



DIVERSE ELDERS COALITION

Policy Toolkit

Policy Toolkit: Advancing Equity in Caregiving

The DEC developed this comprehensive policy toolkit to translate findings from our latest literature review into actionable guidance for state policymakers and community-based professionals and advocates. Organized around five pillars - Family & Friend Caregivers, Cultural Competence & Intersectionality, Community-based Care, Direct Care Workforce, and Data & Research – the toolkit distills key evidence into concrete policy and practice recommendations. Each recommendation is grounded in peer-reviewed studies and national reports, with references cited throughout so users can trace the underlying research. This toolkit is designed to strengthen equitable, culturally responsive systems of care for diverse older adults and the caregivers who support them.

Family & Friend Caregivers

- **Expand state paid family leave programs to include chosen family caregivers.**
 - Inclusive definitions of family improve caregiver participation among LGBTQ+ and immigrant populations (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2023; AARP, 2023).
- **Establish caregiver stipends or tax credits for unpaid caregivers of color and LGBTQ+ caregivers.**
 - Financial recognition improves health outcomes and reduces reliance on Medicaid long-term care (Morgan et al., 2023; ACL, 2022).
- **Fund caregiver navigation programs through Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and CBOs.**
 - Culturally matched navigators reduce care fragmentation and hospital readmissions (Poteat et al., 2024).
- **Create statewide respite voucher programs prioritizing underserved caregivers.**
 - Targeted respite reduces burnout and prevents care breakdowns (Xie et al., 2024; CDC, 2023).
- **Integrate caregiver well-being into Medicaid waivers and care coordination metrics.**
 - States that include caregiver health measures report lower costs and improved patient satisfaction (Lin & Liu, 2022).
- **Develop multilingual caregiver education and resource hubs.**
 - Centralized, language-accessible portals and printed guides improve caregivers' ability to navigate complex systems and claim available benefits.
 - States can partner with community-based organizations (CBOs) to host culturally tailored materials (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2022; ACL, 2023).
- **Require health systems to identify and record caregivers during patient intake.**
 - Systematic caregiver identification ensures caregivers are included in care planning, which is essential for elders from collectivist and multigenerational households. (NASEM, 2022; CDC, 2023)

Family & Friend Caregivers

- **Support peer-led caregiver support groups through CBO mini-grants.**
 - Peer-to-peer groups reduce isolation and strengthen cultural identity, particularly among BIPOC and LGBTQ+ caregivers who face stigma and limited formal support. (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2023).
- **Expand telehealth and digital literacy initiatives for caregivers.**
 - Providing tablets, internet subsidies, and bilingual tech support improves care coordination and access to medical professionals, especially in rural and low-income communities. (National Alliance for Caregiving & AARP, 2023; Pew Research Center, 2024)
- **Establish emergency relief funds for caregivers impacted by disasters or public health emergencies.**
 - Diverse caregivers are disproportionately affected by climate and disaster events; flexible funds can prevent homelessness or institutionalization during crises. (Administration for Community Living [ACL], 2023; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2024)
- **Include caregiver perspectives in state and local aging advisory councils.**
 - Representation from diverse caregiver populations ensures that program design reflects real cultural, linguistic, and family structures. (AARP Public Policy Institute, 2023; National Hispanic Council on Aging, 2024)
- **Provide trauma-informed counseling and mental health supports for caregivers.**
 - Many caregivers, especially refugees and LGBTQ+ individuals, experience cumulative trauma and stress; integrating counseling in caregiver programs improves long-term health. (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2023; Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2023)
- **Promote intergenerational caregiving and flexible zoning/housing policies.**
 - Zoning reforms that enable multigenerational and co-housing arrangements reduce financial burden and support cultural caregiving norms. (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2024; NASEM, 2022)
- **Fund caregiver training for chronic disease and dementia management through trusted CBOs.**
 - CBO-led culturally and linguistically adapted trainings improve caregiver competence and delay institutional care entry for persons living with dementia. (Xie et al., 2024; CDC, 2023; ACL, 2022)
- **Create culturally competent legal assistance programs for caregivers.**
 - Providing free or low-cost legal help (e.g., power of attorney, guardianship, benefits navigation) ensures caregivers' rights are protected and recognized regardless of marital or family status. (National Center on Law and Elder Rights [NCLER], 2023; Movement Advancement Project, 2023)

