

Dementia Family Caregiver Center at The University of Vermont Medical Center Offers Programs for Family Caregivers

Three programs are being offered to assist family caregivers. For those actively providing intensive care, VT CARERS, for those new to caring for a loved one with dementia, TEACH, and those wanting a relationship with and experienced caregiver, Peer-to-Peer Mentoring.

VT CARERS

The UVM Medical Center and the University of Vermont, Larner College of Medicine 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 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, Canada.

The UVM Medical Center has offered these groups since 2016. They have consistently received feedback from the participants that this is an extremely helpful and significant resource. This program includes community based clinicians certified in the CARERS program.

VT 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.

The participants will focus on:

1. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy skills for problem solving practical needs and developing resources for the person receiving care and the caregiver's own self-care.
2. Skill building (through simulation or role play) for managing emotions and improving communication with the person living with dementia, or with others involved in providing care.

Two separate VT 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.

A pre-assessment interview is required which is generally covered by health insurance. Participation in this therapeutic program is generally covered by the caregiver's health insurance and there may be a co-pay.

TEACH

The TEACH (Training, Education, and Assistance for Caregiving at Home) program was also developed at the Reitman Center. The TEACH Program is a four-week interactive group program for family caregivers, involving one session per week.

Lead by a Reitman Center certified clinician, caregivers will learn and practice practical skills that are central to caregiving. Each session covers a unique theme that is central to caregiving for someone with dementia:

1. Self Care
2. Navigating the System
3. The Changing Relationship
4. Future Planning

The program offers a unique opportunity to share and learn from other caregivers and explore common problems that are encountered and evidenced-based methods of support.

PEER-TO-PEER

The Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Program is available for family caregivers who provide care to a person with dementia living at home. This program was developed to strengthen relationships between caregivers, and transform the lived experience of an experienced caregiver into a meaningful relationship with a person new to caregiving. This experience will provide additional support and guidance from someone who understands the challenges caregivers face, someone “who has been there.”

Volunteer mentors participate in a recruitment interview, training/orientation, receive monthly coaching from trained professionals and sign a volunteer and confidentiality agreement.

This program is made possible with a generous grant from UVM Medical Center Auxiliary.

ABOUT THE DEMENTIA FAMILY CAREGIVER CENTER

The UVM Medical Center Dementia Family Caregiver Center is a model of care for Vermont to address fragmentation of services, gaps in access to services and increase support services for families living with dementia. The center offers a gateway to currently available supports and resources. The center coordinates evidence-based therapeutic programs for family caregivers (VT CARERS/TEACH) and includes a Volunteer Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Program for family caregivers. It is dedicated to broadening gerontological education in social work via a collaborative pilot project (VT-BRIDGES) with the University of Vermont’s Social Work Department and the UVM Center on Aging.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

DEMENTIA FAMILY CAREGIVER CENTER

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