

Policy Profile for Compensating Family Caregivers

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*A project of the "Hidden Costs/Invisible Contributions:
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Introduction and Overview

'Hidden Costs/Invisible Contributions: The Marginalization of "Dependent" Adults' (HCIC) is an international, collaborative program of research designed to create a deeper understanding of the place of those characterized as "dependent" in society, specifically, older adults and those persons with disabilities or chronic illness.

The research is divided into four Themes. Theme 3 – Impact of Public Policy on Costs and Contributions – includes a critical examination of national level policies and programs aimed at financially compensating caregivers of dependent adults in ten countries. Policy Profiles have been developed for Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Israel, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States.

These Policy Profiles describe national level direct compensation (e.g. allowances) and indirect compensation (e.g. tax relief) policies for family caregivers. National labour policies that support employed caregivers are also included. Information presented is the result of a systematic review of articles, reports, and websites. The Profiles were reviewed by decision makers and researchers familiar with the country's public policy.

This Profile describes national level policies and programs that offer compensation for family caregivers in Norway, and summarizes the social policy context for supporting family caregivers.

Home Care in Norway

Norway is a constitutional monarchy, divided into 19 counties and 434 municipalities. The official language is Norwegian. Norway has a population of approximately 4.5 million people.

Norway's Social Services Act specifies that those who are unable to care for themselves due to illness or disability are entitled to help. Norway's health and social service policies encompass a wide range of community services for dependent adults such as home help and home nursing. Municipal authorities are responsible for administering programs, taking into account local variations and needs. Consequently, while dependent adults and caregivers are entitled to help, the kinds and amounts of help provided vary significantly by municipality. This has proven to be an ongoing challenge in the attempt to ensure national standards are met.

Home nursing care has undergone considerable expansion in Norway since the early 1990s. In 1992, 53% of municipalities could provide 24-hour home nursing care. In 1998, the proportion had increased to almost 81%.

Norway's Social Services Act (1991) outlined supports for caregivers such as respite services and caregiver wages. More recently, a national plan, "The Action Plan for the Elderly", (1998-2001) has been implemented. This policy has strengthened home-based care and acknowledges the importance of supporting family caregivers.



Highlights

- % 65 years and older – 14.8% (2004)
- % of 65+ institutionalized – not available
- % of disabled persons age 16-66 – 16% (2004)
- % of women in labour force – 46% (2000)
- % of people requiring daily care– 4.4% (2000)
- % gdp for long term care – not available

Caregiver Highlights

- The percentage of the population reporting giving unpaid assistance to sick, disabled or elderly persons outside their own household on a regular basis increased from 8% in 1980 to 17% in 1995.
- In 2002, approximately 6,749 caregivers received a care wage.

National Compensation Initiatives for Caregivers

Direct Compensation

Initiative	Attendance Allowance
Target Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care receivers who are disabled or ill.
Eligibility Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care receiver needs special nursing and care due to illness, injury or disability. Needs must be documented in a medical report.
Income Tested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No.
Entitlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lowest two of five rates are available to those over the age of 20. Amount depends on needs, maximum is NOK 5,862 (\$1119 CAD) per month. Payment is not taxable.

Initiative	Care Wage
Target Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caregivers of severely disabled persons.
Eligibility Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caregiver is providing extraordinarily burdensome care. No age limit.
Income Tested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No.
Entitlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount depends on care needs, average is NOK 4,600 (\$878 CAD) per month. Payment is taxable.

Initiative	Pensions For Unmarried Family Caregivers (Post-Caregiving Pension)
Target Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ex-Caregivers.
Eligibility Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unmarried. Caregiver has lost his/her source of livelihood upon the death or institutionalization of the relative care receiver. Out of workforce for at least 5 years due to extensive care obligations. Ability to support themselves through paid work is permanently reduced. Benefits cease when the caregiver marries or becomes eligible for an old age pension.
Income Tested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not available.
Entitlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefits are reduced if receiving employment income. Subject to income taxation at slightly reduced rates relative to other incomes.

National Compensation Initiatives for Caregivers

Indirect Compensation

Initiative	Pension Credit
Target Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Caregivers.
Eligibility Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recipients of care wage receive pension credits automatically.• Other caregivers must apply every year and must provide 22 hours of care a week (including travel time) and caregiving must have a duration of a least 6 months.
Entitlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Caregivers are given three pension credits per year, which corresponds to a below average wage.

Labour Policies

Initiative	Nursing Care Leave
Target Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employed caregivers.
Eligibility Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Caregiver is nursing a permanently ill or terminally ill family member.
Entitlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full wage for a period of up to 20 days leave when care receiver is over 18 years old.• Payment is taxable.

Initiative	Care Leave
Target Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employed caregivers.
Eligibility Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information not available.
Entitlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full wage for a period of up to 10 days leave.• Payment is taxable.

Current Issues and Debates

One of the challenges Norway faces in its ability to support caregivers is the wide variation in supports offered by the municipalities. There is significant variation in the way municipalities use the care wage, in terms of how many applications are received, who is eligible, and what amount is paid to the caregiver. Differences in available services are also an issue. Despite these concerns, some improvements have been made. For example, schools for caregivers have been established in Oslo and some other areas of Norway that operate in cooperation with local organizations.

Organizations such as The Norwegian Pensioner's Association and The Dementia Federation of the Norwegian Health Association advocate for more support for family and voluntary caregivers. The Dementia Federation has developed a ten-point program of principles, four of which are concerned with the needs of family caregivers. These principles concern accessing formal help, intervention and follow up of families of persons with dementia, making information and training available to caregivers, and acknowledging that the family caregiver's willingness to provide care does not free government of its responsibility to support these caregivers. The Federation also states that caregivers of persons with dementia should be given financial compensation to allow them to maintain their standard of living.

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For additional information on the HCIC project, please visit
<http://www.hecol.ualberta.ca/rapp/mcri.htm>

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Personal Communications

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