed name and title	Date

Sources and further reading

AARP: Caregiving in the US 2025 (aarp.org)

PHI: Direct Care Workers Key Facts 2025 (phinational.org)

ACL: National Strategy implementation grants (Oct. 2026) (acl.gov)

AARP LTSS Scorecard: CARE Act legislation (longtermscorecard.org)

42 CFR 482.43: Hospital discharge planning (law.cornell.edu)

Rural Health Information Hub: Caregiver Training Services (ruralhealthinfo.org)

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