

Senior Citizen / Community Center

ICMA

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CAREGIVING

2026 SURVEY RESULTS

ICMA partnered with the National Academy for State Health Policy and The John A. Hartford Foundation to conduct a national survey of local governments on priorities and actions related to family caregiving.

In 2025, 63 million American adults provided ongoing care to adults or children with a medical condition or disability—representing almost one-quarter of all adults in the United States, and a 45 percent increase over the previous decade.¹ Caregiving responsibilities, largely unpaid and with limited external resources available to offset the burden, impact the productivity and wellness of a growing segment of local residents and local government employees. While ICMA has tracked local government programs, policies, and partnerships to support an aging population through multiple surveys for more than two decades, the National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers² and this collaboration catalyzed an opportunity to explore a new dimension of this research.

To understand the degree to which local governments are aware of or taking actions related to family caregiving needs, ICMA conducted this electronic survey of 426 local governments in January 2026 (the survey was distributed to 3,988 local governments, for a response rate of 11%). Results suggest opportunities for local governments to leverage their unique capacity as an employer, a key community voice, and in policymaking and budgeting to help connect family caregivers with available resources.

¹ AARP & National Alliance for Caregiving. *Caregiving the US 2025*. Washington, DC: AARP. July 2025. <https://doi.org/10.26419/ppi.00373.001>.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living. National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers. Last modified July 25, 2025. <http://acl.gov/CaregiverStrategy>.

KEY FINDINGS

Most local governments offer benefits to their employees that can support family caregiving needs.

- The most common benefits provided to local government employees that can assist with family caregiving needs are employee assistance programs (reported by 84% of respondents), flexible work schedules (75% of respondents), and flexible spending accounts (74% of respondents). Remote work options, paid care leave, and access to information resources were also reported by over half of survey respondents.

At the community level, most local governments are not actively tracking or planning around family caregiving needs and issues.

- Few local governments report formal tracking or assessment of family caregiving needs and available local support. About two-thirds of those responding to this survey report anecdotal awareness, and 28% said they had no insight or were unsure.
- Family caregiving needs are not commonly addressed in many typical local government planning documents such as comprehensive plans, transportation plans, economic development plans, or strategic plans. However, about 40% of responding local governments indicated that their emergency or disaster plans did address the topic.
 - Public health plans, such as community health improvement plans, are another tool where counties in particular tend to address caregiving priorities.
- Targeted public engagement actions to specifically monitor the needs of family caregivers or those requiring care are uncommon. Some local governments are using translation services (40%) or varied timing or location of public meetings (38%) to lessen overall barriers to engagement in public decision-making.

Most local governments could identify at least one stakeholder sector offering caregiving services to individuals with a chronic or other health condition, disability, or functional limitation, potentially lessening the burden on local families.

- Local governments most frequently identified nonprofit/community-based organizations (mentioned by 65% of respondents), faith-based or religious organizations (53%), and senior care or senior housing entities (52%) as providers of local caregiving services.

Local governments do fund or help deliver specific programs and services that contribute to an infrastructure of care.

- Senior Centers are the most common type of program or service reported. Sixty percent of survey respondents support them with funding and/or by operation.
- On demand transportation services (to medical and other appointments), community centers that serve all ages, and meal delivery are also among the more common programs and services supported.

- While counties made up a minority of overall survey respondents, they were more likely than municipalities to fund or operate supportive services and programs.
- Thirteen percent of responding local governments maintain joint use agreements for community facilities that support family caregiving needs, often related to their senior or community centers.

Local zoning policies do provide indirect support to family caregiving needs.

- Approximately 70% of responding local governments have adopted regulations to promote more affordable housing.
- More specific to aging in place and nearby access to care, 66% allow accessory dwelling units, and 60% permit the siting of caregiving facilities. About half of respondents have created housing communities oriented around specific needs or demographics (such as senior housing), and/or allow in-home caregiving.
- A limited number of local governments have achieved community designations related to family caregiving issues such as Age-Friendly (14%), Disability-Friendly (4%), or Dementia-Friendly (3%).

There is room for growth in helping to coordinate access to the wider network of supports needed and potentially available across entities in the local/regional caregiving ecosystem.

- Less than 10% of responding local governments facilitate centralized access to information about, or enrollment in, supportive services.

Sample Respondent Comments

“Our region is a child care desert, with an older-than-state-average population. This means that working age people often struggle to find adequate care for their elderly parents and their young children. This has absolutely impacted our ability to recruit and retain workers.” – Wisconsin county administrator

“[We are] a limited service city, with the county providing many of the services in this policy area. As an employer, we are increasingly becoming more attuned to this emerging issue. We will have to address for recruitment and retention.” – Georgia city administrator

“After taking this survey, I feel ashamed that our city does so little to support or provide information about adult caregiving. I currently take care of my 80-year-old father, who has dementia, and it is very tiresome, and I am unaware of any help that might be available in my area.” – Texas city administrator

SUMMARY DATA

Not all respondents answered every question. Many questions allowed respondents to select multiple topics. Percentages may exceed 100 for that reason and/or due to rounding.

