

COVID-19 Updated Guidance for CY2023

Title III-E (NFCSP) and the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Family Caregiver Support Program

AMENDMENTS AND WAIVERS TO POLICY

1. In the past, the State of Wisconsin limited payments to in-home provider agencies, extended family members and friends of primary caregivers. In response to the paid caregiver shortage, social distancing advisories, and the reality that many family members are reluctant to invite outsiders into the home of older adults at-risk of contracting COVID-19, DHS temporarily amended this policy in 2021 and will continue using the amended policy until Dec. 31, 2023.

Now all family caregivers, **including primary caregivers**, who are eligible to enroll in AFCSP and NFCSP may receive a non-professional rate stipend to reimburse for caregiving provided. If an agency's funding is running low, priority should be given to low-income caregivers who have been laid-off, furloughed or have lost a job.

Time spent performing the following tasks may be eligible for an hourly stipend using Title III-E or AFCSP when pre-approved by county and tribal caregiver program coordinators:

- Bathing and grooming
- Meal preparation and feeding
- Housekeeping chores, such as cleaning and doing laundry
- Grocery shopping and errands
- Snow removal, lawn care and home maintenance
- Transportation to and from doctor appointments, scheduling appointments, or participating in appointments by phone or internet
- Managing banking, household bills, and other financial transactions
- Emergency planning for oneself or the care recipient
- Purchasing technology, caregiver training or internet services needed to maintain connections with medical and other care providers, friends and family members while adhering to social distancing guidelines



- Medication management and coordination with qualified health care professionals, including pharmacists
- Grandparent and relative caregiver supports
- Any other activity currently reimbursable under Title III-E and the AFCSP

Local agencies are responsible for setting the non-professional rate paid for stipends and for providing instructions about to primary caregivers, extended family members and friends on how caregiving hours should be documented and submitted for payment. Agencies are also responsible for maintaining documentation to justify payments. Guidance for establishing a policy to provide stipends has been distributed to county and tribal AFCSP and NFCSP coordinators. It is also available on the [GWAAR.org website](http://GWAAR.org) or by contacting Lynn Gall, Family Caregiver Support Programs Manager for the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, at Lynn.Gall@dhs.wisconsin.gov.

Note: Caregivers are personally responsible for determining the tax implications of receiving stipends, as well as for understanding how earning a stipend may impact their eligibility for unemployment benefits and other public benefits. Caregiver program coordinators may assist caregivers in gathering information they need to make a determination about the impact stipends may have on tax liabilities and benefits, but program coordinators **may not advise or provide legal advice**. However, NFCSP and AFCSP may be used to pay for caregivers to consult with a financial advisor or attorney to help make these determinations. Free benefits counseling is also available to caregivers age 60+ through the [Elder Benefit Specialist Program](#) or to caregivers of all ages through the [GWAAR Guardianship Support Center](#).

2. The 112 hr. annual limit on NFCSP caregiver respite is suspended until Dec. 31, 2023. Agencies may approve as much respite as needed based on results of the required AFCSP and NFCSP caregiver needs assessment if the agency's funding allows.
3. The 20% cap on supplemental services is waived for participants enrolled in the Title III-E (NFCSP) through December 31, 2023.

***Additional Reminders:***

- Online caregiver education and training is available to family caregivers through [Trualta](#). Self-registration is easy, and caregiver coordinators are notified when a new user in their service area registers. Coordinators should follow-up with Trualta registrants to ask if they have additional unmet needs that our programs can address.
- An online version of Powerful Tools for Caregivers (PTC) classes became available in June, 2020. To obtain the necessary training to host an online PTC class, contact Judy Rank at the Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging at (608) 243-5690 or info@wihealthyaging.org.

BEST PRACTICES

Family caregivers face special challenges during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and professional caregiving workforce shortage. A person receiving care needs a physically and emotionally healthy caregiver. Below are guidelines to help Family Caregiver Support Program coordinators and ADRC staff serve caregivers. DHS emphasizes that programs should provide information that is based on medical science with the goal of keeping family caregivers connected to other relatives, friends and qualified professionals.

