



News Release

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GRANT WILL EXPAND PROGRAM TO HELP CAREGIVERS FOR THOSE WITH DEMENTIA

(RICHMOND, Va.) — Virginia has secured additional federal funding to expand statewide a program to strengthen services for Virginians experiencing dementia and their caregivers.

The \$276,000 grant from the federal Administration for Community Living allows the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services to broaden the FAMILIES caregiver intervention program. The Family Access to Memory Impairment and Loss Information, Engagement and Supports program will be featured in the documentary, “Alzheimer’s: The Caregiver’s Perspective,” which airs Nov. 10 at 9 p.m. on public television in Richmond and Charlottesville.

The greatest risk factor for Alzheimer’s disease is age, and as boomers swell the Commonwealth’s older population, Virginia must support sufficient training for care providers and family caregivers to address this growing demand. The Alzheimer’s Association estimates that the number of cases of Alzheimer’s disease in Virginia could jump 46 percent, from 130,000 in 2014 to 190,000 in 2025.

“As we expect Virginia’s population of older adults to double by 2030, we also expect an increase in the number of individuals with Alzheimer’s disease and other types of dementia,” said DARS Commissioner Jim Rothrock. “The expansion of the FAMILIES program across Virginia is a significant opportunity for the Commonwealth to help caregivers who face the difficult challenge of caring for loved ones with this cruel disease.”

Caring for individuals with Alzheimer’s is a significant commitment. On average, older adults with dementia require 171 hours of care per month. About 455,000 caregivers in Virginia provide assistance to a loved one with dementia, and in 2015, they provided 519 million hours of unpaid caregiving valued at \$220 billion.

Caregivers often feel overwhelmed by the responsibility and desperately need support. The FAMILIES program aims to help them feel more confident in their role, increase satisfaction with their social and emotional support networks, reduce depression that can often overwhelm caregivers, and help caregivers assess and comfortably respond to behaviors that can sometimes affect people with dementia.

The new grant will expand FAMILIES services to enroll about 100 caregivers of individuals with dementia. Since 2014, when the program first began in the Charlottesville and Williamsburg areas, more than 130 caregivers have enrolled in the program.

“Often caregivers need help, but are unsure where to find the support they need to understand what their loved with dementia is experiencing or how to assist them. The FAMILIES program connects them to a trained counselor who provides them with an individualized approach while also engaging family members and friends. Caregivers gain the understanding that they are not alone and that help is available,” said Devin Bowers, the state dementia services coordinator who supervises the DARS grant.

Partnering with DARS on the FAMILIES program are local Area Agencies on Aging; the University of Virginia Memory and Aging Care Clinic, which serves participants in northern, central and southwestern Virginia; Riverside Center for Excellence in Aging and Lifelong Health for caregivers in southern Virginia, Hampton Roads, the Middle Peninsula and the Northern Neck; and the Alzheimer’s Association Central and Western Virginia Chapter, Southeastern Virginia Chapter and the Greater Richmond Chapter, which in collaboration with Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging, will work with caregivers in the Richmond metro area.

For more information on the FAMILIES program, contact the state dementia services coordinator at 804-662-9154 or devin.bowers@dars.virginia.gov.

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The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, in collaboration with community partners, provides and advocates for resources and services to improve the employment, quality of life, security, and independence of older Virginians, Virginians with disabilities, and their families. For more information, visit www.vadars.org or follow DARS on Facebook at www.facebook.com/vadars or Twitter at @vadars.