

# Creating Community for a Lifetime Roadmap

## Overview—Caregiving

Caregiving recommendations seek to mobilize family, friend and other caregivers to complement the formal service system in providing the support older adults need to remain independent. They call for raising community awareness of the vital role family caregivers play and improving caregivers' access to information, education and support services.

### Desired Outcome

Personal, community and cultural supports for successful caregiving are strengthened.

### Background

Almost all older adults in Kent County want to stay in their current homes—but more than a third of them fear they won't be able to. They cite financial uncertainty and questions about their ability to care for themselves as they age as key reasons for their concern.

One in five older adults in Kent County provide regular help or care to a family member, friend or neighbor who is unable to do some things for themselves due to sickness or disability. One-fourth of these unpaid caregivers say they get no respite from these responsibilities. And when the tables are turned and older adults in Kent County need this kind of informal caregiving support for an extended period of time, nearly a third say they don't know of anyone who could provide it.

According to most estimates, Kent County's aging population will double in the next 30 years. Strengthening the informal caregiving system of support in Kent County will help many older adults "age in place"—meeting their expressed desires and providing a cost-effective alternative to more formal systems of care.

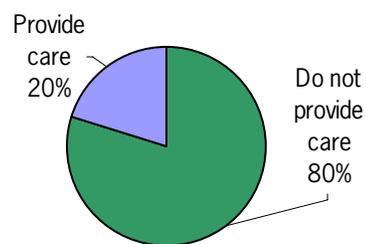
### Older Adults as Caregivers in Kent County

More than 12,600 older adults make up a significant informal network of support for the frail and disabled in Kent County.

Although most provide caregiving for relatives, a full 36 percent regularly help their neighbors and friends with activities they are unable to do themselves due to sickness or disability.

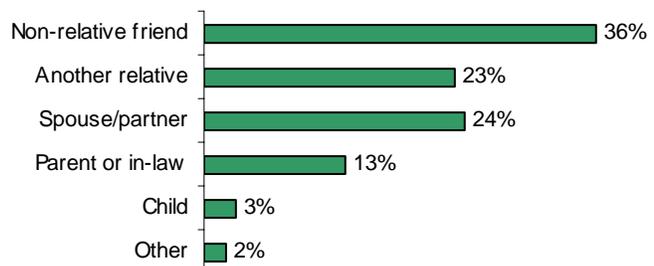
Older caregivers dedicate a substantial number of hours each week to helping their family or friends. Among those

**Exhibit 1 - Percent of People Age 65+ Who Provide Help to the Frail or Disabled**



Source: AdvantAge Initiative Survey of Kent County 2004.

**Exhibit 2 - Relationship of Caregivers to Care Recipients**



Source: AdvantAge Initiative Survey of Kent County 2004.

## Caregiving continued

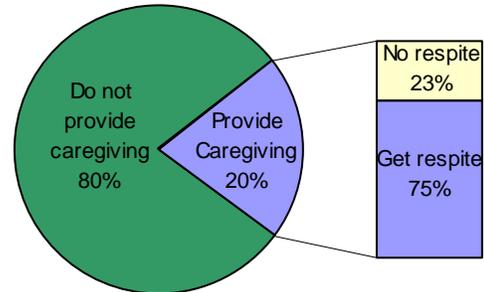
who provide care:

- 18% devote more than 10 hours per week
- 23% four to ten hours
- 34% one to three hours
- 25% could not assess how many hours they spend on caregiving.

The mean number of hours of those who provide caregiving is 19.8 hours per week. That means that older adults in Kent County are providing about 250,000 hours of care per week to family and friends—unpaid and, for one in four of these caregivers in Kent County, without respite.

The fact that nearly 80% of the older adult caregivers in Kent County have been providing this help for a year or more underscores the importance of ensuring that they themselves have access to respite and a formal system of support.

**Exhibit 3 - Percentage of People Age 65+ Who Get Respite/Relief From Their Caregiving Activities.**



Source: AdvantAge Initiative Survey of Kent County 2004.

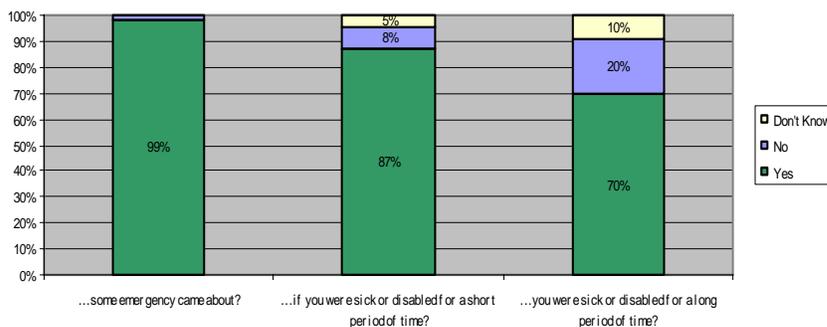
### Formal Support for Older Adults Providing Care

Why are one in four older adult caregivers not getting respite from their responsibilities? It could be that they are not familiar with community services: among all of the older adults in Kent County who were surveyed:

- 41% did not know if respite services were available in Kent County
- 15% did not know if a visiting nurse was available
- 21% did not know if a home health aide was available.

### Does the Informal Support System Work for Everyone?

**Exhibit 4 - Is There Someone Who Could Help If...?**



Source: AdvantAge Initiative Survey of Kent County 2004.

Nearly all (99%) of Kent County seniors reported having someone they could contact at any time of the day or night if an emergency situation arose. That number falls to 87% when Kent County's older adults are asked if they feel they have someone who would help them if they were sick for a short period of time, such as if they had the flu. The

percentage drops even further when older adults are asked if they have someone who would help for a long period of time if they should become sick or disabled. Nearly one-third do not know of any family member or friend who could provide this kind of long-term help.