Table 1: How would you characterize your local government's awareness of family caregiving needs and support available in your community? Select the best option(s). (n=426)

Selected Choice	Respondents
We track or monitor regularly	6.1%
We have conducted a one-time or limited assessment	5.2%
We have anecdotal awareness	64.1%
No insight or not sure	27.5%

Table 2: Does your local government identify or address needs around family caregiving in any of the following plans? Check all that apply.

Plan Type	Yes	No	N/A	n
Comprehensive plan	11.8%	71.1%	17.1%	357
Transportation plan	14.4%	66.0%	19.5%	353
Economic development plan	12.5%	67.6%	19.9%	352
Emergency or disaster plan	38.9%	47.7%	13.4%	352
Public health plan (e.g., Community Health Improvement Plan)	22.1%	45.0%	32.9%	353
Strategic plan	14.7%	62.6%	22.7%	353
Other	15.2%	30.4%	54.4%	125

Table 3: Does your local government currently hold any of the following community designations? Check any that apply. (n=355)

Selected Choice	Respondents
Age-Friendly Community	14.1%
Dementia-Friendly Community	3.1%
Disability-Friendly Community	3.9%
None of these	82.8%

Table 4: Does your local government address family caregiving needs of your employees through any of the following policies or benefits? Check all that apply.

Policy or Benefit	Yes	No	N/A	n
Flexible work schedules	75.3%	19.8%	4.9%	348
Remote work	60.8%	34.7%	4.5%	352
Paid care leave	58.2%	37.2%	4.6%	347
Employee assistance programs	83.5%	13.6%	2.8%	352
Access to information resources on caregiver support	54.0%	33.4%	12.6%	350
Referral to caregiver supports	35.6%	50.6%	13.8%	348
Flexible spending accounts	74.0%	21.8%	4.2%	354

Table 5: Is your local government involved in funding or delivering any of the following types of programs or services that support family caregiving? Check any that apply. (n=328)

Program or Service	Funding Support	Deliver or Operate
Meal delivery	29.3%	18.9%
Communal meals	23.8%	16.5%
Nutrition education	18.3%	17.1%
Senior center	44.8%	29.9%
Community center serving all ages	30.8%	28.0%
Financial wellness education	14.0%	23.2%
Training on basic medical tasks	11.3%	18.0%
On demand transportation services to medical appointments	38.4%	20.4%
On demand transportation to non-medical appointments	33.8%	17.7%
Home maintenance/retrofit/repair programs	22.6%	15.5%
Workforce development activities to expand care providers	11.3%	10.4%
In-home respite care	5.2%	7.6%
Adult day care	6.1%	7.9%
Care for populations with special needs (illness, disability, etc.)	11.0%	11.0%
Child care	14.9%	15.2%
Family caregiver support program	6.4%	10.4%
None of these	18.6%	16.2%

Figure A: Summary of family caregiving-related programs or services receiving any type of local government support (i.e., funding and/or operational) (n=328)

