

CAREGIVER CHRONICLES

BULLETIN

February 2026



Dane County Caregiver Program
Area Agency on Aging of Dane County

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You Don't Have to Do This Alone: A Quick Start Guide for Family Caregivers

A fall. A new diagnosis. A gradual change that suddenly becomes “too much.” Many family caregivers don’t plan to become caregivers—you step in because someone you care about needs help. If you’re supporting an older adult or a person with dementia, there are practical steps you can take right away to make caregiving safer, more manageable, and less isolating.

Start with the Dane County ADRC early, not only in crisis

In Wisconsin, **Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs)** are a trusted “front door” for information and support. The **Dane County ADRC** can help you sort through options, answer questions, and connect you to supports that fit your situation including education, planning, and dementia care. You can reach an Information & Assistance Specialist from 7:45 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. at 608-240-7400.

Call the **Dane County Caregiver Program** to learn about the **National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP)** services and caregiver respite. We are taking applications for 2026 grants for respite and supplemental services. Contact Caregiver Specialist, Jane De Broux, at 608-381-5733 or [debroux.jane@danecounty.gov](mailto:Debroux.Jane@danecounty.gov).

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Who may be eligible for NFCSP supports?

NFCSP is designed to strengthen and support family caregivers. In general, you may be eligible if you are:

- A caregiver for a **frail adult age 60 or older**; or
- A caregiver for an **individual with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia** (regardless of age); or
- A **grandparent or relative caregiver** (such as an aunt/uncle) age 55+ caring for a child; or
- A **relative caregiver** (including a parent) age 55+ caring for an adult with a disability who is age 18–59

Eligibility and available supports can vary, so the best next step is simply to contact the Caregiver Program or the ADRC and talk through your situation.

Create a one-page Care Plan

When you're juggling appointments, medications, and day-to-day needs, having key information in one place can reduce stress and prevent emergencies. Create a simple one-page sheet with:

- Diagnoses, allergies, and a current medication list
- Clinic/provider names and phone numbers
- Insurance information (Medicare/Medicaid/VA/private) and pharmacy
- Emergency contacts
- A short note on what's normal for the person vs. warning signs that mean "call the nurse" or "call 911"

Keep a copy of the information on your phone and bring it to appointments.

Clarify your role and the legal basics

Many caregivers provide hands-on help, but medical and financial decision-making may require formal permission. Consider whether the person you're caring for has:

- A **Health Care Power of Attorney**
- A **Financial Power of Attorney**
- A **HIPAA authorization** so healthcare teams can share information with you

If these documents are not in place and your care partner still has capacity to complete them, it's worth addressing sooner rather than later, especially before a hospital stay or memory decline.

Focus on safety: falls, medications, driving, and memory changes

Big crises can be prevented with small changes:

- **Falls:** clear clutter, improve lighting, add grab bars if needed
- **Medications:** use one pharmacy when possible; ask for a medication review if you notice dizziness, confusion, or sudden sleepiness
- **Driving:** if you're seeing red flags (getting lost, new dents, near misses) talk with the healthcare provider about next steps and contact the ADRC for information and resources on driving cessation
- **Dementia/wandering risk:** consider door alerts, an ID bracelet, and a simple plan if the person you're caring for leaves unexpectedly

Treat respite like a necessity, not a luxury

Caregiving is meaningful but it can also be exhausting. Finding respite is how caregivers stay healthy enough to keep going. Even a consistent break of a few hours a week can make a difference. When you talk with the Caregiver Program or ADRC, ask about respite options and caregiver coaching/education. Skills and support reduce stress and improve safety for everyone.

A gentle reminder that your health matters, too

If you're experiencing poor sleep, constant anxiety, irritability, depression, or feeling overwhelmed, you deserve support. Tell the Caregiver Specialist or Dane County ADRC what's happening and talk with your own healthcare provider. Reaching out early is a sign of strength and it's one of the best ways to protect both you and the person you care for.

