



Project: Nevada Caregiver Support Center

Organization: University of Nevada, Reno, Psychology Department

Project Description

The Nevada Caregiver Support Center (NCSC) provides education and practical solutions to families and professionals caring for older adults with dementia. The NCSC's mission is to prolong independent living and home-based care while maximizing quality of life. Home-based individual, family and group services are provided in Washoe County and rural communities throughout northern Nevada.

In the most recent grant year, the program assisted almost 276 clients and their families/caregivers with its services, which have now become a nationally recognized and progressive model of care for managing patients with dementia.

Evidence-based support services are provided to persons with early stage dementia through individual and/or family coaching and referrals to healthcare and social service agencies. "Coping with Changes" support groups are available for high functioning clients. Instruction is provided in behavioral activation and environmental and memory prosthetics.

Services for late stage clients include support through coaching to family caregivers in restraint free care, adapting principles of behavioral activation, e.g. helping caregivers to identify and implement pleasant activities for the care receiver. Caregivers are supported with education for in-home modification and how to effectively simplify the structure in the home for persons with dementia.

In 2008 there has been a significant increase in referrals to NCSC. A program providing companions to socially isolated elderly clients with memory disorders has been expanded. Seventeen undergraduate students at UNR have been trained in effective methods of communicating with persons with dementia. Working in teams of two, they are paired with elderly clients. The students are closely supervised by staff of NCSC. NCSC serves many caregivers with mental health issues, (e.g., anxiety, depression, psychosis, traumatic brain injury).

Through the promotion of teaching healthy coping behaviors to caregivers, prevention or reduction of stress related physical and psychological problems is achieved. NCSC designs their support services on evidence-based techniques to reduce or alleviate risk of elder abuse, utilization of costly medical services and psychotropic medication for stress-related problems, and reduced reliance on institutional care. NCSC has been most successful in working with underserved communities in rural Nevada. Reduced medical costs are associated with caregiving emergencies due to skill deficits. While NCSC operates with a sliding fee scale, no one is denied service due to lack of financial resources.

The Nevada Caregiver Support Center is truly a valuable resource for Nevada caregivers and professionals as they help elder care receivers.

For more information visit <http://www.nevadacaregiver.org/> or contact Jane Fisher, Ph.D. at 775-784-4335 or via e-mail fisher@unr.edu