

Reducing the sense of obligation among caregivers: strategies for professionals and practitioners

What does it mean **to feel “obligated”** as a caregiver?



While caregiving is considered a choice under the law¹, caregivers may feel pressured to take on this supportive role.

The feeling can be linked to different factors, including:



Access to services:

Various issues — a scarcity of resources in the public sector, the complexity of the service offering and access criteria that can be restrictive — can combine to make caregivers feel compelled to assume a supportive role, seeing few available or affordable options.



We have less help than we ought to,
because the system is
overloaded. (Free translation)

– Caroline, caregiver



They have absolutely nothing.
Nothing to give,
nothing to offer.
(Free translation)

– Mélanie, caregiver



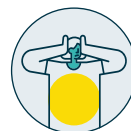
Organizational pressures:

The health and social services system often delegates tasks to caregivers without considering their limitations, capacities or willingness to assume the role. This situation can be exacerbated by organizational constraints such as a lack of staff or home support services.



Pressures from one's circle:

When no one offers help, a person may feel obliged to assume the role of caregiver, thereby becoming implicitly designated as such by those around them. This is particularly true for women, who are more likely to take on the role.



Internalized pressures:

Caregivers may internalize feelings of obligation due to their emotional bond with and sense of duty toward the person they care for (e.g., a parent toward their child, or one spouse toward another).

NOTE:

The sense of obligation is experienced differently by different caregiver populations (e.g., young caregivers, caregivers from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community or diverse ethnocultural backgrounds).

To find out more, see the report, [*Recognition Without Coercion: Navigating Need, Obstacles and Ethical Dilemmas in Caregiver Recognition and Self-Recognition \(2025\)*](#).

¹ Government of Quebec (2020). Act to recognize and support caregivers.

The information in this publication is based on the report, [*Recognition Without Coercion: Navigating Need, Obstacles and Ethical Dilemmas in Caregiver Recognition and Self-Recognition \(2025\)*](#), which is available online.

Use it to find out more !

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**Observatoire
québécois de la
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Why is it important to lessen **the sense of obligation** among caregivers?



Feeling obligated can increase the caregiver's burden and negatively impact their well-being, especially since they are often required to take on the role without being able to set clear boundaries. People who feel forced into caregiving experience higher emotional stress, poorer psychological and physical health, and a lower quality of life compared to those who feel they have a choice.



As a professional or practitioner, you play an important role in helping to alleviate caregivers' feelings of obligation.

Below are a few strategies you can implement in your practice:



Recognize the organizational pressures and constraints related to your work that can affect your support of caregivers.



Remind caregivers that they have the right to accept or decline this role.



Clarify your role, responsibilities and expectations towards caregivers.



Encourage caregivers to express their needs, set clear boundaries and ask for support.



Assess the needs of the person receiving care in collaboration with their caregiver, and support the caregiver in reflecting on the type of support they wish to offer and are able to provide.



Invite caregivers to express their emotions (e.g., guilt, feelings of betrayal), listen actively to their concerns and validate their experiences, and offer support if they wish to redefine their role with the care recipient.



Explore additional support options, whether from the person's network or through the appropriate resources (e.g., respite care, home care services).