



INTEGRATED CARE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Support carers



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Contents

Introduction to the Guide	4
Session structure.....	4
Support carers	6
Learning objectives.....	7
Supporting carers' well-being.....	8
Care pathway to support carers.....	9
Assess the impact of the carer's role	11
Health and lifestyle advice	12
Community-based health care.....	13
Support for carers.....	14
Summary.....	16
References	17

Introduction to the Guide

This Facilitator Guide is part of the material developed to support training programmes on the WHO Integrated Care for Older People (ICOPE) approach. This guide serves as a roadmap for trainers and facilitators, helping them navigate through the session on supporting carers of older people, while ensuring that key topics are covered and participants are engaged. It includes practical tips, potential challenges, and suggested ways to handle different situations that may arise during the session.

Session structure

This Facilitator Guide is organized around four core facilitation actions that you will use throughout the session. Icons represent these actions and indicate how you should guide participants through the content.

You will see these actions repeated across all slides and modules, providing a consistent structure for facilitation.



Show: The slides

This indicates the slide you should present from the slide deck. When you see the Show, display the corresponding slide to participants.



Say: What you explain

This provides a suggested narrative outline for you to explain the slide content. The text is intended as guidance rather than a fixed script. You may adapt the wording to suit your facilitation style, experience and the needs of your participants, while keeping the key messages intact.



Ask: Questions to prompt dialogue

This prompts you to ask questions and encourage dialogue with and among participants.

The discussion associated with these questions should generally take 2 to 5 minutes. However, you should use your best judgment to decide how much time to dedicate to such interactions, considering factors such as participant engagement, availability of time, and/or relevance of the topic.



Do: Actions to facilitate learning

This prompts you to conduct an action, such as guiding an activity, managing group interaction or providing instructions to participants.

Keep in mind that this Facilitator Guide is only a roadmap. You are expected to apply your voice and experience to make this tool work for you. As explained, the 'Say' sections are simply indications; you can use them as a script when you feel the need to, but you can and

should adapt them to suit your natural training style. Add your personal touch and personality to every training, while being careful to stick to the session objectives.

A key component of successful face-to-face training is establishing trust and rapport with your learners. Use your good judgement to assess the attitude and cultural sensitivities of the people in your workshop. Adapt your training techniques and approach accordingly.

You are going to be great at conducting this training.

Support carers



Do:

- *Formal welcome*
- *Introduction of the facilitator*



Show: Slide 1



Say:

Welcome to the module on support carers.

As people age and their ability to care for themselves declines, their spouse, family or household members may intervene to provide support and care. However, this can take a toll on the carer's well-being. It is important for health and social care workers to keep an eye on the carers and make sure they get the support they need for their well-being and that of the person they provide care for.

This session will take approximately 10 minutes.

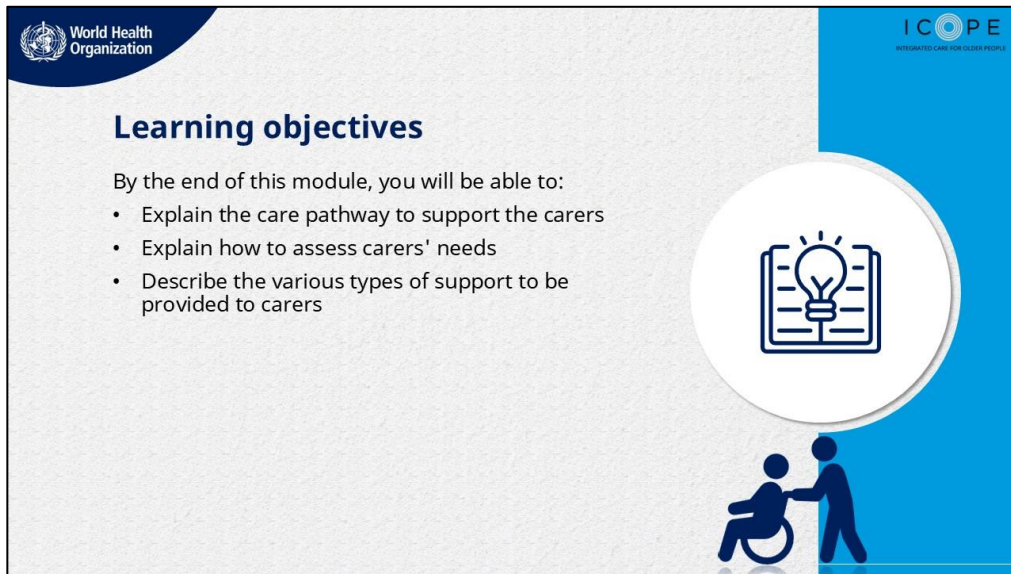
You will find more details on this topic in Chapter 12 of the ICOPE handbook.

