

Statement

Better support for family caregivers during the corona pandemic!

Urgent recommendations of BAGSO to politicians

Around three quarters of those in need of care and two thirds of those suffering from dementia live at home. Most of them are cared for by relatives alone, in two out of three cases it is women who take over this task. The systemic relevance of caring relatives is obvious, but the measures taken so far in the course of the corona pandemic to protect those involved and to relieve caring relatives are not justified.

We consider the following measures at federal, state and local level to be particularly urgent:

1. Protection from infection with the corona virus

Relatives providing care live in the fear of bringing the virus home, without noticing it, and transmitting it to the person in need of care. They know that such an infection is a deadly danger, especially for the person in need of care. This is a huge psychological burden for many.

As in hospitals and nursing homes, it must be ensured that all persons who are part of the home care setting are sufficiently equipped with disinfectants and protective equipment (in particular respiratory masks, gloves and protective disposable overalls). This also includes those who – even if only to a limited extent at present – take on domestic services or care tasks in the homes of people in need of care.

Likewise, relatives providing care – like professional carers – must be able to have themselves checked very quickly to see whether they have become infected. To this end, a mobile, accessible service



- corresponding to the Corona Taxi in Heidelberg – must be made available in all municipalities.

2. Ensuring the provision of nursing care

Often the home care is dependent on one person. If this person drops out, an emergency plan is needed. Another person from the family environment is not always available to take over the care tasks.

Emergency care must be provided for these cases at the local level, either through inpatient facilities or through regional "emergency teams" consisting of employees of currently unopened day care and short-term care services.

A second important aspect in ensuring home care is an improved compatibility of work and care. In view of the current situation, in which relief services such as day care are no longer available or – in order to reduce the number of contact persons – care services are no longer offered, employed caregiving relatives need more time: Together with our member association, *wir pflegen e.V.*, we are therefore pushing for continued payment of wages for a period of up to three months as well as an extension of the existing entitlement to work interruption in the event of "short-term inability to work due to care" from 10 to at least 20 working days. Such relief benefits would make it considerably easier for another family member to take over from the family environment if the main carer were to be absent.

Many families are dependent on the support of carers and household help from abroad who live temporarily in the households. Many of them left Germany as early as March, either out of fear of contagion due

to the exponential rise in the number of infections in Germany at that time, or out of concern that they would otherwise not be able to return to their home countries. As has already happened in some cases with cross-border commuting and harvest workers, bilateral conversations are urgently needed to find solutions that guarantee the freedom of travel for carers and domestic workers.

3. Support for caring relatives

As in other "system-relevant" areas, policymakers must provide more support for family carers in the current situation. Together with *wir pflegen e.V.*, we are calling – in view of the fact that there are currently no offers of relief – for those in need of care to be provided with a freely available budget, so that they can react flexibly to the current challenges. The budget should be based on the rates for day care or short-term care. In addition, the relief amount of 125 euros in accordance with § 45b SGB XI (German Social Security Code) should be flexibly applicable not only for care level 1, but for all care levels.

Finally, we demand that nursing care insurance funds post letters with the most important information to all households with people that receive care: Where do I turn to in which cases? Which additional services can I claim?

Against the background of the extraordinary stress situation of relatives providing care, psychosocial counselling services in particular must be offered more frequently and must be available seven days a week.

About BAGSO

The German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations is a non-partisan umbrella organisation of civil society institutions in the field of senior citizens' work and ageing policy in Germany. As a representative of the interests of older persons, we consistently call on politics, society and business to offer framework conditions that allow for a good and dignified life in older age. In doing so, we also have the interests of older people of tomorrow and beyond firmly in view.

At the United Nations, BAGSO is actively involved in the development of a UN Convention for Older People. BAGSO is also a member of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP), an international alliance of over 200 civil society organisations that advocates for the rights of older people. BAGSO's Secretariat for International Policy on Ageing provides information on current international developments in ageing policy and contributes the interests of civil society to international processes.

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