



NY Connects: Choices for Long Term Care

Statewide Update
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NY Connects: the Connection to the Future of Long Term Care

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NY Connects is almost half way into its third year of operations. **NY Connects** provides free, quality, and unbiased information and assistance to persons of all ages and disabilities. In doing so, the program supports a consumer's right to be informed about and choose appropriate long term care services and supports that will enable them to live independently in their community.

While counties remain at varying levels of program implement, the commitment to the success of **NY Connects** in serving older adults, people of all ages with disabilities and their caregivers is strong. Counties have made significant efforts to operate an effective Information and Assistance program and make their **NY Connects** Long Term Care Councils (described on page 3) vital and essential components of local long term care reform

Information and Assistance

Ninety-four percent (51) of the 54 participating county programs are operational. Individuals can access information and assistance by phone, email, or a walk-in visit. Between July 2007 and September 2008 there were 136,464 contacts to **NY Connects**. In Program Year 2, this represented an average of 28,943 contacts per quarter.

Public Education

NY Connects programs are actively working to promote the program as the central resource in the community for long term care information and assistance. To help raise public awareness, several strategies have been employed to ensure that community awareness increases as **NY Connects** furthers its program enhancement. One such strategy includes the recently developed statewide **NY Connects** brochure. To date, nearly 11,000 brochures have been ordered and distributed to the counties.

"94% of participating local programs are providing information and assistance to consumers."

Year's End Spurs the Production of Annual Report

As **NY Connects** becomes more established in the community, consumers continue to benefit from the services it provides. As demand increases for **NY Connects** services, accurate program data and reporting becomes essential. This data provides local programs, as well as the State, with the necessary information to identify gaps and barriers in the long term care system and work cross-agency to solve these issues.

NY Connects will soon release its first Semi-Annual Report on local program utilization. The Report provides a compilation of the results of data collected by **NY Connects** programs for the period of October 1, 2007 - March 31, 2008. The report quantifies the demand for **NY Connects** by describing who is using the program, the type of information that they are looking for and the help that is being provided to individuals by the program.

The information presented in the report covers a variety of topics, including methods of access, awareness sources, types of information requested, and types of information provided. For example, the data demonstrates that 51% of those individuals who contacted **NY Connects** became aware of the program through a local agency or human service provider. However, only 10% of contacts became aware of **NY Connects** through the media (i.e.: brochures, radio, television, etc.). Using this information, a **NY Connects** program might presume that their outreach to local providers has been successful, while they may need to focus further efforts on the media as a tool for educating consumers.

Information obtained from these topics will assist **NY Connects** programs in determining areas of unmet need or where particular gaps in services may exist. It can also help to inform policy makers about the long term care needs in the state in order to guide program improvement efforts and advance long term care system reform.

NY State Receives Federal Nursing Home Diversion and Modernization Grant

New York was 1 of 14 states awarded the 2008 Nursing Home Diversion Modernization Grant from the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) and the Administration on Aging (AoA). The goal of the 18-month federal grant is to help individuals remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible and to delay and prevent nursing home placement. As part of the grant, the NYS Office for the Aging will work with three counties – Onondaga, Broome and Oneida.

The program will focus on individuals who are at immediate risk of spend-down to Medicaid and nursing home placement. The grant will offer these individuals the opportunity to receive home and community-based services in a consumer-directed fashion, so that they may have more control and direction over the services they receive. In order to apply for and be considered for these grants, CMS, AoA and the Veterans Healthcare Administration (VHA) required states to have a fully functioning Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC). NY Connects in Onondaga, Broome and Oneida have been recognized as a fully functioning ADRC by these federal agencies. There are an increasing number of federal grant opportunities requiring ADRCs to be able to apply.

“New York was one of 14 states to receive the 2008 Nursing Home Diversion Modernization Grant.”

