



HILLS *of* 
HEADWATERS
COLLABORATIVE
Caregivers in the Hills

Progress Report

July 2021

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Background	4
The Team	5
Our Approach	6
Phases of the Program	7
Charting Our Growth	8
Identifying Caregiver Needs	9
Recommendations Moving Forward	10
Caregiver Recognition	11
An Informed Approach	12
Conclusion	13

“The simple act
of caring is heroic.”

- Edward Albert, Actor & Activist

Executive Summary

The mission of Caregivers in the Hills is to promote positive partnerships between caregivers and the health care community to ensure mutual respect, communication, and compassion.

Our program is anchored in promoting and supporting the following:

- Committing to a phased beginning with working with two prominent agencies, extending to other OHT partners, and finally opening the program up to the community.
- Identifying caregivers in Dufferin County and Caledon.
- Providing caregivers with an identification badge that will enable them to participate more fully in the care of their loved one(s).
- Assisting the health care community with education and tools to validate and recognize the role of the caregiver.
- Empowering caregivers to ask questions and be involved in the health decisions of their loved one(s).



Background

To ensure the Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Ontario Health Team is well connected to patients, families, and caregivers, the Hills of Headwaters Community Wellness Council was established.

In 2020, the Council identified the priority to create a program that would support caregivers in Dufferin County and Caledon. Various program names were brainstormed and the council voted in majority for *Caregivers in the Hills*.

Project Leads Heidi Vanderhorst and Bob Borden and Project Manager Sharon Hendry initiated the launch of the program on August 1, 2020. The following month, Dini Dimakos Shevchenko, a Social Service Worker student from Humber College fulfilled her field placement as the Project Coordinator. Upon graduation, Dini took on the role of Administrative Support for the program.

Along with ongoing feedback from the council, the team has launched the first phase of the program. We began developing our mission and vision, followed by the creation of a website and online application. We have now welcomed over 30 caregivers from the [Alzheimer's Society of Dufferin County](#) and [Dufferin Child and Family Services](#).

With support from our community and health care partners, we look forward to welcoming even more caregivers.

The Team

Heidi Vanderhorst
Project Lead

Program Manager
Dufferin Area Family Health Team
Phone: 519-938-8802 x308
Email: h.vanderhorst@DAFHT.ca



Bob Borden
Project Lead

Patient Family Advisor Lead
Hills of Headwaters Collaborative
Email: bobborden1299@gmail.com



Sharon Hendry
Project Manager

Quality & Patient Experience Specialist
Headwaters Health Care Centre
Phone: 519-941-2702 x2576
Email: shendry@headwatershealth.ca



Dini Dimakos Shevchenko
Administrative Support

Dufferin Area Family Health Team
Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Ontario Health Team
Phone: 519-216-6671
Email: caregiver@hillsofheadwaterscollaborative.ca



Our Approach

The Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Community Wellness Council is a dynamic group of health care professionals, patients, caregivers, and community volunteers. At the beginning of 2020, the group addressed a large gap in services for caregivers. At the time, there was no means of identifying unpaid caregivers who were supporting patients, clients, and residents in the community.

Due to the high burden placed on unpaid caregivers as well as the responsibility they ease for health care settings, it was determined that unpaid caregivers should be recognized and validated for their role. The council agreed that unpaid caregivers should be supported in advocating for the mental and physical care decisions for their loved ones.

In the early stages of the program, the team decided starting small would be ideal in terms of navigating previously uncharted territory in Dufferin County and Caledon. What was the uncharted territory? Identifying caregivers in the community and understanding the responsibilities and challenges they face in their role.

The program was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic and that gave the team a strategic focus to seniors and children. We realized that many of the in-person programs both groups had participated in pre-COVID-19 were now put on hold; thus, placing a larger responsibility on their caregivers.

With this in mind, we decided the initial phase of our program would begin by identifying caregivers of seniors and children through two local organizations - the Alzheimer's Society and Dufferin Child & Family Services. With the support of the two agencies, we continue to identify caregivers, which include the spouses, partners, parents, and grandparents of their respective loved ones.

Learn more about our phased approach in greater detail on the following page.



Caregivers in the Hills and Community Wellness Council member Kat Anderson, her son Atlas, and his support dog Harris.

