



DAS Georgia News

DHR Division of Aging
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SWEEPING CHANGES IN MEDICARE

D In December, President Bush and Congress passed the Medicare Modernization Act of
I 2003, which will bring people with Medicare better health coverage and more choices.
R This new law provides assistance to those with low incomes, adds preventive benefits
E and a much needed prescription drug benefit. Many of these changes are scheduled to
C begin this calendar year. From June 2004 – December 2005, Medicare beneficiaries
T will be able to choose a Medicare-approved drug discount card that will save them
O 10-25% on prescription drugs. This temporary program will provide immediate relief to
R those who have high prescription costs. Some people whose incomes are no more
S than \$12,569 for a single person or no more than \$16,862 for a married couple, may
qualify for a \$600.00 credit on the discount card. Medicaid recipients who have out-
patient drug coverage will not be eligible for this program.

In April, card sponsors that have met Medicare's strict standards will begin marketing
their cards and information regarding the cards will be listed on www.medicare.gov.

These cards will have a "Medicare-approved" seal. Medicare will not be going door-to-door nor will they be contacting
beneficiaries by phone to market the cards. If someone reports that they have been contacted in this manner, a
referral will be made to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Fraud Hotline for investigation.

In January 2006, beneficiaries can begin enrolling in Medicare part D, the actual drug benefit. GeorgiaCares staff has
begun rigorous training to be prepared to answer calls regarding these changes. The GeorgiaCares program has
recently partnered with WSB-TV to provide comprehensive, timely and accurate information through numerous
statewide information fairs to assist in this effort. These fairs, named "MEDICARE 2 SENIORS: Information to
Families" will begin in May, which is Older Americans Month. Call the GeorgiaCares hotline at 1-800-669-8387 for
more information on the changes in Medicare or for the dates, times or locations of the WSB-TV events.

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Celebrating Ombudsman Service to Residents

The Ombudsman Program's semi-annual training session was held in Decatur January 21 through 23. A large part of the
conference consisted of joint training sessions with Office of Regulatory Services' Long-Term Care Section staff. Other
participants included representatives of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Adult Protective Services, Community Care
Services Program, Division of Aging Services, Georgia Medical Care Foundation, Area Agencies on Aging, Georgia
Advocacy Office, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases, and Georgia Legal
Services Program.

Kathy Jones, Long-Term Care Ombudsman Coordinator with Georgia Legal Services Program (GLSP), Augusta Office,
accepted the Ombudsman Service Award for her exemplary efforts advocating for residents of long-term care facilities in
the Central Savannah River Area. Under Ms. Jones' strong leadership, the community ombudsman program provided
quality services to residents during times of program organizational transition. "I am so proud of Kathy and all of our
ombudsmen. They work tirelessly to represent those individuals who are so often forgotten and who have limited voices,"
stated Lauren Spivey, Elder Rights Coordinator with CSRA Regional Development Center Area Agency on Aging.

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FAMILY CAREGIVER MEDIATION AVAILABLE

Family Caregiver mediation/shared decision making is a new program available within Georgia. A brief summary of this program, which is available through a grant to the Georgia Division of Aging Services and the Center for Social Gerontology follows.

Mediation, or shared decision making, is extremely beneficial in difficult cases involving family dynamics and caregiving where an older vulnerable person is involved. Unresolved family conflicts may get worse over time, often with the care recipient being placed in the middle of the dispute. The goal is to resolve disputes through mediation before the conflict gets worse and the caregivers “give up,” leaving the care recipient with fewer choices for good care, or before a family member files a court petition unnecessarily for a guardianship proceeding. These meetings are confidential and can take place in a neutral setting or in the client’s home. The mediators are neutral third parties who help the parties develop and agree on workable solutions. All mediators have undergone intensive training in basic mediation skills and additional training in mediating family caregiver and adult guardianship cases.



Program Parameters: *The program serves Georgians aged 60 and older throughout the state.*

The person aged 60 and over can be a caregiver or a care receiver.

Cost: *There is no cost for mediation services during the demonstration project.*

Contact Information: *Call Natalie Thomas at (404) 657-5337 or (404) 657-5328.*

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Renee Sanders, Coordinator, accepted the Special Initiatives Award on behalf of the community ombudsman program at Georgia Legal Services Program, Dalton Office, for their exemplary and sustained efforts providing training to long-term care facility staff from the 15-county Northwest Georgia planning and service area.

Mildred Lawson, a volunteer with the metro Atlanta ombudsman program, was applauded by attendees for her “big heart and kind generosity.” She was presented with the Jim Derick Volunteer Ombudsman of the Year Award. Ms. Lawson has made a phenomenal difference in the lives of residents in Clayton County nursing homes and has advocated tirelessly for them in an endless quest for change. Ms. Lawson recently worked to help transition a nursing home resident into a community-based setting.