Let us get started!

Learning objectives



Show: Slide 2



Learning objectives

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Explain the care pathway to support the carers
- Explain how to assess carers' needs
- Describe the various types of support to be provided to carers



Say:

Let us take a moment to understand what we aim to achieve by the end of this module:

- Explain the care pathway to support the carers
- Explain how to assess carers' needs
- Describe the various types of support to be provided to carers

Supporting carers' well-being



Ask:

Before we dive into this module, let me ask you all a question: Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you had to take on the role of a carer for a loved one experiencing a decline in health or functional ability? How did it impact your well-being? Take a moment to reflect on your experience and, if you want, share it with others.



Show: Slide 3



Say:

Let us dive into this module and acknowledge the crucial role that carers play when older people experience declines in intrinsic capacity and functional ability.

Caregiving responsibilities often fall on a spouse, family member or another household member. Consider how often this important role is played in an informal, under-recognized and undervalued way.

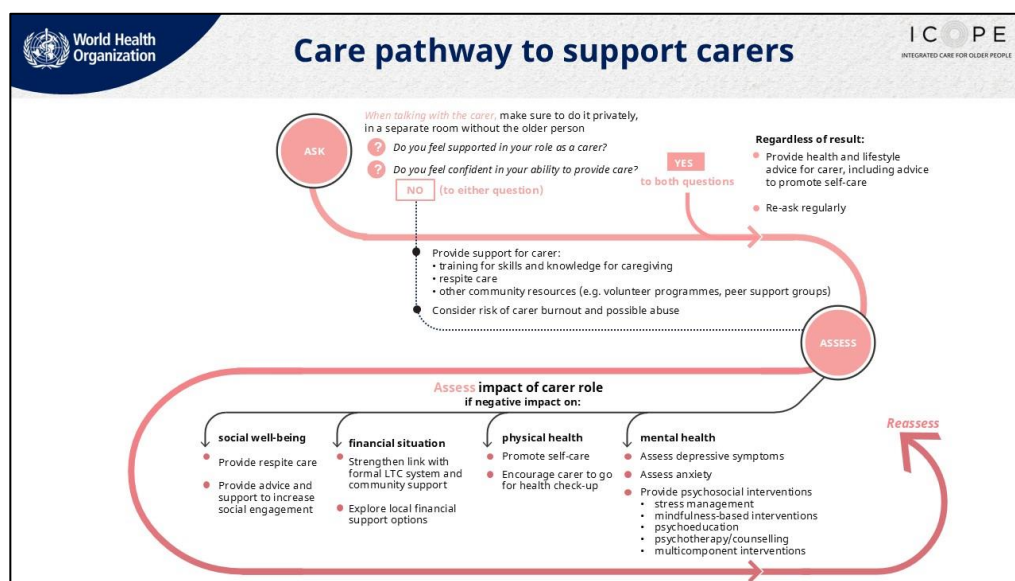
The care provided can significantly affect the carer's well-being as they strive to meet the diverse needs of the older person. It is vital for community health and social care workers to stay vigilant in monitoring carers' well-being. This ensures that carers receive the support they need for their health and caregiving duties, ultimately creating a healthier and more sustainable caregiving environment.

Throughout this module, let us explore how we can effectively support carers and the best practices for ensuring their well-being.

Care pathway to support carers



Show: Slide 4



Say:

This slide outlines the structured approach to assessing and supporting carers, recognizing that they are essential to the well-being of older people but often face significant challenges themselves. The pathway begins with asking two key questions:

- Do you feel supported in your role as a carer?
- Do you feel confident in your ability to provide care?

If the answer to either is NO, immediate support is needed. It is thus recommended to consider:

- Providing training in caregiving skills
- Offering respite care to give carers a break
- Connecting them with resources, such as volunteer programs or peer support groups
- Considering the risk of burnout or potential for abuse, which may require further intervention.

Even if the carer answers YES to both questions, the pathway still advises that support can still be offered by suggesting lifestyle advice to promote self-care and reminding regular check-ins to monitor changes in their well-being.