—Jane De Broux, Caregiver Specialist

This Valentine's Day, we celebrate the kind of love that builds strong communities—neighbors showing up for neighbors.



Wisconsin Historical Image ID 81457

Strong Bones, Strong You

Stay active and keep your bones protected with regular strength training!



FallsFreeWI.org

Falls
Free
Wisconsin

Monthly MIPPA Moment:

Dual Eligible Beneficiaries & D-SNP Plans

Dual eligible beneficiaries in Wisconsin are people enrolled in both Medicare and Medicaid who get help paying Medicare costs. These beneficiaries can access *coordinated* care through specific plans like **Dual Eligible Special Needs Plans** (D-SNPs) offered by some Medicare Advantage plans. This type of plan integrates hospital, medical, and prescription benefits for a smoother experience, and cost savings. These plans, such as Family Care Partnership and SSI Medicaid D-SNPs, cover premiums, copays, deductibles, and other services, with Medicare paying first and Medicaid last. Dual Eligible Special Needs Plans work best when you're enrolled in the same company's Medicaid HMO (health maintenance organization) or MCO (managed care organization). That way, through a D-SNP plan, the same company provides both your Medicare and Medicaid coverage.

Types of Programs & Plans:

- Family Care: long-term care, home/community-based services (HCBS), and behavioral health.
- SSI Medicaid: covers primary/acute care, state HCBS, and behavioral health.
- Highly Integrated D-SNPs (HIDE SNPs): available statewide via SSI Medicaid plans.
- Fully Integrated D-SNPs (FIDE SNPs): available in limited counties, combining Medicare & Medicaid services.

You can find more information here: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p03556.pdf> or contact your local ADRC for more information or directions to a SHIP (State Health Insurance Assistance Program) Counselor.

For more MIPPA Program information, call MIPPA Program Specialist, Leilani Amundson, at 608-240-7458.
This project was supported by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services with financial assistance, in whole or in part, by grant number 2101WIMIAA, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201.

FREE Virtual Welcome to Medicare Seminar

What you need to know about enrolling in Medicare!

If you are turning **age 64 this year**, the Dane County Area Agency on Aging wants to help you make informed choices about your Medicare options! Do you understand what Medicare is and isn't . . . how to avoid penalties for late enrollment in Medicare... and how to get the most out of your health and prescription benefit plans? Some decisions and actions about Medicare can take place 3-6 months before you turn 65, so don't wait until you are turning 65 to understand all you need to know about this important benefit. Want easy to understand answers to all of these complex questions? Sign up to attend the following **Free Welcome to Medicare Seminar**. By attending a seminar, you'll walk away with the accurate and detailed information you need from unbiased experts in benefit programs.

Saturday, March 14, 2026, 9-11:30 am

Location: McFarland Senior Outreach Services, 5915 Milwaukee St, McFarland

Email: AAA@danecounty.gov to register by 3/6/26





Free
Learning
Sessions
Online!

or on
your
phone

Date

Time

Topic

A LEADING VOICE FOR CAREGIVERS

All sessions are available on your choice of Zoom or telephone only!

