Caregiver Wellness and Burnout Prevention: A National Practice Module

Recognizing and reducing caregiver strain and burnout.

Why this module matters. About 1 in 4 U.S. adults is a family caregiver, 44% provide high-intensity care, and nearly 1 in 5 report fair or poor health because of caregiving.

About this module

This module gives teams a shared, evidence-based approach to recognizing and reducing caregiver strain and burnout. 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 aides, supervisors, and clinicians
Format	7 units, case scenarios, a knowledge check, and a national checklist
Time	About 1.5 hours
How to use it	Caregivers use Units 1 to 6. Agencies and clinicians use Unit 7 and the checklist.

Learning objectives

After completing this module, learners will be able to:

1. Describe the scale of caregiver strain.
2. Recognize signs of burnout.
3. Use a weekly self-check.
4. Apply everyday strategies.
5. Find national and local supports.
6. Support paid caregivers.
7. Build caregiver support into care plans.

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. The national picture

Measure	Figure	Source
Family caregivers in the United States	63 million, up 45% in a decade	AARP and NAC, 2025
Share of U.S. adults who are caregivers	About 1 in 4	AARP and NAC, 2025
Caregivers providing high-intensity care	44%	AARP and NAC, 2025
Caregiving for five years or more	30%	AARP and NAC, 2025
Caregivers in fair or poor health due to caregiving	Nearly 1 in 5	AARP and NAC, 2025
Caregivers who stopped saving / are in debt	Over one-third / 23%	AARP and NAC, 2025
Working-age caregivers who are employed	70%	AARP and NAC, 2025
Home care workforce	Nearly 3.2 million paid home care workers	PHI, 2025

Caregiver strain is not a personal failure. It is a predictable result of heavy, long-term responsibility, and it can be reduced.

Unit 2. Recognizing burnout

Area	Warning signs
Body	Exhaustion, poor sleep, frequent illness, headaches, weight change
Mind	Trouble concentrating, forgetfulness, feeling overwhelmed
Emotions	Irritability, sadness, anxiety, guilt, resentment, hopelessness
Behavior	Withdrawing from friends, skipping your own health care, using alcohol or medicines to cope
Care	Losing patience with the person, cutting corners, feeling numb

> **Get help right away.** If you have thoughts of harming yourself or others, call or text 988 (Suicide and Crisis Lifeline) or 911 now.

Unit 3. A weekly self-check

Rate each item from 0 (never) to 4 (nearly always). A rising total over several weeks is a signal to get more support.

In the past week, I...	0	1	2	3	4
Felt exhausted even after rest	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Felt I had no time for myself	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Felt stressed balancing care with work or family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Felt angry or resentful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Felt my health has suffered	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Felt alone with caregiving	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Unit 4. Everyday strategies that help

Strategy	Practical step
Ask for and accept help	Make a list of specific tasks others can do
Keep your own health care	Schedule your checkups and screenings
Move and rest	Short walks, stretching, regular sleep times
Stay connected	Weekly call or visit with a friend; a support group
Set limits	Decide what you can and cannot do, and say it clearly
Plan ahead	Legal and financial planning reduces later crises
Learn skills	Training in transfers, medicines, and dementia care lowers stress

Unit 5. National supports and programs

Program	What it offers
National Family Caregiver Support Program (Older Americans Act)	Through Area Agencies on Aging: information, counseling, training, support groups, and respite
Lifespan Respite Care Program	State programs to help families find and pay for respite
Medicare caregiver training services	Since 2024, clinicians can bill for training family caregivers in care skills
Medicare GUIDE Model	For people with dementia in participating programs: care coordination, caregiver support, and respite services
Medicaid HCBS	In many states, respite and, in some programs, pay for family caregivers
Employer benefits	Family and Medical Leave Act, state paid leave, and employee assistance programs
ACL National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers	Federal strategy; ACL awarded new state implementation grants in October 2026

Find local help through the Eldercare Locator: 1-800-677-1116 or eldercare.acl.gov.

Unit 6. Wellness for paid caregivers

- Take your breaks and days off.
- Talk with your supervisor when a client situation is wearing on you.
- Use your employer's assistance program if available.
- Grief after a client dies is normal; ask for support.
- Report unsafe or abusive situations; you have a right to be safe.

Unit 7. What agencies and clinicians can do

1. Ask about caregiver strain at assessment and every review.
2. Include respite and backup plans in the care plan.
3. Refer caregivers to the Area Agency on Aging and support groups.
4. Offer training that builds confidence.
5. Support paid staff with fair schedules, recognition, and debriefing after hard events.

Case scenarios

Case 1. A tired daughter

Maria cares for her mother with dementia while working full time. She has stopped seeing friends and is not sleeping.

- Which burnout signs apply?
- What supports could help?

Discussion: Exhaustion, withdrawal, and poor sleep. Respite through the Area Agency on Aging, a dementia support group, the GUIDE Model if available, and asking family for specific help.

Case 2. A grieving aide

An aide cared for a client for three years. The client died last week, and she feels numb.

- How should the agency respond?

Discussion: Recognize the loss, offer time to talk, the employee assistance program, and flexibility with the next assignment.

Knowledge check

1. How many family caregivers are there in the U.S.? *(63 million)*
2. What share report fair or poor health from caregiving? *(Nearly 1 in 5)*
3. What number do you call or text in a mental health crisis? *(988)*
4. Which program funds caregiver support through Area Agencies on Aging? *(National Family Caregiver Support Program)*
5. What is the Eldercare Locator number? *(1-800-677-1116)*

National Caregiver Wellness and Support Checklist

This checklist turns national caregiver support programs and practices into one tool for families, agencies, and clinicians. 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. Recognize

Action	National basis	Done	Notes
Caregiver strain asked about at assessment and reviews	ACL National Strategy	☐	
Weekly self-check used by the caregiver	Best practice	☐	
Crisis numbers known (988, 911)	SAMHSA	☐	

B. Support

Action	National basis	Done	Notes
Respite and backup caregiver in the plan	NFCSP; Lifespan Respite	☐	
Referral to Area Agency on Aging	Older Americans Act	☐	
Caregiver skills training offered	Medicare caregiver training services	☐	
GUIDE Model or dementia supports explored, if relevant	CMS GUIDE Model	☐	
Work leave and employer benefits explored	FMLA; state law	☐	

C. Paid caregivers

Action	National basis	Done	Notes
Breaks and time off protected	Labor law; best practice	☐	
Debrief and support after hard events	Best practice	☐	
Employee assistance program available	Best practice	☐	

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)

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

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

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

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