

CAREGIVER CHRONICLES

BULLETIN

January 2026



Dane County Caregiver Program
Area Agency on Aging of Dane County

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What would you like to bring with you into the New Year?

Most New Year's resolutions are discarded pretty quickly. Studies have shown that less than 25% of people remain committed after 30 days. Yet there is value in setting goals to make things work more smoothly and to be sure you are living in a way that is true to yourself rather than always fulfilling the needs and expectations of others.

Caregiving is a role often defined by the expectations of other people – the person you're caring for; other family members and friends; and medical, legal, and human services professionals. Take a little time to focus on your needs and what you might like to bring into your life as you look ahead to a new year.

Adopt a different mindset

Rather than a list of resolutions that result in pressure to achieve or the same (maybe unrealistic) things you've tried before that resulted in frustration and disappointment, set aside some time to think about what makes things go well for you and what doesn't. For example, have you tried an exercise program that was boring and felt like a chore but you liked moving and how you felt afterward? Could you keep the part you liked—the regular movement and the way you felt more energized but change the activity? For example, maybe running on a treadmill in the gym feels like a tedious chore but running or hiking outdoors would be more enjoyable. What would you need to make that happen? You could consider skipping the gym membership and buying some gear to keep you feeling safe and warm outdoors in winter weather.

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Ask yourself some questions

- What is something I'm currently tolerating that I need to eliminate in 2026?
- What did I spend too much time on in 2025 that did not end up mattering at all?
- Am I setting this goal because I really want it or because I think I should want it?
- What is my plan when my motivation fades?
- If I could do anything I wanted without limit what would that be?
- If I envision the person I would like to be in 2026, what would I do every day?
- Who are the people who support me the most and how can I connect with them more?
- What will I say "no" to so I can say "yes" to something I want to prioritize?

After taking time to answer the questions, make a list of what you would like more of and what you no longer want. Then find small ways to make your priorities fit better into your schedule and circumstances. With regular actions you can have more of what you would like to have in your life and less of what is making life harder.

—Jane De Broux, Caregiver Specialist
Area Agency on Aging of Dane County



What to Leave Behind in 2025

- All or nothing mentality and pressure to achieve instant change
- Digital overload and allowing social media to affect your mood
- People who create drama and drain your energy
- Saying "yes" out of guilt
- Going it alone when you need help



Dane County Caregiver Program Update for 2026

How does the Caregiver Grant process work in 2026?

In a normal year, caregivers contact the ADRC or the Caregiver Program and ask to have their names added to the list for assessments. A Caregiver Specialist then contacts caregivers in the order their requests are received. The Specialist talks with each caregiver to see what support is needed and to fill out the grant application. This continues until the yearly funding runs out.

Right now, the federal budget has not been finalized. We are waiting for funding from the Older Americans Act (OAA) to be sent to the states. Because of this, we cannot start distributing grant funds yet but we are beginning assessments and applications so paperwork is ready to go when the funds are received.

What is the Older Americans Act?

The Dane County Caregiver Program is part of a national program called the National Family Caregiver Support Program. This program is paid for with federal funds through the Older Americans Act (OAA). The OAA is a federal law that supports many services for older adults that are provided through a network of state agencies, Area Agencies on Aging, tribal organizations, and local service providers.

The OAA helps pay for programs, such as:

- Meals at community sites and meals delivered to homes
- Support for family caregivers
- Transportation services
- Elder rights protection
- Healthy aging programs

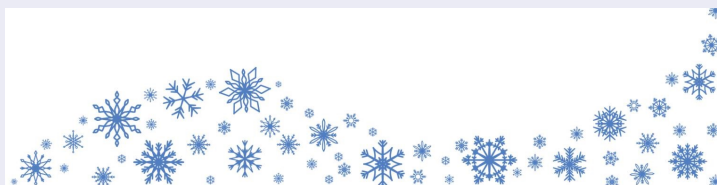
These programs help older adults stay healthy, safe, independent, and connected to their communities.

How does the funding flow?

The federal government sends OAA money to the state of Wisconsin and the state then distributes the funds to the Area Agencies on Aging. In Wisconsin there are three Area Agencies on Aging: Milwaukee County, Dane County, and Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR). These agencies oversee services at the county and regional level.

How does the federal budget affect OAA programs?