Phases of the Program

Phase 1:

Development & Testing

- Implementing the program with two Ontario Health Team partners - the Alzheimer's Society of Dufferin County and Dufferin Child and Family Services
- Develop a secure application for data collection from caregivers
- Educate and track learning of local health care providers on the role of the caregiver
- Onboard caregivers from the two OHT partners and provide them with an identification badge

Phase 2:

Learning & Widening

- Widen participation to larger OHT partner organizations that will have greater impact and reach more unpaid caregivers in the community
- Onboard the Dufferin Area Family Health Team to assist in identifying caregivers
- Develop an education Toolkit accessible to all OHT partners
- Build awareness of the program with health care providers and the local community (Communications Plan)
- Onboard local businesses/retailers to promote the program by offering rewards/perks to caregivers

Phase 3:

Building Momentum

- Widen the program to all OHT partners
- Continue to secure other non-healthcare partners to widen reward/support systems
- Continue to promote Caregivers in the Hills and introduce education tools to the public
- Work with other Ontario Health Teams to help them build their own caregiver identification program
- Collaborate with OHT partners to address the ongoing needs of caregivers

Charting Our Growth



The first phase of Caregivers in the Hills began August 1, 2020 and will end on August 31, 2021. Here is a look at what we have accomplished so far.

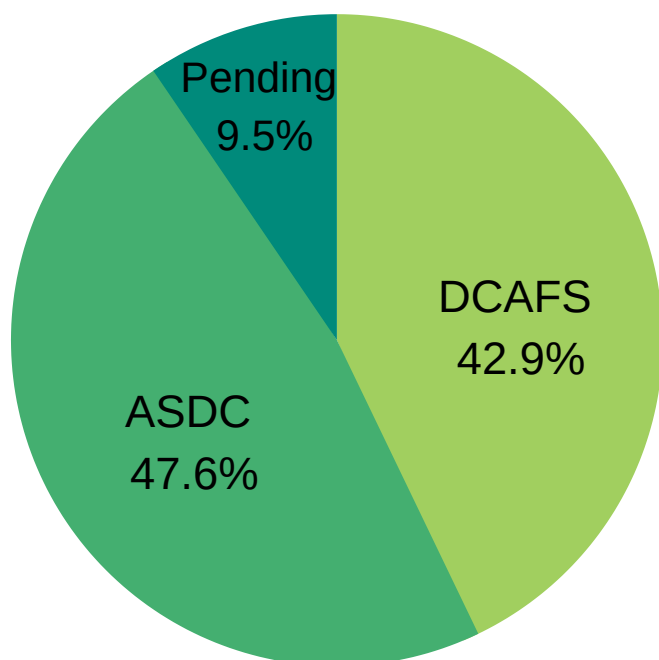
Education Module Completion for Health Care Providers:

Understanding the Role of the Caregiver eLearning

Organization	# of Participants	% of Participants
Headwaters Health Care Centre	79	68%
Dufferin Area Family Health Team	34	29%
Other Organizations	4	-1%

Caregivers in the Hills:

Current Membership from Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Ontario Health Team Partners: Dufferin Child and Family Services (DCAFS) and the Alzheimer's Society of Dufferin County (ASDC)

