

REST PARTNERS WITH ILLINOIS IN VOLUNTEER RESPITE PILOT PROGRAM

The Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) is entering into a partnership with Marklund's REST Program to begin a process that will ultimately bring thousands of volunteer respite care workers to those caring for loved ones at home throughout the state. Within this agreement, REST (Respite Education and Support Tools) master trainers will work with social service agencies as well as faith-based and volunteer organizations to present this comprehensive two-day interactive "Train the Trainer" course that will allow leaders in these organizations to become registered trainers for volunteer respite workers. Upon obtaining this registration, these new trainers can then offer eight-hour training sessions for volunteers to learn general care

techniques that will help them provide respite services for caregivers in their respective communities. All training sessions will be offered at no charge.

"We are so pleased to begin this new partnership with the State of Illinois to bring respite care where it is so urgently needed," noted Lois Sheaffer Kramer, REST Master Trainer, and Director of Government Relations and Community Support for Marklund.

Respite care has allowed caregivers to take a break from the stresses of caregiving which ultimately impacts their lives in a positive way," explained Sheaffer Kramer. "Those who received it often report an increase in life satisfaction, improved relationships with other family members, and improved health.

An Urgent Need

Currently, more than 5,000 families who are providing some form of at-home care for loved ones are listed on the Illinois DHS PUNS (Prioritization for Urgency of Need) list waiting for respite services. Of those, 3,000 say it is a critical need and another 1,000 say it is an emergency need. This problem is not isolated to the greater Chicagoland area, but impacts the entire state of Illinois.

Established as a pilot program, which may ultimately be shared with other states throughout the nation, Marklund's REST pilot program will address the needs of Illinois caregivers by implementing a training schedule which will educate 12,500 volunteer respite workers by the end of a three-year period. These volunteers will help families by

allowing caregivers to take a break feeling confident that their loved ones are being cared for by qualified individuals without incurring the cost of private caregivers or placing them in long-term care facilities.

Through the REST program, Marklund envisions creating a network of organizations throughout the state that can provide volunteer respite workers that are trained with the needs of the caregivers and care-recipients in mind.

An innovative solution to the increasing need for standardizing respite training, the REST program was designed to train the average lay person on how to provide respite breaks to caregivers and to connect with the care recipient," she said. "This is not a medical program—you don't have to have any kind of a medical background to be trained as a respite care volunteer."

More than just a training program, REST is an ongoing support system for those involved at all levels. "The REST team's involvement with these agencies does not end when the training session ends," Sheaffer Kramer noted. "This program is designed to maintain ongoing, long-term communication with each trainer in the field to ensure that these trainers are empowered and connected to reach out to each other and the interested volunteer respite workers."

For information on hosting a training session or becoming a volunteer respite care worker, visit the website at www.restprogram.org.

**Partnering with
the Illinois
Department of
Human Services
to build a
state-wide network
of volunteer
respite care
workers**

