

Area Agency on Aging *Connections*

SeniorLine is first step to access ACAA services

By Daniel Casciato
For Pittsburgh Senior News

In carrying out their mission to serve Allegheny County seniors, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services Area Agency on Aging (ACAAA) supports the continuance of seniors living at home through a home care alternative program.

The first step in accessing services is to call SeniorLine at (412) 350- 5460. After a senior or family member calls SeniorLine to inquire about home care options, a social worker spends about 45 minutes asking questions to determine which care manager to direct them to.

“At the point of intake, there are some questions that the senior or family caregiver who is calling should be prepared to answer,” said Darlene Burlazzi, deputy administrator for ACAA. “We try to elicit as much information about that person’s physical, mental and financial situation so we can direct them to the right program.”

ACAAA will assign a long-term care manager who works with seniors and their families to develop a care plan that addresses that senior’s needs, as identified by the assessment.

“To make the consumer navigation through the system better, we now have a care manager who will have a long-term relationship with that senior, do that level of care assessment and create the care plan,” said Darlene.



After the intake call, the senior is directed to the care manager or service provider who ACAA feels will ultimately handle the case. Home care management services are provided through four agencies: Hill House Association, Ursuline Senior Services, LifeSpan Inc. and Lutheran Service Society.

The senior could be recommended to one of three home care alternative programs: the PDA Waiver program, the OPTIONS program or the Family Caregiver Support Program. Each one provides different services and has different income eligibilities.

The PDA Waiver program offers a broad range of services to medically needy seniors ages 60 and older who choose to receive

services at home instead of a nursing home. The OPTIONS program provides assistance to seniors ages 60 and older who need help to remain independently in their own homes.

The Family Caregiver Support Program helps people who need assistance in caring for senior family and/or friends, as well as seniors who provide care for children. In Allegheny County, 1,050 people are currently in the PDA Waiver program; 3,500 in OPTIONS and 450 in the Family Caregiver Support Program.

The care manager coordinates the necessary services, which may include adult day care, home-delivered meals, personal care, chore service, home health, home companions and respite

care. This care plan is designed to meet the various physical, emotional and financial stresses that a senior may encounter.

“The care manager who will have the long-term relationship with the senior who needs the services will assess their level of care and develop a plan based on their needs and goals, and the services we have available and the cost,” Darlene said.

She stressed that care managers will stay active in each particular case and will come out to visit the senior as often as they need. The more frail the senior, the more contact the care manager will have. “Our goal is for the senior to build a long-term relationship with their care manager,” she explained. “When the relationship is good, we have seen seniors call on their care manager for something other than the services we provide, such as roof leaks or a furnace malfunction. Our care managers will assist them in those situations.”

In certain instances, the care manager will also try to coordinate care between the insurer and the physician. If necessary, nurses are also available to oversee the clinical aspect of a case. “As some seniors become frailer, we eventually may have to move them to other programs, but our goal stays the same: to allow them to age gracefully in their home,” said Darlene.

For more information, call SeniorLine at (412) 350-5460. *PSN*

Area Agency on Aging *Connections*

Allegheny County Department of Human Services/ Area Agency on Aging home care alternatives

PA Dept. of Aging (PDA) Waiver Program	OPTIONS Program	Family Caregiver Support Programs
<p>The PDA Waiver Program offers a broad range of services to medically needy persons age 60 and older who choose to receive services at home instead of a nursing home.</p> <p>To qualify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be Age 60 or older • Monthly income of \$1,869 or less; and not more than \$8,000 in assets (for example, bank accounts, stocks, or bonds). • There is no cost to the consumer for the services provided. • If a spouse earns more than \$2,541/month, joint assets cannot exceed \$28,328. 	<p>The OPTIONS program provides assistance to persons age 60 and older who need help to remain independently in their own homes.</p> <p>To qualify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be age 60 or older; • Requires assistance with daily activities such as bathing, grooming, light housekeeping, meals or laundry. • There are no income or asset limits. • Consumers contribute to the cost of services based on the total monthly income of the consumer <u>and</u> the spouse who lives in the same household, if married. 	<p>The Family Caregiver Support Programs help persons who need assistance in caring for older adult family/friends, as well as elders who provide care for children.</p> <p>To qualify for one of these programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The caregiver must be age 18 or older and providing care to someone who is 60 years of age or older, who may or may not be related to by blood or living in the same household. <p style="text-align: center;">Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The caregiver must be age 60 or older and providing care for a child, age 18 or younger, who is related by blood, marriage or adoption <u>and</u> resides in the same household. • Financial assistance with out-of-pocket caregiving expenses is based upon total household income and number of persons who live in the household.
Services:	Services:	Services:
<p>Broad range of home and community based services which include but are not limited to personal care, adult day services, emergency response systems, home delivered meals, transportation, and home modifications/assistive devices.</p>	<p>Broad range of home and community based services which include but are not limited to personal care, adult day services, emergency response systems, home delivered meals, transportation, and home modifications/assistive devices.</p>	<p>Services include benefits counseling, caregiver education training, and financial assistance with out-of-pocket caregiving expenses. The amount of reimbursement may be as much as \$350/month depending upon the program. Caregivers may also be eligible for a one-time grant of up to \$2,000 for home modification and assistive devices that reduce caregiver burden.</p>
For information call:	For information call:	For information call:
<p>SeniorLine at (412) 350-5460 or toll free 1 (800) 344-4319</p>	<p>SeniorLine at (412) 350-5460 or toll free 1 (800) 344-4319</p>	<p>SeniorLine at (412) 350-5460 or toll free 1 (800) 344-4319</p>