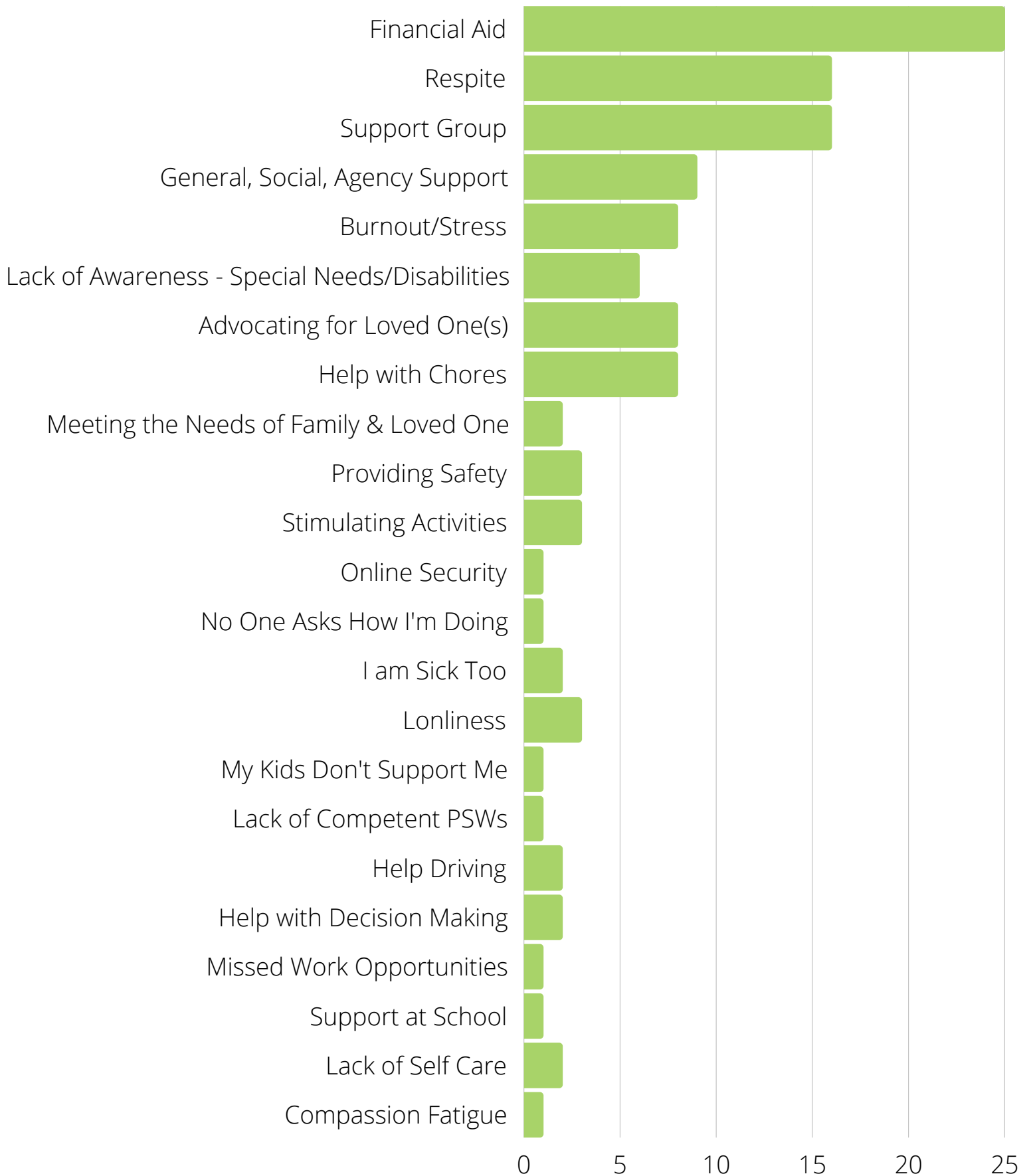


Organization	Caregivers
DCAFS	18
ASDC	20
Total Members	38

Data Collected:
December 18, 2020 to July 23, 2021

Identifying Unpaid Caregiver Needs:

We asked all 38 Members of the Caregivers in the Hills program to tell us about their most prominent needs. Here are the results:



Recommendations Moving Forward

Meeting the Needs of Unpaid Caregivers

We have identified a few of the biggest challenges for members of Caregivers in the Hills, they include:

- Financial support
- Increased options for day and overnight respite
- Increased support in the community and at home
- Increased awareness of special needs and disabilities

In order to address these needs, *Caregivers in the Hills* aims to:

- Continue to advocate for financial support in order to maintain program goals.
- Work in tandem with Ontario Health Team partners to align with their goals and work plans for supporting the caregiving community.
- Collaborate with Ontario Health Team partners to come up with actionable steps to support caregiver needs.
- Continue to educate Ontario Health Team partners and the larger community to identify members of Caregivers in the Hills via their badge.
- Promote a culture of caregiver validation, recognition, and celebration of the caregiver and all they do.



Member of Caregivers in the Hills
Cheryle Hamilton and her husband
Richard Hamilton.



*Caregiving is universal.
There are only four kinds of people in
the world:*

*those who have been caregivers,
those who currently are caregivers,
those who will be caregivers,
and those who will need caregivers.*

- Rosalyn Carter

Caregiver Recognition

Few things delight us more than being able to make the members of *Caregivers in the Hills* feel appreciated.

On April 6th of this year, our team celebrated **Caregiver Recognition Day** by safely dropping off gifts to the 21 unpaid caregivers who were part of the program at that time. We asked our members to choose between a beautiful journal, tote bag, or umbrella, each bearing our logo and the 'I Am a Caregiver' identifier.

***"My journal was received.
This gift brightened my day.
Greatly appreciated."***

**Regards,
H. Dietrich
(Caregivers in the Hills member)**



An Informed Approach

An important element of recognizing the members of *Caregivers in the Hills* is to stay transparent and keep them informed of our efforts to grow and promote this program. Here are some of the ways we show our caregivers that we care about them!



Keeping caregivers tuned in with our quarterly newsletter!

Creating user-friendly documents that walk unpaid caregivers through the application process step by step!



Promoting Caregivers in the Hills and increased support for identification of caregivers with our Ontario Health Team Partners!

ATTENTION!

I AM A CAREGIVER

HILLS *of*
HEADWATERS
COLLABORATIVE

CAREGIVERS IN THE HILLS

Email: caregiver@hillsofheadwaterscollaborative.ca



Conclusion

Caregivers in the Hills has enjoyed great success, learning, and growth in its first phase. Members of the program have informed us of the many challenges they must contend with daily in their caregiving role.

The Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Community Wellness Council has continued to contribute invaluable ideas, support, encouragement, and feedback for the program every step of the way.

We continue to work in tandem with our Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Ontario Health Team partners to communicate, promote, and encourage strong partnerships essential for the ongoing success of Caregivers in the Hills and its members.