

UVMHC offers CARERS Program for Family Caregivers

The University of Vermont Medical Center & the UVM Center on Aging offers Coaching, Advocacy, Respite, Education, Relationship and Simulation ([CARERS](#)), an evidence based therapeutic group program that enhances the knowledge, skills, and competence of informal family caregivers of people with dementia. This program is based on the model developed by the Reitman Center at the Sinai Health System of Toronto, Ontario. The Memory Program at the UVM Medical Center has offered these groups since 2016. They consistently have received feedback from the participants that this is an extremely valuable service. This program has now been expanded to include community group leaders certified in this program.

CARERS is more than a support group. The program consists of 8 weekly sessions in an intimate group setting of no more than 6 members. The program is designed to increase understanding of the behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia and to address caregiver burden. These sessions focus on:

1. Cognitive behavioral therapy skills for problem solving for practical needs and resource development.
2. Skills (through simulation or role play) for managing emotions and improved communication with the person suffering from dementia or with others involved in providing care.

This group is intended for family members who have been actively providing intensive care. For family members who are new to caregiving, another group program, TEACH is offered. The TEACH program was also developed at the Reitman Center. Two separate CARERS groups are offered. There is one for spouses or partners and one for adult children caregivers. The adult children caregiver meetings usually are held in the early evening at a 5-7 pm time frame, the spouse/partner group normally meets during the day. Participation in this therapeutic program is generally covered by the caregiver's health insurance and there may be a co-pay. A pre-assessment interview is required which is also generally covered by health insurance.

More Information:

Please contact Lori P. McKenna, LICSW, with the UVMHC Dementia Family Caregiver Center at 802-847-2466 to ask about joining the program. Sign up early as these program classes fill up quickly!