Cultural Competence & Intersectionality

- **Require inclusion of LGBTQ+ and racial equity standards in HCBS contracts.**
 - Explicit standards strengthen provider accountability and align with CMS Equity Framework goals (Anderson et al., 2023).
- **Partner with local cultural brokers and peer educators to bridge communication gaps.**
 - Community-based partnerships increase trust and service uptake among elders of color (Hamed et al., 2022).

Cultural Competence & Intersectionality

- **Implement trauma-informed care training addressing racism, homophobia, and xenophobia.**
 - Providers trained in intersectional trauma models report higher cultural responsiveness scores (Jimenez, 2022).
- **Fund interpreter and translation services in long-term care facilities and home care settings.**
 - Language access increases compliance and safety while lowering preventable hospitalizations (Knipping et al., 2023).
- **Incentivize recruitment of caregivers who share cultural backgrounds with care recipients.**
 - Cultural concordance improves satisfaction, adherence, and continuity (Lottmann & King, 2022; Stinchcombe et al., 2024).

Community-Based Care

- **Expand Medicaid 1115 waivers to test culturally integrated care models.**
 - Waivers can fund innovative partnerships between health systems and CBOs (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2023).
- **Support co-located services (health, housing, caregiving) at trusted cultural hubs.**
 - Integrated sites reduce transportation and stigma barriers for diverse elders (Hall, 2023).
- **Incorporate chosen family in care coordination and consent policies.**
 - Inclusive recognition of family structures improves communication and reduces unmet needs (Poteat et al., 2024).
- **Fund joint training between direct care workers and unpaid caregivers.**
 - Shared learning improves consistency and quality of care (Hengelaar et al., 2021).
- **Create partnerships between health departments and LGBTQ+/racial CBOs for data-informed interventions.**
 - Community partnerships strengthen surveillance and accountability (Arias et al., 2024).

Direct Care Workforce

- **Establish state-level wage floors and hazard pay for direct care workers.**
 - Fair compensation reduces turnover, stabilizes care quality, and lowers Medicaid expenditures by reducing institutionalization costs (PHI, 2023; Campbell et al., 2021).
- **Fund cultural and linguistic competency training for all licensed home- and community-based service (HCBS) workers.**
 - Training programs that embed intersectionality increase worker confidence and client satisfaction (Knipping et al., 2023; Anderson et al., 2023).
- **Create paid career ladders and credentialing pathways for bilingual and bicultural caregivers.**
 - Career advancement opportunities improve retention and promote continuity of culturally responsive care (Hengelaar et al., 2021).
- **Require workforce demographic data collection by race, ethnicity, language, and LGBTQ+ identity.**
 - Disaggregated data helps states identify gaps in representation and pay equity (PHI, 2024; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023).

Direct Care Workforce

- **Support immigrant caregivers through visa stability, legal protections, and inclusion in state-funded benefits.**
 - Over 27% of the direct care workforce are immigrants; turnover related to instability costs states an estimated \$1.3 billion annually (Campbell et al., 2021; National Domestic Workers Alliance, 2022).

Data & Research

- **Mandate demographic and identity data collection in caregiver surveys and registries.**
 - This ensures equitable funding allocation and accurate representation of marginalized caregivers (ACL, 2023).
- **Fund longitudinal studies on caregiving in racially and sexually diverse populations.**
 - Data gaps limit effective policy design and innovation (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2023).
- **Develop state equity dashboards tracking care access, workforce diversity, and client outcomes.**
 - Transparency tools drive accountability and community trust (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2024).
- **Require equity impact assessments for new caregiving legislation.**
 - These analyses help states avoid unintended disparities (Jimenez, 2022).
- **Support participatory policymaking with caregiver advisory councils representing diverse populations.**
 - Inclusion of lived expertise improves program design and uptake (Poteat et al., 2024).

References

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