

FAMILY CAREGIVER

HEALTH BULLETIN



NOVEMBER 2024

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

HONOR A CHILD CAREGIVER




According to the American Association of Caregiving Youth, approximately 5.4 million children, under the age of 18, care for a parent, grandparent, and/or sibling or other relative who is sick or has a disability. This is a responsibility most young kids do not have to face but some are forced to if their family cannot afford or find care.

Before and after school, young caregivers cook, clean, manage medications, and provide physical care and emotional support to not just one, but in some cases multiple loved ones who need help. As stress takes its toll, young caregivers are at increased risk for health problems including headaches and digestive

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or just breathe.

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issues. These kids go to school with anxiety, worry, and in some cases depression. As a result, their participation in school suffers.

Young caregivers are at increased risk for:

- Inability to focus
- Earning poor grades
- Getting in trouble
- Inability to relate to peers
- Failure to participate or fully engage in extracurricular activities

Connie Siskowski, a nurse and researcher who founded the American Association of Caregiving Youth (AACY), is concerned that young caregivers are going unnoticed. One of her studies showed that 22% of youths dropped out of school to care for a family member.

To help ease the burden of care on young people, and help kids be kids as well as caregivers, Siskowski believes they need more financial and emotional support. These kids also need a break. If you know a young caregiver, create an opportunity for rest by offering to make a meal or help with physical care so the child can have some time to complete homework, be with friends, play a sport, or just breathe.

Proper services for young caregivers demonstrate positive impacts on caregiving youth, including purpose, joy, empathy, and time management. The National Alliance on Caregiving recommends the following resources for young caregivers:

- **American Association of Caregiving Youth:** <https://aacy.org>
- **Kesem, support for children whose parents have cancer:** <https://www.kesem.org>
- **Lorenzo's House — support for children whose parents have early-onset dementia:** <https://lorenzoshouse.org>
- **National Alliance for Caregiving:** <https://www.caregiving.org>

REFERENCES:

- American Association of Caregiving Youth <https://aacy.org>
- American Heart Association. (2021). A Growing Phenomenon: Youth Caregivers Need Recognition, Support. Retrieved July 15, 2024 from <https://www.heart.org/en/news/2021/11/03/a-growing-phenomenon-youth-caregivers-need-recognition-support>

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