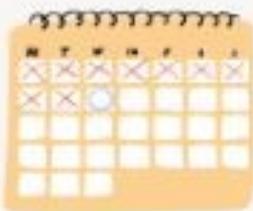
Tuesday February 3	1:00 pm Eastern 12:00 pm Central 11:00 am Mountain 10:00 am Pacific	Managing Challenging Expressions in Dementia with Jaime Cobb Tinsley, CAEd Challenging expressions in dementia are a form of communication—not “bad behavior.” This program helps caregivers understand the why behind these expressions and offers practical, compassionate strategies to respond with confidence and care. Ideal for family and professional caregivers seeking to reduce stress, strengthen connection, and improve quality of life for everyone involved.
Thursday February 5	11:00 am Eastern 10:00 am Central 9:00 am Mountain 8:00 am Pacific	A Series of Emotions: How to Cope with Fear as a Caregiver with Elliot Montgomery Sklar, PhD and Lucy Barylak, MSW Coping with the declining health of someone around us can trigger fear – fear about what is to come and even fear about our own health. This session will address coping with ongoing fear and anxiety.
Tuesday February 10	2:00 pm Eastern 1:00 pm Central 12:00 pm Mountain 11:00 am Pacific	La familia como equipo con Tia Viera En “La familia como equipo” exploraremos cómo toda la familia puede participar en el cuidado de una persona viviendo con demencia, tanto quienes están cerca como quienes viven a distancia. Hablaremos de cómo reconocer las fortalezas de cada miembro, cómo comunicarse con respeto y claridad, y cómo compartir responsabilidades de manera más justa. También veremos ideas prácticas para incluir a familiares que no pueden estar físicamente presentes, usando la tecnología y acuerdos claros. El objetivo es que nadie se sienta solo con la carga del cuidado, y que la familia pueda caminar unida en esta etapa tan importante.
Thursday February 12	11:00 am Eastern 10:00 am Central 9:00 am Mountain 8:00 am Pacific	A Series of Emotions: How to Deal with Anger as a Caregiver with Elliot Montgomery Sklar, PhD and Lucy Barylak, MSW Many of us feel frustrated, overwhelmed, and angry at times along the caregiving journey. Interpersonal conflict can also surface when it comes to sharing responsibilities and making difficult decisions. This session will address healthy ways to deal with anger and conflict.
Thursday February 19	11:00 am Eastern 10:00 am Central 9:00 am Mountain 8:00 am Pacific	A Series of Emotions: How to Handle Uncertainty as a Caregiver with Elliot Montgomery Sklar, PhD and Lucy Barylak, MSW Many of us feel frustrated, overwhelmed, and angry at times along the caregiving journey. Interpersonal conflict can also surface when it comes to sharing responsibilities and making difficult decisions. This session will address healthy ways to deal with anger and conflict.
Wednesday February 25	11:00 am Eastern 10:00 am Central 9:00 am Mountain 8:00 am Pacific	Navigating Inpatient and Rehab Care: personal Journeys, Professional Wisdom with Marty Skinner and Zanda Hilger, LPC In this session, they share hard-earned lessons from emergency room visits, hospitalizations, transitions to rehabilitation, and the often-overlooked challenges of returning home. Blending professional expertise with lived experience, this session offers practical guidance, honest insight, and emotional support for anyone caring for a loved one with chronic medical needs.
Thursday February 26	11:00 am Eastern 10:00 am Central 9:00 am Mountain 8:00 am Pacific	A Series of Emotions: How to process Sadness as a Caregiver with Elliot Montgomery Sklar, PhD and Lucy Barylak, MSW Sadness is something difficult for most of us to process and cope with, and a hard thing to talk about – which is why we have a dedicated session in this series to discuss the importance of sadness. We'll also explore anticipatory grief – a common experience of caregivers.

Ambiguous Loss Support Group

FOR CAREGIVERS



This group offers a safe, welcoming space for those navigating anticipatory grief or loss. Through education, shared conversation, and mutual support, we come together to understand the journey ahead with care. All are welcome to attend. Participation is optional but encouraged.



2nd Thursday of the month

10-11:30 am.

Virtual meetings by Zoom

Hosted by the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Dane County (ADRC) and the Area Agency on Aging (AAA).

For more information or to register, email

danedcs@danecounty.gov or call the ADRC at 608-240-7400





WEDNESDAY ONLINE Conversations SUPPORT GROUP

**For those with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) and
those in the early stage of any type of dementia.**

*Meets online
1st and 3rd Wednesday of the Month
10:30 am - 12:00 pm*

"This is a sacred place where I can share without judgment."

