Informal Caregivers and Older Adults

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Michigan Department of Transportation project: Low-cost, high-impact measures to meet the transportation needs of Michigan’s aging population

Maintain the safety and well-being of Michigan’s older adults by developing measures to be implemented by MDOT

Literature review, demographic analysis, older driver survey, caregiver survey, recommendations for MDOT
Background

- The number of Americans age 65 and older will grow from 40 million currently to more than 88 million in 2050
- Dependence on the personal automobile for mobility
- Declines in abilities needed for safe driving
  - Age-related medical conditions
  - Medications used to treat conditions
  - Perceptual, cognitive, and psychomotor skills
- Mobility following driving cessation
Caregiving in the United States

- Caregiver: family member or other person that provides unpaid care to an older adult

- Estimated 36 million adults provided unpaid care to someone age 65 or older

- The current economic value of caregivers’ unpaid contributions is estimated to be $450 billion

- Most frequently reported IADL performed is providing transportation (84%)
Caregiving in Michigan

- By 2030, Michigan’s older adults age 70 and older will comprise 14% of the state’s population

- Michigan has an estimated 1.3 million caregivers providing care to someone age 60 and older

- 1.4 billion hours of time

- $13.4 billion in economic value
Purpose

- Comprehensive understanding of caregivers in Michigan that provide transportation or other assistance to someone age 70 or older
  - Characteristics of caregivers
  - How caregivers assist older adults
  - Impact on health and finances

- To improve the effectiveness of this important part of older adult safe mobility
Sample

- Michigan Driver History File
- Adults 45-80 years
- Residents of the 7 MDOT regions
- Provided transportation assistance or other unpaid care to a Michigan senior age 70 or older within the last 12 months
Questionnaire design

- Cognitive interview process and pilot testing

- Final questionnaire contained 41 questions regarding:
  - Demographics
  - Driving status and frequency
  - Work and/or volunteering activity
  - Health
  - Types of transportation assistance provided
  - Characteristics of care recipient
  - Caregiver burden
Data collection

- Telephone interview administered by a professional survey company
- 5,548 contacts made
- n = 300
- 12% response rate
- 39% of the contacts reported that they did not provide care to an older adult
- Average interview length was 14 minutes
Demographics of Caregivers

- 61 years
- 66.3% Female
- 76.3% Married
- 94.7% White
- Live in own home/apartment
- Nearly all are licensed and drive regularly
- Completed at least some college or more
- Frequency of providing care varied
- Income varied
Employment and Volunteer Work

- Half of caregivers work outside home for pay
  - 67.7% Full-time
  - 27.0% Part-time
  - 5.3% Occasional

- Slightly more than half volunteer in the community
  - Average 5.5 hours per week
Overall Health

- 56.4% Excellent/Very good
- 25.5% Good
- 13.6% Fair
- 4.5% Poor
Demographics of Care Recipient

- 84 years
- 70.0% Female
- 61.6% Widowed
- Parent of caregiver
- More than half no longer drive
- Close proximity to caregiver
Health Issues of Care Recipient

- 65.4% Mobility
- 43.2% Vision
- 35.5% Cognition
- 34.0% Other condition
Types of Assistance Provided

- Majority of caregivers do not assist with ADLs
- 91.1% Transportation
- 54.8% Housekeeping
- 40.2% Finances
- 38.4% Food preparation
- 35.2% Medications
Transportation

- 97.0% Provide rides in the car

- Frequency of providing rides per week
  - 35.9% 1-2 times
  - 19.4% 3-4 times
  - 9.4% 5-7 times

- Medical, shopping, and family/personal

- Arrange for rides

- Get rides with family/friends or drive themselves
Caregiver Burden

- “a multidimensional response to physical, psychological, emotional, social and financial stressors associated with the caregiving experience” (Kasuya, Polgar-Bailey & Takeuchi, 2000)

- Burden can be moderated by available resources, SES, prior health status, and social support

- Bakas Caregiver Outcomes Scale = 3.6

- 43% sought information/services to help with providing assistance
Recommendations

- Ensure that materials are available and easily accessible to caregivers
- Consider medical/health professionals as partners for disseminating transportation safety information for caregivers
- Support research on caregivers who provide transportation assistance to older adults to better understand this population, as well as factors that enable them to sustain these efforts over time
Discussion

- Caregivers play a critical role in maintaining safe mobility for older adults
- Increases in life expectancy and aging of the baby boomers
- Programs to assist caregivers
- Backbone of our long-term care system
Publication