



Family Caregiving in the Toronto Jewish Community

REITMAN CENTRE & IFA
CAREGIVING FORUM MAY 22/14

Lisa Levin, VP Communications & Development
Circle of Care; Chair, Ontario Caregiver Coalition



Circle of Care

Mission: To Support individual independence and to sustain and enhance quality of life in the community.

- Multi-service agency serving seniors and adults with disabilities.
- Funded primarily by the Provincial Government (through CCAC's and Central LHIN).
- In 2012/13, served over 8,400 clients.
- Currently - 350 volunteers and 787 staff.

OUR SERVICES

- Personal Support
- Physiotherapy
- Social Work
- Day Program for Seniors with Dementia
- Kosher Meals on Wheels
- Homemaking
- Association of Jewish Seniors
- Visiting Hospice
- Transportation
- Access & Navigation
- **Caregiver Support**
- Assisted Living & Supportive Housing
- Volunteer Supported Services
- Exercise and Falls Prevention Classes

Caregiver Support: Family Caregiver Connections

- Education sessions
- Support Groups
- Respite care
- Transportation
- In-home respite care
- Kosher meals on wheels
- Caregiver services for Russian speaking clients

- 42% of clients from former Soviet Union
- Just under 600 clients

FCC is a partnership of 7 agencies: Circle of Care; Baycrest; JIAS Toronto; Reena; Betel Centre; Chai Tikvah; Jewish Family and Child

Jewish Caregivers - Specific Populations

- 1) Newcomers from former Soviet Union
- 2) Families with different levels of religious observance
- 3) Families caring for Holocaust survivors



Newcomers from Former Soviet Union

- Sponsorship issues – no access to government benefits for 10 years – major financial pressures
- Language barriers
- Isolation
- Multigenerational families living together



Newcomers from Former Soviet Union

- Formal care discouraged - care seen as responsibility of the family; mistrust of formal caregivers.
- Long term care placement not subsidized.
- Neglect/abuse can occur.



Families with Different Levels of Religious Observance

- Jews who are very observant have strict dietary rules regarding diet and food preparation – Kashrut or Kosher:
 - Separate meat and milk
 - Kosher food and meat
- Challenging for children who are less observant to care for parents who live on their own and keep a kosher home.
- Challenges training homemakers
- Guilt!

Families Caring for Holocaust Survivors

- Try and keep survivor parents out of institutions wherever possible.
- Challenges with accepting any form of help until a crisis arises. Even more difficult to accept formal help from “strangers”.

Mental health issues: flashbacks; hoarding; fear of showers; depression



Families Caring for Holocaust Survivors

- Sometimes there are strained relations between children and parents.
- Emotional separation between parents and children.
- Tendency for offspring to “parent” their parents due to their vulnerability.
- Higher levels of caregiver self neglect; stronger feelings of guilt

Conclusions

- Religious traditions, historical events and immigration all impact on caregiving and can increase challenges of the role.
- Important to be sensitive to these matters when supporting caregivers.
- Care planning must be client and caregiver centred to take these factors into account.

