



Meeting the Needs of Caregivers – Tips for Public Libraries

In Ontario, there are 3.3 million caregivers who provide physical and/or emotional support to a family member, partner, friend or neighbour. While many caregivers are happy to provide this care, 36% are struggling to cope. This number increases to more than half for caregivers supporting someone with a mental health challenge.

Caregivers are overwhelmed and frustrated, saying that caregiving is having a negative effect on their mental health. This is in part because it's hard to find the information they need, when they need it. They don't know what supports are available in their community and they feel isolated and lonely. The Ontario Caregiver Organization (OCO) recently asked caregivers what would help them support their own mental health. Their wishlist includes easier access to information and peer support programs. They also wished their community had a better understanding of the caregiving role and the challenges caregivers face.

How can public libraries help?

As a community hub, public libraries are perfectly positioned to meet the growing needs of Ontario caregivers. Here are 5 simple things you can do today to support caregivers in your community:

1. Create and maintain a collection of information resources for seniors and their caregivers. Make these resources easily accessible. In Stratford, The Change Foundation's Connecting the Dots for Caregivers initiative worked with the Stratford and Clinton Library, as well as local caregivers, to curate a list of helpful caregiving books and articles.
2. Post information about the Ontario Caregiver Organization's 24/7 Helpline in your Library. The helpline connects caregivers to local supports and information about tax credits, local respite, and other services that caregivers may need. You can download and print bookmarks, posters, brochures, newsletter articles and social media posts at www.ontariocaregiver.ca/helpline.



3. Assist Caregivers who may not be comfortable using a computer. The Ontario Caregiver Organization website provides information and tools to help new and experienced caregivers. Visit <http://www.ontariocaregiver.ca> to learn more.

4. Offer a meeting space where caregivers can gather for regular support group meetings. The Stratford Public Library and the Clinton Public Library are two Ontario libraries that provide the meeting space for a regular caregiving connection group.

5. Follow OCO social media – Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube. Look for @CaregiverON and share important information about caregiver supports with your network of followers and on your community boards.

For more information about caregivers or to access support visit www.ontariocaregiver.ca.