



Interior Health

Why Should We Assess the Needs of Family Caregivers¹?

Caregivers may need to be recipients of care in their own right.

- Caregivers may have caregiver needs that place them at risk for depression, anxiety, increased burden and strain and physical health concerns.
- Caregiving needs are often related but distinct from the needs of the person with dementia.
- Separate assessment from the person with dementia is required to determine the extent and nature of those needs as they relate to caregiving or other health issues.

Assessment builds caregiver morale and capacity:

- Caregivers who have their needs assessed feel acknowledged, valued, and better understood by practitioners.
- Caregivers gain a better grasp of their role and the abilities required to carry out tasks.
- If the physical, emotional and financial strains on family caregivers become too great, care in the home may be seriously jeopardized.

It's the key to effective care planning:

- Identifying service needs and unresolved problems is fundamental to a plan that supports and strengthens the family as a whole, where most care is given and received.
- Caregiver strain and health risks can impede the caregiver's ability to provide care, lead to higher health care costs, and affect the quality of life for caregivers and the person with dementia.
- The well-being of the family caregiver is often key to the care recipient getting the help needed at home or in the community—rather than placement in a nursing home. When caregivers can no longer cope, nursing home placement decisions are made.

It opens doors for the caregiver and the care recipient:

- Assessment can establish eligibility for useful services, supporting both the caregiver and the care recipient.
- Knowing caregiver needs and preferences triggers timely referrals.

It's a way to monitor program effectiveness and to inform policy:

- Information from caregivers reveals what works and what does not.
- Caregiver feedback helps assure quality of care.
- Patterns seen across caregivers and over time reveal gaps and priorities for new programs and better policies.

On-line Easy Access Resources for Caregivers:

1. Alzheimer Society of B.C.: [Dementia Helpline](#)
2. B.C. Provincial Dementia information site: [Dementia Journey](#)
3. Interior Health's Dementia Pathway website: [Care for the Caregiver](#)
4. [Family Caregiver Alliance](#) (An American organization with extensive resources)

¹ Information adapted from [Family Caregiver Alliance](#), *Caregivers Count Too! A Toolkit to Help Practitioners Assess the Needs of Family Caregivers*.