Longevity recognitions included: Renee Sanders was acknowledged as becoming the second certified ombudsman in the state of Georgia to serve for 20 years. Mary Woody received a 15-year service recognition. Woody is coordinator of the community ombudsman program for 5 counties of the Southern Crescent service area and works in the Georgia Legal Services Program Piedmont office; Pam Lipsitz, coordinator for the Coastal Georgia program, housed in the Savannah GLSP office, serving for 10 years; Robin Miller, co-coordinator of the community ombudsman program for the Athens area, for her 10 years of service, and Ramona Hambrick, staff ombudsman with the Northwest Georgia program in the Dalton Georgia Legal Services Program office, serving for 5 years.

Becky A. Kurtz, Georgia’s State Ombudsman, expressed appreciation to these ombudsmen for their service. “These ombudsmen have worked to resolve the complaints of thousands of residents who live in nursing homes and personal care homes. In addition, they have provided families with helpful information and consulted with facility staff members, all with a focus on improving the quality of life of people who live in long-term care facilities.”

Community Care Services Program (CCSP) – Affirmed

The February 2004 draft **Georgia Long Term Care Study** (Cooney, Landers, Curry, et al) article affirms the need for a range of long term care (LTC) program options. The CCSP is a viable alternative long term care program option for consumers that provides home and community based services at a lower cost than nursing facility placement.

The CCSP is a win win long term care option in its consumer-focused, collaborative program management model. Partners include state staff, AAAs, local contractors, care coordination agencies and the consumer/ representative working together to ensure that consumer needs are identified and met creatively in the home and/or community.

The varied social and medical needs of consumers are met by different client eligibility criteria and case management practices in LTC program models. **The Division of Aging Services through the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) administers and assesses the CCSP and HCBS programs that address consumer needs and choice.**

Matching the consumer and his care needs to the most appropriate, cost-effective level of service is critical. **Screening at the AAA level (GATEWAY) provides this service to consumers. A statewide computer database of service**

providers streamlines consumer access to resources and referral to services. The AAAs use the Client Assessment Tool to identify consumer risk and develop a plan of care.

Changing consumer needs are assessed, monitored and re-assessed through a practice of **comprehensive care coordination**. Improved quality of life for the consumer is at the center of CCSP care planning and local coalition. **The Aging Network has partnerships in the local communities and, currently, the CCSP is collaborating in research projects/ program pilots with the Emory University Fuqua Center on late life depression, and with the Rollins Center on difficult behaviors in dementia clients.**

Recently, the CCSP collaborated in an Administration on Aging/ Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Real Choice Aging and Disability Resource Center grant application to pilot a collaborative intake and referral system for two service populations. Partners include state Aging and Developmental Disabilities service systems, AAAs (ARC and SOWEGA), and a local community-based agency serving developmentally disabled consumers. Client-centered, streamlined service access and delivery is the goal. We anticipate funding will be awarded for this initiative.

SATISFIED ALS AND PSS CUSTOMERS

The Quality Assurance Team of the Planning and Evaluation Section completed a statewide client satisfaction survey for a sample of clients receiving Personal Support and Alternative Living Services.

The surveys focused on the client's satisfaction with the services received. The results were positive. Clients were very satisfied with the services. The results of this project will establish a benchmark for future client satisfaction and provide an indication of provider performance.

The report on the results was presented to the DAS Leadership Team in March. One of the recommendations was that both surveys be repeated annually.



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GEORGIA'S ELDER ABUSE AND CONSUMER FRAUD PREVENTION

Where in Georgia can consumers learn about a growing problem affecting Georgia's elderly, namely elder abuse? Who in the aging network are the experts that can provide information and referral to persons seeking resources to help older victims of this crime? Who provides training to both professionals and volunteers so that they can identify the signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation and learn techniques to either eliminate or reduce the risk of abuse in the clients they serve? In the aging network, there is a program that provides all of these services and more – Georgia's Elder Abuse and Consumer Fraud Prevention Program.

Authorized and funded by Title VII of the Older Americans Act (OAA), the program is designed to provide services to identify, prevent and treat elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. The goals of the program are to heighten the awareness of abuse of older individuals in community settings and to provide or facilitate access to programs and services for victims. Each of Georgia's twelve (12) planning and service areas has an elder abuse and consumer fraud prevention program.

With a total budget of approximately \$116,000, during SFY03 the program handled 1,019 information and assistance calls; provided community education to 13,265 persons and raised awareness of elder abuse through outreach activities for over 793,000 persons; and trained 2,888 professionals and volunteers. In addition, a total of 50 volunteers provided 359 hours of service to help local programs in their efforts to address the needs of victims of elder abuse. Special initiatives during that time period included establishing a Safe Haven program to reduce the risk of abuse in older persons who need emergency placement until family or guardians are identified to help the individual, conducting outreach to Meals on Wheels clients and training law enforcement officers. For further information, contact Dawn Washington at 404-656-0797.