

Alberta Caregivers Association Strategic Framework 2013- 2016



VISION: *An Alberta where caregivers are valued and supported*

MISSION: *To empower caregivers and promote their well being.*

ABOUT THE ACGA

The ACGA was born out of the ashes of caregiver burnout, experienced by one woman caregiver who received minimal support while caring for her husband. A group of caregivers joined her to take action so that the health and well-being of caregivers like them could be protected and enhanced. In 2001, the group incorporated the ACGA as a non-profit organization; we received charitable status a year later.

We value the irreplaceable support provided by numerous disability- and illness-specific organizations in our province. We complement this function by focusing exclusively on preserving caregivers' well-being, not trying to make them better caregivers. The ACGA understands that the well-being of the care recipient is of paramount importance to caregivers: we help them try to find a balance so that they are not sacrificing their own health. After all, you need to make sure your own oxygen mask is secure before you can assist others.

CORE BELIEFS AND PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICES

The Alberta Caregivers Association upholds the following beliefs and principles of practice:

The Caregiver Identity

- All caregivers share common needs and strengths despite their varying situations and points on the caregiving journey.
- Caregivers are integral providers of care and therefore are equal members of the care team.
- Acceptance of one's identity as a caregiver is the first step to seeking help.

Supporting Caregivers

- Caregivers need time, energy, money, and support to be able to maintain balance in their lives and participate in community life.

- Varying physical, mental, and emotional challenges necessitate ongoing, comprehensive availability of support to help caregivers cope positively.
- Caregivers need assistance accommodating for their changing roles and identities, including life transitions and the post-caregiver stage.
- The caregiving experience affords caregivers unique perspectives and expertise to plan and provide relevant support for other caregivers.

Public Policy and Service Systems

- Definition and understanding of the caregiver experience is fundamental to developing policies and service systems to meet their needs and those of their loved ones.
- Strong service systems for caregivers and their loved ones are required in communities to make a substantial difference in the lives of caregivers.
- Caregivers require a choice of accessible services (e.g. respite) to maintain their well-being.
- Caregivers need a voice in policy and practice decisions affecting them or their loved ones.

ACGA Principles of Practice

- Caregivers should drive the development of programs for caregivers.
- The focus of all programs must be the well-being and quality of life of caregivers themselves.
- The needs of the caregiver are the primary consideration in everything we do.
- Caregiver experiences inform our work.
- Cooperation, rather than competition, among caregiver-serving organizations is the only way to build caregiver-friendly communities.
- The ACGA must be accessible to all caregivers in Alberta, regardless of situation, background, or location.
- The ACGA will respond to all requests in a timely, effective, and compassionate manner.

FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

The Alberta Caregivers Association sees the following factors as essential for achieving our mission.

Program/Service Success Factors

- Increase in awareness and public understanding of caregiving, and in appreciation for the caregiver role across Alberta.
- Caregivers self identify, and are aware of and can access the tools, supports and services they need.
- Communities throughout Alberta have tools and resources to support their caregivers.
- Change in policy: the role of the caregiver is recognized formally in social and health policy. We see 'the system' change to recognize caregivers' role and to address caregivers' needs.
- Caregivers, partners and community satisfaction: The Association provides quality services and builds strong partnership and relationships across the province.