1. Emphasize Prevention

Ensure that you and everyone in the household follows CDC Guidelines:

- a. Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- b. Avoid close contact with others as much as possible (about 6 feet), and wear a face mask.
- c. Stay home when sick, except to get needed medical care.
- d. Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue.
- e. Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects daily. (e.g., tables, countertops, light switches, doorknobs, and cabinet, refrigerator and appliance handles)
- f. For disinfection, a list of products with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approval is available at [Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Fighting Products](#), Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products.

2. Know who is at greatest risk

According to the CDC, older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19, even if they have received one of the available vaccines. If a caregiver or household member is at increased risk for COVID-19 complications, they should be advised to consult with their health care provider to monitor their health and symptoms.

3. Watch for COVID-19 symptoms

If a family caregiver suspects they may have been exposed to COVID-19 and develops a fever, cough or other symptoms, or experiences difficulty breathing, advise them to immediately call their healthcare provider for medical advice.

4. Designate a room at home that can be used to isolate sick household members

Identify a separate room and separate bathroom (if possible) for a sick or potentially exposed person to use. Plan to clean these rooms regularly. [Learn how to care for someone at home.](#)

5. Create an emergency plan

Advise caregivers to make a backup plan with the help of other family members and friends to provide what the care recipient is likely to need if the primary caregiver needs to self-isolate or has an emergency. Others will be needed to ensure all needs are met. Make sure the primary caregiver creates an emergency contact list that includes instructions about medications and specific care needs in case the caregiver becomes ill. Remind them that their local Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) can assist in creating an emergency plan.

6. Make a list of contacts and community resources

Advise caregivers to create a current list of contacts for family, friends, neighbors, carpool drivers, health care providers, teachers, employers, the local public health department and the Aging and Disability Resource Center. Include help lines such as:

- a. Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline – 1-800-272-3900 or [live chat](#).
- b. Wisconsin's [Trualta](#) online caregiver education and training portal.
- c. Caregiver Action Network Caregiver Help Desk – toll free number 855-227-3640 or [live chat](#)
- d. Institute on Aging Friendship Line - crisis intervention hotline and a “warmline” for non-emergency emotional support calls – 1-800-971-0016



- e. Disaster Distress Helpline – free, 24/7 crisis counseling and support to people experiencing emotional distress related natural or human-caused disasters (options for deaf/hard of hearing and Spanish speakers) 1-800-985-5990 or Text TalkWithUs to 66746

7. Take advantage of technology and virtual supports, such as telephone support groups, webinars, tele-events and message boards from the following organizations.

- [Alzheimer's Association](#) offers a variety of online and virtual supports. In addition to a telephone support group for Wisconsin caregivers on Tuesdays from 5:30-7:00 pm and Thursdays from 1-2:30 pm. Register by calling 800-272-3900 and ask for Wisconsin Support Group information
- [ALZConnected](#) is a free, online community for anyone affected by Alzheimer's or other dementia such as message boards and a Caregivers Forum.
- [Caregiver Teleconnection](#) holds weekly live call-in events as well as archived programs all relating to caring for someone who is older or disabled.
- [Alzheimer's Foundation of America](#) hosts webinars that are accessible online.
- [Family Caregiver Alliance](#) offers online caregiver support groups

8. Interactions with nursing homes, CBRFs and assisted living

Always call in advance of visiting to learn their most recent policies for entering the facility.

9. Encourage caregivers to discuss their circumstances with their employer

Tele-work may be an option, as well as leave options. Remind caregivers to emphasize that someone else's health is dependent on them remaining well.

10. Prioritize emotional health and stress management

Encourage caregivers to make time to unwind, call a friend or spiritual advisor, listen to music or engage in other relaxing activities. It is important for them to take breaks. Connect with family and friends by phone or use conference call or video conferencing technology.

Note: AFCSP and NFCSP can both be used to provide necessary technology.