

Oconto County Caregiver Tool Box

Situation: No matter where you live, in a city, in the country or on a farm family members step up to care for their spouses or aging relatives. Caring for someone with medical problems such as Alzheimer's and other diseases takes time away from family activities, creates stress and stretches finances for the caregiver and other family members.

Sometimes family caregiver concerns are invisible in the community. The following county data can help community leaders plan for local family caregiver needs, and let family caregivers know they are not alone.

From 1990-2000, the US Census reported the greatest increase in older adults was among the oldest, age 85 and older. In Oconto County the number of individuals age 85 and older grew by 146 – a 28.8% increase during that decade. County residents 65 and older increased by 7.9%. In Oconto County, an estimated 748 individuals age 65 and older have some form of dementia. The oldest, those 85 and older, make up 41.2% of all older adults with dementia, yet are only 14% of the older adult population.

Research indicates that caring for someone with dementia is more stressful than caring for someone without dementia. Family caregivers have a greater need to use community supports such as adult day care and in-home respite care, and could benefit from support groups and community educational programs. Often the caregivers are not aware of resources that could help them.

Response: Oconto County does not have a comprehensive caregiver resource guide. The transition to the Aging Disability Resource Center (ADRC) will likely be in two years. A directory was needed now. Through the Oconto County Dementia Care Network and the leadership of the Family Living agent an Eastern District Resource Management Grant was secured for \$2,950.

Objective: Create a Caregiver Tool Box (a comprehensive resource directory)

Purpose: To assist those seeking caregiver information and assistance in Oconto Co.

Outcomes: 1) Conduct a survey of service providers to secure information for inclusion in the Tool Box document; 2) Create the document in electronic; 3) Place Tool Box link on collaborator's websites as well as on websites of those listed in the Caregiver Tool Box.

Donna Doll-Yogerst worked with Technology Services who recommended the use of Wetpaint for this project. Molly Immendorf provided the day long training for Dementia Care Network members and for the Tool Box creator.

Results:

Information was collected via survey, telephone calls and local knowledge of resources. Other directories such as Oconto County Human Services, NEWCAP, outdated Oconto County Commission on Aging and UW-Extension were used as resources.

The Caregivers Tool Box was created featuring local resources. This electronic resource guide helps long distance caregivers get connected to the community when their loved one resides in Oconto County. Caregiving from a distance is difficult and many use the internet to search for services. Some services they find are not available in Oconto County and they need to know what is available.

Collaborators provided in-kind staff time, travel, and \$100 of office supplies and postage over the course of this project. Members will print more copies as needed when the initial printing has been exhausted. The cost to print the Caregiver Tool Box document is valued at \$1.90/copy (Based on Marinette County). The Oconto County Commission on Aging donated the printing.

The Dementia Care Network served in an advisory capacity for the Caregiver Tool Box project. This included review of materials at monthly meetings as well as providing information on their organization for the tool box.

Evidence: A survey of those involved with the project was conducted by Donna

Doll-Yogerst. Survey results indicated that after the UW-Extension Wetpaint training 60% needed to review notes before jumping in, 20% needed more guidance, 10% understood the process and were able to post their agency information and 10% never were able to log in after countless tries (with Technology Services help.)

100% were listed in the electronic tool box. 72% were said their degree of satisfaction was very good with 28% stating they were neutral.

Comments about the training included:

"There are lots of options for people to choose from depending on their circumstances, goals and health"; "Some of my changes didn't take"; "We have the general information regarding our programs. In the future, our plans are to do upgrading so that we have a more comprehensive listing"; "Our organization has been very involved with the process from its inception"; "Would have liked to have been able to post more pictures, but wasn't sure how".

Regarding their organizations Wetpaint posting 72% said it was very good and 28% were neutral. Comments included: "All information is screened before it is entered"; "It gives a brief overview of our programs and services and will help viewers know the resources that are available in Oconto County. We will continue to update and "tweek" the information"; "It started with a basic description. The WetPaint site is evolving into a great resource".

All but one agency will place the Tool Box for Caregivers link on their website.

To visit the Oconto County Caregivers Tool Box, click here:

<http://ocontocountytoolbox.wetpaint.com>