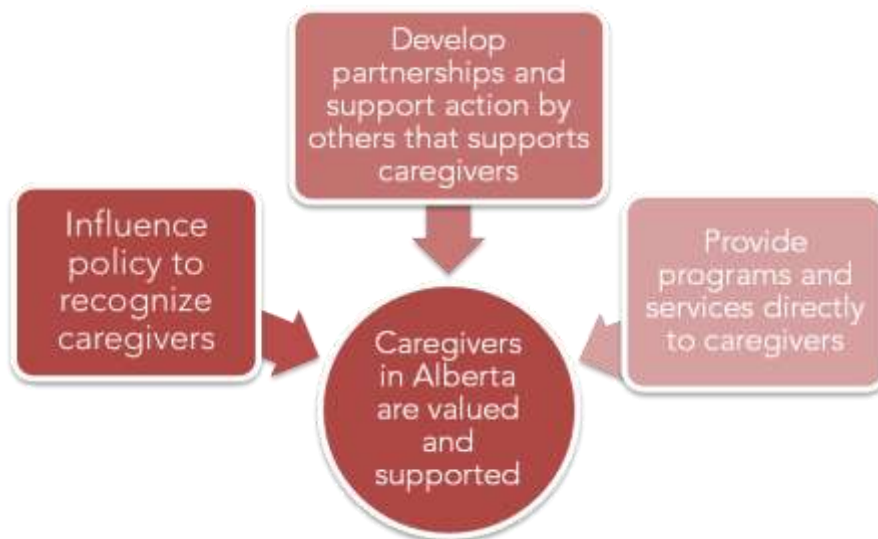
Organizational Success Factors

- Broad name recognition across the province. The Association is known and valued across the province.
- Increased membership: caregivers, partners, and communities support the Association across the province.
- Increase in partnerships across the province: The Association is the hub for caregiver awareness and support across Alberta. Through our direct action and our work with others, caregivers have access to tools and support they need.
- A strong and stable organization: The Association has stable funding and a skilled and committed Board, staff and volunteers in place. Staff, Board and volunteers know they are valued and their work makes a difference.

GOALS

The Alberta Caregivers Association is committed to:

- Supporting caregivers through the development and delivery of programs and services that address caregivers' needs.
- Developing partnerships and working with non-profit organizations, government agencies and private service providers to facilitate access to caregiver supports and to ease system navigation.
- Influencing social policy to ensure that the health and social systems recognize and include caregivers.



Our commitment is turned into action through the following goals:

1. Raise the profile of and public support for caregivers, their issues and the Alberta Caregivers Association.
2. Provide programs that meet the information, education support, networking and advocacy needs individual caregivers.
3. Influence and affect systems change at all levels to recognize caregivers and address their needs.
4. Expand the reach of the Alberta Caregivers Association to support communities and their caregivers throughout Alberta.
5. Ensure the growth, sustainability, relevancy and effectiveness of the Alberta Caregivers Association.

STRATEGIES FOR ACTION 2013- 2016

To realize these goals the Association will pursue the following strategies over the next three years.

| Goal | Strategic Directions |
|---|---|
| 1. Raise the profile of and public support for caregivers, their issues and the Alberta Caregivers Association. | 1.1 Engage public figures and decision makers. 1.2 Recognize/highlight the contribution of caregivers. 1.3 Educate the public about the importance and experiences of caregivers. 1.4 Profile caregivers' stories and experiences. |
| 2. Provide programs that meet the information, education support, networking and advocacy needs individual caregivers. | 2.1 Develop/provide education for professionals, employers and the community. 2.2 Develop/maintain a resource centre for caregivers and community members. 2.3 Maintain and/or enhance direct services for caregivers. 2.4 Undertake program design and development. |
| 3. Influence and effect systems change at all levels to recognize caregivers and address their needs | 3.1 Ensure the role of caregivers is recognized in health and social policy. 3.2 Influence professional understanding of caregivers and how they fit within professional practice. |
| 4. Expand the reach of the Alberta Caregivers Association to support communities and their caregivers throughout Alberta. | 4.1 Increase partnerships and connections across the province in order to support caregivers. 4.2 Develop resources and tools for partners. |
| 5. Ensure the growth, sustainability, relevancy and effectiveness of the Alberta Caregivers Association. | 5.1 Expand ACGA membership. 5.2 Secure sustained funding. 5.3 Develop communication plans and tools. 5.4 Develop and sustain the Association's human resource capacity. 5.5 Undertake research and evaluation activities to understand ACGA's impact. |

ANNUAL ACTION PLANS

The Association identifies specific actions and develops action plans to support these Strategic Directions on an annual basis.