The next step is to assess the broader impact of the caregiving role across four domains:

- **Social well-being:** If the carer lacks a social network.
- **Financial situation:** If they struggle with managing appointments or expenses.
- **Physical health:** If caregiving is determining physical distress.

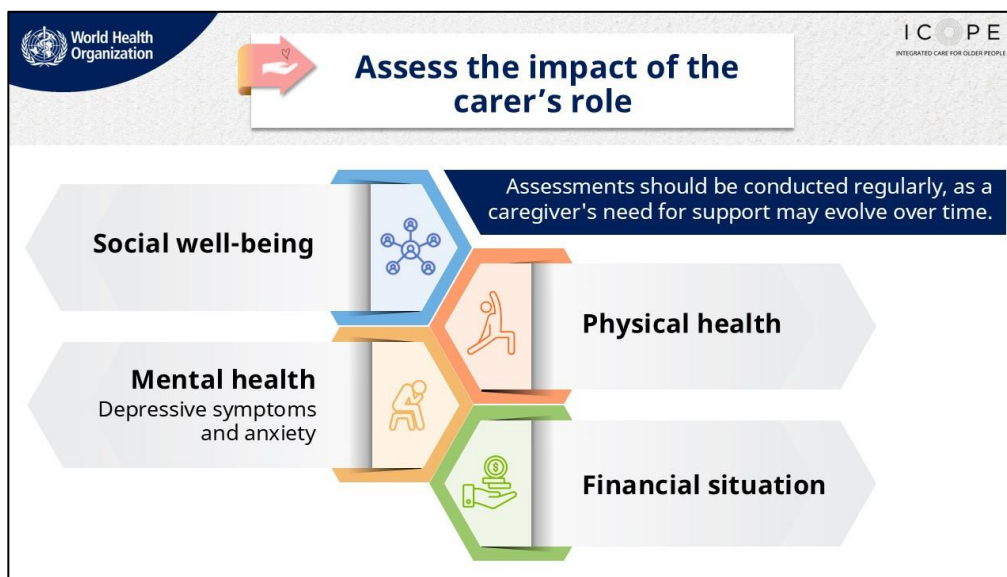
- Mental health: If the carer presents signs of distress, anxiety or symptoms of depression.

The pathway concludes with a reminder to reassess regularly, as caregiving demands and personal circumstances can change over time.

Assess the impact of the carer's role



Show: Slide 5



Say:

Now, let us discuss more in detail the essential areas we need to explore with every carer we interview to ensure they are comprehensively supported in their tasks.

Caregiving can lead to social isolation, as carers may have less time or energy to maintain relationships or participate in community activities. Ask about their current social network and explore opportunities to reconnect them with social supports.

The physical demands of caregiving, especially when assisting with mobility or personal care, can take a toll. Encourage carers to prioritize their own health, including attending regular check-ups and engaging in physical activity.

Carers are at increased risk of depressive symptoms and anxiety. Regularly screen for signs of emotional distress, and when needed, refer them to mental health services such as counselling or support groups.

Many carers experience financial strain, particularly if they reduce work hours or leave employment to provide care. Assess their financial stability and connect them with financial aid programs or community resources if needed.

The slide also includes a critical reminder: carers' needs change over time. Regular reassessment ensures that support remains relevant and responsive to their current situation.

Health and lifestyle advice



Show: Slide 6




Health and lifestyle advice

Caring for someone can be exhausting and stressful, especially for family members.



- Return to or do activities you enjoy.
- Maintain a regular sleep routine.
- Stay as physically active as possible.
- Follow a healthy diet and have regular meals.
- Spend time with friends and family.
- Get involved in community and social activities.
- Take regular breaks to recharge.



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Say:

This slide offers compassionate guidance for family carers, emphasizing the emotional and physical toll of caregiving. Always consider the empathetic statement at the beginning of this slide: “Caring for someone can be exhausting and stressful”. It is important to let carers feel they are seen and understood.

Several pieces of advice can be provided to the carer:

- Engage in enjoyable activities: Encourage carers to reconnect with hobbies that bring joy and identity beyond caregiving.
- Maintain a sleep routine: Help carers improve sleep hygiene, even with interruptions.
- Stay active: Movement, even short walks or stretches, helps reduce stress and boost energy.
- Eat healthily: Remind carers to prioritize balanced meals for their nutrition.
- Connect socially: Encourage maintaining relationships and asking for help to combat burnout.
- Participate in community activities: This can provide support and a break from caregiving duties.
- Take regular breaks: Discuss options for respite care or shared caregiving responsibilities to recharge.