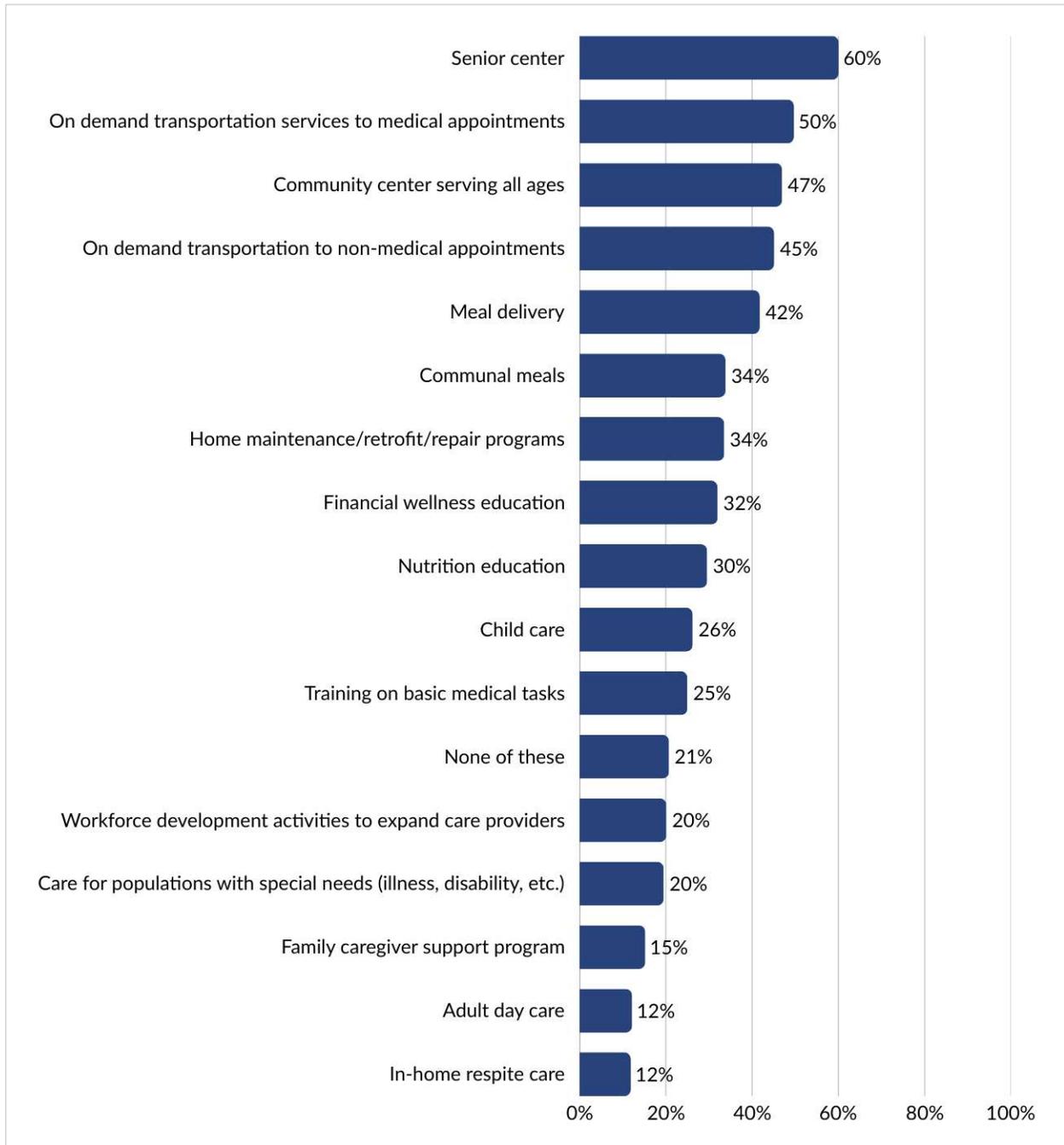


Table 6: Does your local government maintain joint use agreements to make use of community facilities for any type of family caregiving activities? (n=345)

Selected Choice	Respondents
Yes	13.0%
No	71.3%
Not sure	15.7%

Table 7: Does your local government facilitate centralized access to information about/enrollment in supportive services (e.g., consolidated enrollment, "No Wrong Door" approaches, telephone helpline, etc.)? (n=345)

Selected Choice	Respondents
Yes	9.3%
No	74.8%
Not sure	15.9%

Table 8: To the best of your knowledge, please indicate whether any of the following sectors directly provide caregiving services to individuals with a chronic or other health condition, disability, or functional limitation in your community, lessening the need for family caregiving. Check any that apply. (n=327)

Selected Choice	Respondents
Employers	18.3%
Faith-based/religious organizations	53.2%
Nonprofit/community-based organizations	65.4%
University or community college	7.6%
Health system	40.4%
State or regional entities (e.g., agency on aging)	46.8%
Senior care/senior housing entity	52.3%
Other	1.5%
Not sure	22.3%

Table 9: Has your local government adopted zoning regulations to enable any of the following priorities?

Priority	Yes	No	Not Sure	n
Mandate Universal Design standards	15.5%	62.6%	21.9%	310
Allow in-home caregiving	47.9%	29.9%	22.2%	311
Allow accessory dwelling units	65.8%	26.4%	7.8%	322
Promote affordable housing	69.3%	23.0%	7.8%	322
Allow siting of caregiving facilities	60.4%	20.8%	18.8%	313
Create housing communities oriented around specific needs/demographics (e.g., senior housing)	51.9%	36.6%	11.5%	314
Encourage co-location of uses and services supporting public health	38.3%	37.4%	24.3%	313

Table 10: Does your local government use any of the following tools to engage family caregivers or those requiring care about their needs? Check all that apply. (n=318)

Selected Choice	Respondents
Public meetings	14.8%
Surveys	12.6%
Focus groups	10.1%
Online comment portals	6.6%
Resident boards, commissions, or task forces	18.2%
Other	4.1%
None of these	69.2%

Table 11: Does your local government use any of the following tactics to lessen barriers to engagement in public decision-making? Check all that apply. (n=317)

Selected Choice	Respondents
Translation services	40.1%
Providing free child care at events	9.5%
Varying timing/location of local government meetings, events	37.5%
Compensating participants for their time	4.4%
Other	2.5%
None of these	45.4%