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## Caregiving For Older Adults In Kent County

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# CAREGIVING FOR OLDER ADULTS IN KENT COUNTY

CREATING COMMUNITY FOR A LIFETIME... Planning for an elder-friendly community in Kent County

## OLDER ADULTS CARE FOR OTHERS—BUT DO THEY GET THE CARE THEY NEED?

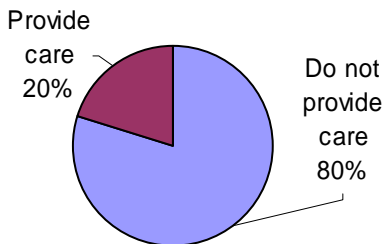
One in five older adults in Kent County provides regular help or care to a family member, friend or neighbor who is unable to do some things for themselves due to sickness or disability. One-fourth of these unpaid caregivers say they get no respite from these responsibilities. And when the tables are 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.

*An elder-friendly community recognizes, values and supports the contributions that older adults make to caring for others.*

## OLDER ADULTS AS CAREGIVERS IN KENT COUNTY

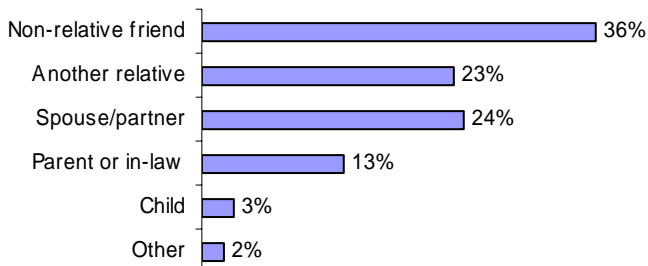
More than 12,600 older adults make up a significant informal network of support for the frail and disabled in Kent County (Exhibit 1).

**Exhibit 1 - Percent of People Age 65+ who Provide Help to the Frail or Disabled**  
Kent County AdvantAge Initiative 2004



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 (Exhibit 2).

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

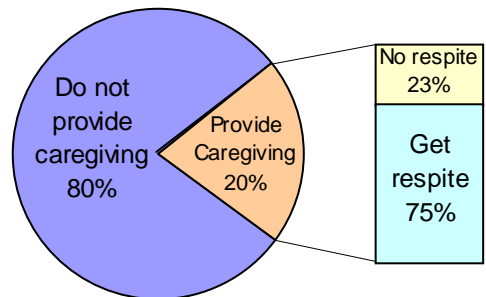


Older caregivers dedicate a substantial number of hours each week to helping their family or friends. Among those who provide care:

- 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 (Exhibit 3). 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.**



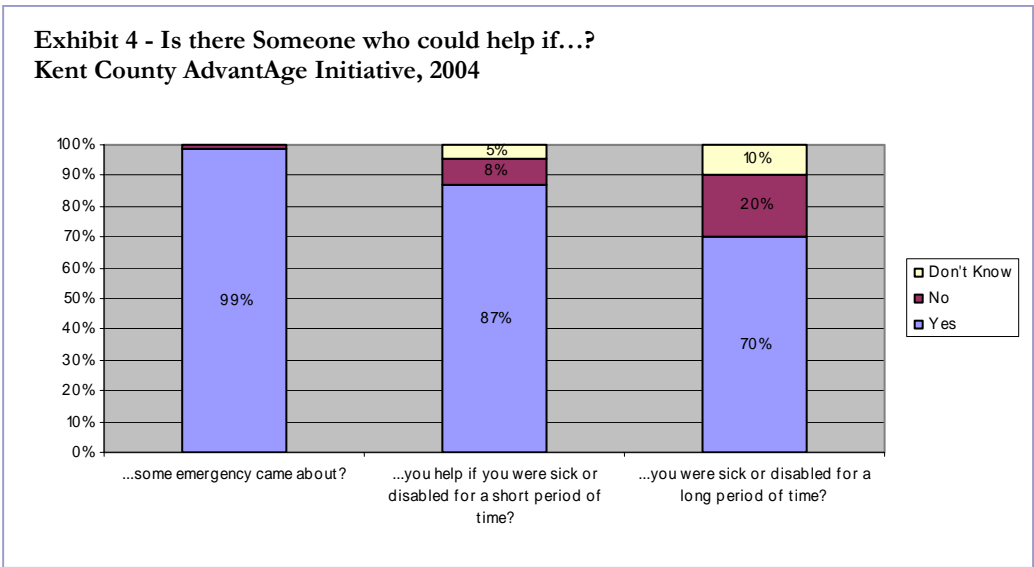
## FORMAL SUPPORT FOR OLDER ADULTS PROVIDING CARE

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?

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 (Exhibit 4). 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 (Exhibit 4). 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.

## IT'S OUR FUTURE!

Today, one in ten Kent County residents – 62,102 people – is 65 or over. Most experts agree that, within the next 30 years, that number will double. Creating Community for a Lifetime is planning today so that the older adults of tomorrow are supported as caregivers **and** receive the caregiving they need as they age.

**Creating Community for a Lifetime** is a Kent County initiative seeking to build a framework for long-term planning to address the challenges and opportunities presented by an aging community. Lead partners are the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan and the Grand Rapids Community Foundation.

Information in this Data Sheet is derived from a 2004 AdvantAge Initiative (AI) survey of Kent County residents 65 or older. This survey provides an opportunity to compare local findings with results from AI Surveys conducted in other communities as well as nationally. Analysis of Kent County survey results was provided by the Community Research Institute at the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy, Grand Valley State University.

For more information about *Creating Community for a Lifetime* or a summary of the full AI survey results for Kent County, see [www.community4alifetime.org](http://www.community4alifetime.org).

For more information about the *AdvantAge Initiative*, see [www.vnsny.org/advantage](http://www.vnsny.org/advantage).