



## Time to Talk

# Meaningful Ways You Can Support Caregivers - Seven Tips for Providers

Caregivers often consider themselves “just” a spouse, a son, a daughter or a friend – someone who cares about the person and steps in to fill a necessary need. They find it hard to ask for help, and in some cases the person they support will not allow them to accept it.

After engaging with caregivers in Huron Perth, we heard they’re overwhelmed in their role, unsure of where to get information and anxious about what the future holds. They’re frustrated, worried and feel tremendous guilt. They put themselves last and find it difficult to cope. The impact of caregiving is significant. It impacts the caregiver’s health and wellness, employment, work-life balance, finances and personal relationships.

### You Can Make a Meaningful Difference to the Caregiver Experience

We’re asking providers to recognize caregivers and incorporate these practices as part of your interactions with them:

1. Ask caregivers how they’re doing. Few people ask how the caregiver is doing which contributes to feelings of despair and isolation. We’re told this simple question alone can make a difference.
2. Identify caregivers and include them as part of the healthcare team.
3. Tell caregivers what’s happening and what they can expect next. Caregivers are anxious about what the future holds. Knowing what is going to happen next can help to relieve anxiety.
4. Encourage caregivers to accept help. Caregivers find it hard to ask for help and feel they should be able to manage this responsibility on their own. The reality is that caregivers who don’t seek or accept support are at high risk of caregiver burnout.
5. Help connect them to resources. The Time to Talk pamphlet includes resources of local programs and services. If they haven’t already picked up a pamphlet, please provide them with one.
6. Encourage them to talk to someone about their feelings. It’s not easy for caregivers to share, confiding in one person is a first step and can help relieve anxiety and feelings of isolation.
7. Re-visit this conversation throughout their journey. It may take time for caregivers to seek or accept

### ABOUT CONNECTING THE DOTS FOR CAREGIVERS

Connecting the Dots for Caregivers is an initiative that focuses on improving the experience for caregivers. Together, six local health care providers and caregivers are co-designing solutions that address the needs of caregivers and ensure they feel more supported, valued and engaged in their role. The project began by talking to caregivers and healthcare providers to better understand the improvement opportunities. From that work, three themes were identified that will help improve the experience of caregivers: Awareness and Recognition, Communication and Information, as well as Education, Training and Supports. The project is being funded by The Change Foundation.