Congress recently passed a short-term funding plan called a continuing resolution. This plan keeps many federal programs running for now, including SNAP (FoodShare in Wisconsin); WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; Child Nutrition Programs); Farm Bill Programs; Veterans Affairs; and the FDA (Department of Agriculture and Food and Drug Administration). However, Congress has not yet approved the full federal budget for 2026. Lawmakers are still working on several spending bills, including the one that funds health and aging programs like the OAA. Until the full budget is approved, OAA-funded programs, including caregiver grants, may be delayed.



Monthly MIPPA Moment:

Medicare Costs for 2026

Some Medicare costs will change starting January 1, 2026. The standard Medicare **Part B premium increases to \$202.90/month** (from \$185/month in 2025), with the **annual deductible rising to \$283** (up from \$257), affecting most beneficiaries. Standard costs for Part A remain in that most people pay \$0 if they worked for 10 years or more, and **inpatient deductible for Part A increases to about \$1,736** for each benefit period in 2026 (an increase from \$1,676 in 2025) with coinsurance for longer stays. Maximum **deductible for Part D drug coverage will be \$615** (up from \$590 in 2025). Insulin will be capped at \$35/month or less, with no deductible. Higher-income earners paying Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amounts (IRMAA) for Part B and D, as usual.

Wisconsin's Medicaid program may be able to help pay for some Medicare costs if you are eligible for the Medicare Savings Program. Medicare Savings Programs are for those who receive Medicare benefits and who have limited countable income and assets. See more information here: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p1/p10062.pdf>

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, January 17, 2026, 9-11:30 am

Via Zoom

Email: AAA@danecounty.gov to register by 1/9/26

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





CAREGIVER TELECONNECTION

www.caregiverteleconnection.org



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!

Wednesday January 7 **11:00 am Eastern**
10:00 am Central
9:00 am Mountain
8:00 am Pacific **Ask Dr. Tam Questions with Tam Cummings, PhD** *What kind of questions do you have about dementia? As a caregiver, how do you survive the journey? Dr. Tam Cummings will cover quick stress relief tips and answer any questions you have about dementia.** Sponsored by VITAS Healthcare***

Thursday January 8 **11:00 am Eastern**
10:00 am Central
9:00 am Mountain
8:00 am Pacific **Managing Guilt and the need for Self-Care with Lucy Barylak, MSW** *Caregivers should be aware of feelings of guilt, as they can affect both their well-being and the quality of care they provide. Join Dear Lucy for an honest conversation about the guilt many caregivers experience, practical tips for coping, and why prioritizing self-care is essential.*

Tuesday January 20 **12:00 pm Eastern**
11:00 am Central
10:00 am Mountain
9:00 am Pacific **When Aging Parents Don't Want to Receive Help with Barry J. Jacobs, PsyD** *It can be very frustrating for adult child caregivers when the parents they'd like to help refuse their care--especially when the parents' safety is at risk. In this highly interactive conversation with psychologist Barry J. Jacobs, Psy.D., coauthor of The AARP Caregiver Answer Book, we'll discuss why parents may not recognize that they need help and potential strategies for helping them receive care graciously. Case illustrations will be used throughout.*

Wednesday January 28 **11:00 am Eastern**
10:00 am Central
9:00 am Mountain
8:00 am Pacific **I Made a Promise with Hollie Lowe, MA, LPC, NCC** *'I Made a Promise' is about having to break promises that you may have made. Many times, after the holidays, families realize they need to make a change. **Sponsored by the North Central Texas Caregiver Teleconnection***



A program of the WellMed Charitable Foundation

Register online at www.caregiverteleconnection.org or call 866.390.6491 Toll Free



Moving Forward: Grief and Ambiguous Loss Associated with Dementia Caregiving

Caregivers face many challenges including the daily changes and the lost abilities of their loved one.

This 16-week, psychoeducational support group will assist caregivers to find support, process their feelings and develop the skills to cope.

*This virtual, 16-week group runs
Fridays
January 16 - May 1, 2026 from 1-3pm*

Registration is required by January 9, 2026

To register or for more information,

Karen at 608/921-7165 or Janet at 608/297-3148

Cofacilitated by Rock & Marquette County dementia care specialists.



Increase your confidence, knowledge, and skills.



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_5FenimITSkuIRxEPJnebaA) https://countyofdane.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_5FenimITSkuIRxEPJnebaA
 - 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

