

FINAL REPORT
RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS
INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE

November 1991

AUTHORIZATION AND APPOINTMENT

The Recognition and Support for Caregivers Interim Study Committee was established by the Legislative Council and directed to solicit and review testimony regarding the extent of care provided in in-home settings for individuals by members of their immediate family and evaluate proposals which would provide caregivers with appropriate support, to determine if tax credits or direct payments would prevent premature institutionalization, and to review initiatives by other states which have already established programs to support caregivers. The Study Committee was granted one meeting day. The meeting was held September 17, 1991.

Members of the Study Committee were:

Senator Beverly Hannon, Co-chairperson
Representative Joyce Nielsen, Co-chairperson
Senator Mark Hagerla
Representative Andy McKean
Representative Pat Murphy

COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

At its meeting on September 17, 1991, the Study Committee heard testimony from several individuals involved with the issue of providing support to caregivers and to the elderly and disabled. In her testimony, Ms. Betty Grandquist, Iowa Department of Elder Affairs, presented the Committee with statistics on Iowa caregivers and recipients. She also described a Pennsylvania caregiver support program called the Pennsylvania Family Caregivers Support Program, the purpose of which is to reinforce care provided to a relative in the home. Under the program, a caregiver is reimbursed for services and certain supplies based upon the income of the caregiver, and may receive a one-time grant to finance home modifications or devices which increase the independence of the recipient of care. Ms. Grandquist noted that Iowa's program contains certain elements of the Pennsylvania plan, but that Iowa's program focuses primarily on the needs of the recipient rather than the caregiver. Ms. Grandquist concluded by stating that a program such as Pennsylvania's may only allow a person to remain outside of an institution for a short period of time, but that any amount of care provided outside of an institution would be a savings in the aggregate.

Ms. Donna Speece of the Knoxville Caregivers Support Group stated that the purpose of the group is to provide guidance and support to members as they provide long-term care to

family members. She described the difficulties faced by caregivers, such as lack of funds and lack of services necessary to both the caregiver and the recipient. Ms. Speece made the following recommendations to the Committee:

1. Provide respite care to caregivers and professional leadership for support groups of caregivers.
2. Provide a \$1,200 personal tax deduction for the disabled in addition to the standard income tax deduction.
3. Change the computation on earned interest, IRA's, pensions, annuities, and other savings being held for the purpose of providing for the recipient spouse and the caregiving spouse.
4. Provide health and dental coverage beyond the coverage provided by COBRA (federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1986).

Ms. Karon Perlowski, Executive Director, Governor's Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities, testified before the Study Committee assisted by Mr. Kevin Ruff; Mr. Bob Bacon, Deputy Director, Iowa University Affiliated Facility; and Ms. Ruth Bolinger, Chairperson of the Council. Ms. Perlowski made the following recommendations to the Committee:

1. Amendment of the administrative rules on respite care to allow for more flexibility in the use of blocks of time by families.
2. Exploitation of methods of defining a structure for personal assistance services, such as adding personal assistance as an allowable cost under the State Supplementary Assistance Program.
3. Coordination between the General Assembly and the Council in using the results of the follow-up study funded by the Council.
4. Review of the implications of the provision of tax credits or tax deductions in prevention of premature institutionalization.
5. Provision of an increase in the appropriation for the Family Support Subsidy Program.

The final presentation made to the Study Committee was by Ms. Eloise Calvedt, Human Development Specialist, Iowa State University Extension Service. Ms. Calvedt stressed to the Committee the importance of providing information and resources to caregivers, advertising the resources available to caregivers, assisting caregivers to recognize their role as caregivers, promoting the acceptance of allowing others to assist caregivers in providing care, and coordinating efforts directed at providing assistance to caregivers. Ms. Calvedt stated that the ISU Extension Service produces a number of pamphlets and videos for caregivers, including a newsletter entitled "The Caring Connection", all of which have been effective in providing assistance and support to caregivers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Recognition and Support for Caregivers Interim Study Committee approved the following recommendations to the Legislative Council and the General Assembly:

1. That there be established a pilot project with a spending limitation of \$100,000 within the Department of Elder Affairs, and modeled after the Family Support Subsidy Program, which would be available for spouses caring for spouses.
2. That the Department of Elder Affairs work with various state entities which provide caregiving and caregiver services, including, but not limited to, the Iowa Department of Public Health and the Department of Human Services; evaluate existing services; and report the group's findings to the Human Resources Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives no later than January 1992. A copy of the report is on file with the Legislative Service Bureau.

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