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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Family Caregivers – Essential to Vermont’s COVID-19 Crisis Response and Recovery** *November is National Family Caregivers Month*

November is National Family Caregivers Month, an opportunity to honor family caregivers as the backbone of our home and community-based support system for Vermonters who are aging or living with a disability. According to the [National Center on Caregiving](#), more than 40 million Americans, including 64,000 Vermonters, provide care for a loved one who has a disability, is chronically ill, or is aging, and spend an average of 20 hours per week providing care.

Every day, family caregivers manage health emergencies, juggle priorities, and suffer isolation - and all that was before COVID-19. The pandemic has brought even more challenges as family caregivers handle caregiving in crisis. Loss of economic security, staying home to avoid health risks, navigating telehealth appointments and reduced access to respite services all increase stress on caregivers and can lead to negative health outcomes or moving a loved one out of their home.

The Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) works to support older Vermonters and Vermonters with disabilities through a comprehensive system of long-term services and supports, including supports for family caregivers. Our diverse community partners provide information and referrals, caregiver education and training, and targeted funds for respite. Our partners have quickly adjusted services and programs during the pandemic; for example, conducting support groups online or by phone, changing services to address isolation, and offering extra funding to families and caregivers where possible.

DAIL has compiled a handout of some Remote Caregiver Support Options available in Vermont [here](#).

As the COVID-19 crisis continues this winter, family caregiver support must be a priority, and DAIL is seeking to learn more about what caregivers need to remain resilient in their ability to support loved ones at home. We have recently conducted a survey of family caregivers of older Vermonters in preparation for our next State Plan on Aging, results soon to be posted at [asd.vermont.gov](http://asd.vermont.gov), and we will use this information to guide programs and services going forward. In addition, we look to reports for insights, like [Caregivers in Crisis: Caregiving in the Time of COVID-19](#), released in October by the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving, which details

the increased stress and burden experienced by family caregivers nationwide and recommends increased supports such as access to clinical counseling for caregivers.

If you or someone you know is a family caregiver of an older Vermonter, call the Area Agencies on Aging Helpline at 1-800-642-5119 to find out about caregiver support in your region. Other Vermonters should call 2-1-1.

***About the Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living (DAIL):***

*Our mission is to make Vermont the best state in which to grow old or to live with a disability - with dignity, respect and independence.*

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