Nursing Home Grant...cont'd from pg 2

New York was also 1 of 10 states awarded the supplemental component of the Nursing Home Diversion Modernization Grant: the Veterans Directed Home and Community Based Program Option. The Veterans Healthcare Administration is committed to providing resources to the aging services network to identify veterans at risk of nursing home placement. For the purposes of this grant, Broome, Onondaga and Oneida Counties will partner with the Syracuse VA Medical Center and the VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York to provide these veterans with consumer-directed and/or traditional home and community based services.

Several members of NYSOFA's State Long Term Care Advisory Councils (SLTCAC) have expressed an interest in being kept apprised of progress on the grant and to support the grant's purpose. As a result, NYSOFA recently formed a **Nursing Home Diversion Subcommittee** to discuss key programmatic issues of the grant, and provide feedback, guidance, and support from various entities as they move forward with grant implementation.

Local Programs and Long Term Care Councils Work Together to Develop Innovative Solutions to Gaps and Barriers

Often times the resolution of a particular problem, issue or concern involves the successful collaboration of multiple stakeholders and resources. As one county stated, "at a time when programs and manpower are stretched to the limit, it is truly a blessing when it all comes together." The following examples represent innovative solutions that required collaborative efforts between **NY Connects**, Long Term Care Councils and community partners.

Information and Assistance - Steuben County

A consumer with multiple needs contacted the Steuben County NY Connects program. Their needs consisted of frequent emotional support, home maintenance, and financial assistance and counseling. It was determined that this individual and the corresponding problems and issues involved required the collaboration of multiple agencies, some of whom were already familiar with the consumer. Prior to the implementation of **NY Connects** this individual consumer and/or their caregiver most likely would have resorted to making multiple contacts to a variety of agencies in efforts to locate services and support. This consumer was able to benefit in multiple ways through one phone call as a result of the local collaboration fostered by **NY Connects**.

Energy Assistance – Lewis County

Lewis County reported that the Director of the Office for the Aging (OFA), also the lead agency responsible for **NY Connects**, organized an Energy Task Force in 2008, which included approximately 25 stakeholders from the community. The Task Force meeting resulted in collaborations between the OFA and the oil providers. The oil truck drivers agreed to deliver information on the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), as well as information on other energy saving opportunities to their low income customers. In addition, log deliveries are being donated to the OFA and volunteers have been recruited to cut and split the wood. The Energy Task Force continues to meet and address the energy issues in the county.

Innovative Solutions...cont'd from pg 3

Housing – Jefferson County/Albany County

The Long Term Care Council in Jefferson County has conducted a service gap analysis. A major issue that this analysis addresses is the lack of Enriched Housing and Assisted Living. At present, the county does not have either of these housing options available. To address this issue, the Council wrote a letter to the Executive Director of the Watertown Housing Authority requesting that they explore converting apartments to Enriched Housing Apartments.

Home Modification – Albany County

The Albany County **NY Connects** program, along with Albany Community Action Program (ACAP) received notice that they have been awarded funding for the NYS Housing Trust Fund Corporation's (HTFC) Access to Home program. Funding will be used to implement a home modification program, which will assist seniors in remaining in their homes longer.

Civic Engagement – Delaware County

The Delaware County **NY Connects** program is preparing to host a 'Senior Camp' this summer in order to foster civic engagement. To help them with their planning efforts the county held a two day retreat at the end of January. The camp will offer a variety of programs and activities geared towards community building. The county received a grant from the Roxbury Arts Center to implement this project.

Health Care – Genesee County/Orleans County

The National Patient Advocate Association sought the input of Genesee County for a 2008 report on community health care issues for the Obama-Biden Transition team. Genesee County **NY Connects** invited Orleans County **NY Connects** to participate in the report. The transition team sought information from communities on the following issues:

- problems in the current health care system;
- sources of health information;
- financial difficulties related to health care services;
- health insurance issues;
- preventive services; and
- health promotion

Genesee and Orleans **NY Connects** chose to develop a survey for consumers that addressed the questions sought by the Obama-Biden Transition Team. The responses were compiled and submitted on 12/31/08.

NY Connects:

*Changing the face of
long term care in
your community!*



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