Community-based health care



Show: Slide 7





Community-based health care



- In some countries, carers can access benefits such as paid leave and cash-for-care transfers.
- Community organizations may help identify carers in need through peer groups and social events.
- Easy access to information about local support resources, especially respite care, is crucial.
- Home-based care organizations offer advice and respite care services to ease the burden on family carers.
- Community health workers provide immediate support, including health advice and stress reduction techniques for struggling carers.



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Say:

This slide emphasizes the crucial role of community-based interventions in supporting family members and informal carers of older people. It outlines several effective strategies:

- In countries with supportive policies, carers may qualify for benefits such as paid leave or cash-for-care transfers. These financial supports acknowledge the importance of unpaid caregiving and help alleviate economic strain.
- Community organizations play a vital role in identifying carers in need. Through peer groups and social events, they can connect with individuals who might not otherwise seek help, providing both social connections and early intervention.
- Access to information is essential. Carers need to be aware of local resources, especially respite care, which offers necessary breaks from caregiving duties. Ensuring that this information is clear, accessible and widely disseminated can make a significant difference.
- Home-based care organizations provide practical advice and respite services, assisting carers in managing daily responsibilities and preventing burnout.
- Community health workers often serve as the first point of contact for carers. They can offer immediate support, including health advice, stress management techniques and referrals to additional services.

Support for carers



Show: Slide 8



Say:

Let us explore the multidimensional needs of carers and how to provide practical, compassionate and sustainable support strategies. The following five key areas of intervention are essential:

- **Training:** Start by assessing the carer's current knowledge and skills. Offer training and guidance on how to provide safe, effective and respectful care. This includes observing caregiving routines, identifying areas for improvement and building the carer's confidence and competence.
- **Respite care:** To prevent burnout and maintain a healthy caregiving relationship, carers need regular breaks. Encourage them to explore options for temporary care support, whether through family, community volunteers or formal services. Provide information on available respite services in their area.
- **Psychological interventions:** Caregiving can be emotionally taxing. Offer access to stress management techniques, mindfulness practices and psychoeducation. When needed, refer carers to psychotherapy or counselling. Multicomponent interventions that combine these approaches can be particularly effective.
- **Physical health and social well-being:** Remind carers to prioritize their own health, including regular check-ups, physical activity and rest. Address loneliness and isolation by encouraging social engagement. If the carer is an older person, recommend an ICOPE basic assessment to evaluate their intrinsic capacity and support needs.

- **Financial support:** Many carers face financial strain. Assist them in navigating social protection schemes, checking eligibility for financial aid and connecting with relevant support services. This can help ease their burden, allowing them to focus more fully on caregiving.

Always be mindful of the risk of carer burnout and potential abuse. Early identification and intervention are crucial for protecting both the carer and the person receiving care.

Summary



Show: Slide 9



Summary





- Community health workers can identify carers' needs and support their well-being.
- Interventions such as advice, training, respite care, financial help and psychological support can enable carers to maintain their health and well-being while providing quality care.
- For older carers, assessing their own health is recommended.
- Health workers should look for signs of abuse during assessments of older persons and their carers, ensuring the carer's role is recognized and supported.
- Community stakeholders can advocate for carers and provide ongoing training and support.



Do:

Go through the slides and recap the points discussed during the session.



Say:

To summarize this session, we have emphasized the important role of community health workers in identifying carers' needs and supporting their well-being.

Carers require a range of interventions—including advice, training, respite care, financial assistance, and psychological support—to help them maintain their own health while continuing to provide quality care. We have also highlighted that older carers may have their own health needs, and assessing their health is an essential part of comprehensive care.

Health workers should remain alert to signs of abuse during assessments of both older persons and their carers, while ensuring that the carer's role is recognized, valued, and supported.

Finally, community stakeholders play a key role in advocating for carers and providing ongoing training and support to sustain caregiving within the community.

References



Show: Slide 10

 World Health Organization

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References

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2. Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) guideline for mental, neurological and substance use disorders. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/374250>). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.
3. iSupport for dementia: training and support manual for carers of people with dementia. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2019 (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/324794>). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.



Say:

Here are some useful links and citations for your reference. Thank you for your time and participation.