- Conversations Support Group Attendee

To Participate Contact:

Kayla Olson

608-240-7464

danedcs@danecounty.gov



Join us February Virtual Education Series

Registered attendees will receive recordings after each presentation.

Thursday, Feb 5th 12:00-1:00 PM

HARNESSING THE POWER OF PERSONALIZED MUSIC IN DEMENTIA CARE

Explore how personally meaningful music can enhance daily life for adults living with dementia. This session highlights the science behind music and the brain, the therapeutic benefits of individualized music, and practical ways to support calmer transitions, better mealtimes, improved mood, and more restful sleep.

You'll learn simple, safe tools for integrating music into daily care, along with brief, low-burden methods for evaluating impact and demonstrating cost-effectiveness—helping caregivers create more consistent, positive daily experiences.



Justin Russo

Director of Programming
at the Institute for Music
and Neurologic Function

Register [HERE](#) or call 800.272.3900



Wednesday, Feb 18st 1:00-2:00 PM

UNDERSTANDING ALZHEIMER'S AND DEMENTIA



Alzheimer's Association Community Education Program

Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of aging. Join us to learn about the impact of Alzheimer's; the difference between Alzheimer's and dementia; stages and risk factors; current research and treatments available for some symptoms; and Alzheimer's Association resources.

Register [HERE](#) or call 800.272.3900



For additional Education Programs and Resources click [HERE](#).

www.alz.org/wi
24/7 Helpline 800.272.3900
Hablamos Español 414.431.8811

 **ALZHEIMER'S
ASSOCIATION**
Wisconsin Chapter



Book Club

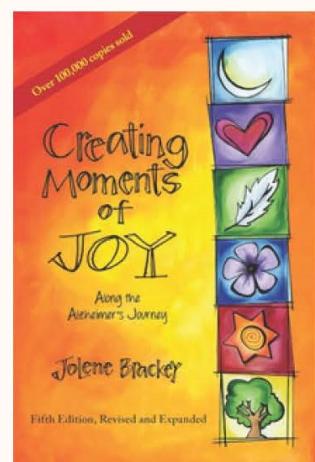


Creating Moments of Joy by Jolene Brackey

Join Ellen and Julia from the Aging and Disability Center of Dane County in this 6-session virtual book club. Together, we will explore and discuss the practical strategies shared by author Jolene Brackey in her book *Creating Moments of Joy*. Discover how to alleviate caregiver stress while deepening your bond with your loved one. Readings will be divided into smaller, manageable sections.



March 2 & 16, April 6 & 20,
May 4 & 18
10-11:30 am
Virtual meetings by Zoom



To register, email
danedcs@danecounty.gov or call
the ADRC at 608-240-7400



Increase your confidence, knowledge, and skills.



**SAVVY
CAREGIVER™**
KNOWLEDGE. SKILLS. MASTERY.

6-WEEK COURSE

*for family caregivers caring for
persons with Alzheimer's Disease or
related dementias*

**VIRTUAL on
Wednesdays**

March 18th-April 22nd

4:00-6:00 PM

via Zoom

Registration deadline
03/02/2026

WHAT YOU WILL GAIN:

- Strategies to manage activities of daily living
- Skills to assess your loved one and how to adjust your approach to care
- Understanding of the different types of dementia and how decline in cognition affects behavior
- Ability to manage emotions & feelings of caregiving
- Decision-making skills and confidence-building to achieve caregiving goals



OPTIONS TO REGISTER (CHOOSE 1):

- 1) Click here https://countyofdane.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_5EenimlTSkulRxFPJnebaA
- 2) Email danedcs@danecounty.gov OR
- 3) Call the Dane County Aging and Disability Resource Center at 608-240-7400 for assistance.

- No cost associated. Please plan to attend all 6 sessions. Sessions are 2 hours in duration.
- A limit of up to 2 additional family members may attend with the primary caregiver, if desired.
- Minimum group size of 6 is required.



608-240-7400



danedcs@danecounty.gov



www.daneadrc.org

