Oswego County Office for the Aging Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011/2012

Office for the Aging Staff
Please feel free to stop by or call our office and let us know how we can help you.

70 Bunner Street
Oswego, NY 13126

Office hours: *8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.*
Phone number: *1-315-349-3484 or 1-800-596-3200, ext. 3484.*

Aging Services Administrator:
Larry Schmidt

Aging Services Specialist:
Bobbie Gill

Secretary:
Kim Briest

Aging Services Aides:
Katrina Froats
Richard Proctor
Linda Ruddy

Long Term Care & Part D Medicare Coordinator:
Sara Sunday

Senior Homecare Case Managers:
Jeanne Chesnut
Hope Cimilluca
*Margaret Waters**
**also Caregiver Services*

Account Clerk:
*Rita Oldenburg**
**Home Delivered Meals and Senior Homecare*

Home Delivered Meals Case Managers:
Missy Peel
Cindy Lewis

EPIC Program Changes

Beginning January 1, 2012 there will be additional changes to the EPIC program benefit.

EPIC will be free, having no fees or deductibles and will expand Part D premiums for members with incomes up to $23,000 if single, and $29,000 if married.

All Seniors must first be enrolled in a Medicare Part D plan to obtain EPIC benefits and maintain coverage.

EPIC members will be responsible for their Part D deductible (if they have one) and Part D co-payments until they reach the Medicare coverage gap (donut hole).

EPIC will provide supplemental coverage to lower out-of-pocket expenses for drugs that are first covered by Medicare Part D only when a member reaches the coverage gap. EPIC will also cover drugs in Medicare Part D excluded classes purchased during the coverage gap.

EPIC will continue to help members apply for Medicare's Low Income Subsidy (LIS) and Medicare Savings Programs to help them save more on drugs.

Social Security Questions and Answers

Question: Someone told me that my mom might be able to qualify for a "compassionate allowance" because of her Alzheimer's. Is this true?

Answer: She might, but the only way to know for sure is for her to submit an application for disability benefits. Compassionate Allowances are a way of quickly identifying diseases and other medical conditions that clearly qualify for Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits. The process allows us to identify and make speedy decisions for the most obviously disabled individuals. Recently 38 more conditions were added to our original list of 50 conditions-25 rare diseases and 25 cancers. The expansion of the list means tens of thousands of Americans with devastating disabilities such as early onset Alzheimer's disease, now can get approved for benefits in a matter of days, rather than months or years. To learn more, and to see a complete list of the conditions, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/compassionateallowances.

Information submitted by Warren Beck, District Manager of the Social Security office in Oswego, NY. They are located at Hillside Commons, 19 Fourth Avenue in Oswego. Phone toll free 800-772-1213 or visit the website: www.socialsecurity.gov.

Oswego County Support Groups

Alzheimer's Support Groups

4th Wednesday at 7 PM
Seneca Hill Manor, Adult Day Care Room
County Route 45, Oswego
Contact Diane Morrisette @ 349-5341

4th Monday at 7 PM
McDonald's Community Room
Route 49, Central Square
Contact Gail Lauricella @ 676-7533

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

2nd and 4th Thursday at 7 PM
FADD Building
98 East Bridge Street, Oswego
Contact Peggy Cuyler-Salem @216-6425

MS Support Group

1st Wednesday at 2 PM
Seneca Hill Manor 1st Floor Dining Room
County Route 45, Oswego
Contact Diane Morrisette @ 349-5341

Hope for the Bereaved

2nd Friday at 7 PM
Fulton Mill Apartments
265 West 1st St. South, Fulton
Contact Myrtle Craw @ 593-6831

Stroke Survivor Group

4th Tues. of each month at 12 Noon
Manor @ Seneca Hill Small Conference Room
20 Manor Drive, Oswego
Contact Jen Duval @349-5346

Grief Support for Widows/Widowers

2nd and 4th Wednesdays 10 AM-Noon
Fulton Alliance Church
1044 State Route 48 South, Fulton
Contact Nancy Galizia @ 593-3142

Mental Illness Educational and Family Support Groups (LIGHT)

Every other Tues. 3 PM-4:30 PM
Oswego Behavioral Health
74 Bunner Street, Oswego
Contact 349-5500

Parkinson Support Group

1st Monday at 1:30 PM
Bishop's Commons
4 Burkle Street, Oswego
Contact Dick Olson @ 652-6857

Caregiver Support

Call OFA for current times @ 349-3484

Three Steps to Disaster Planning

Emergencies happen and it's important to be prepared using the following three simple steps listed below.

Step One: **GET A KIT.** Basic supplies such as water, non perishable foods and medications should be included.

Step Two: **MAKE A PLAN.** Meet with your family and make a plan for likely emergencies. Include meeting places, evacuation routes and transportation options for every family member and every possible location (work, school, and home).

Step Three: **BE INFORMED**. Learn what disasters may occur in your area and how you will be notified. New York State's All-Hazards Alert and Notification System is a web-based portal that allows State agencies, county and local governments, emergency service agencies and institution of higher learning to provide emergency alerting information and private notification to a defined audience (local, county, regional or statewide). NY-Alert is free and subscription-based. If you wish to receive emergency information, you can register on the NY-ALERT website at: www.nyalert.gov. If you don't have access to the web, you may sign up for NY-ALERT by calling 1-888-697-6972.

Current News

Do you need a speaker to come to your workplace to educate and support caregivers? OFA has **Outreach Speakers** willing to come free of charge to any workplace in Oswego County. Call OFA at 349-3484 to make an appointment with Caregiver Services for a workplace speaker.

2011 Medicare Part D Open Enrollment is earlier this year. Enrollment is scheduled to begin October 15 and run thru December 7 in 2011. When a person is selecting a drug plan it is important that they research the plan and make sure that the plan covers as many of their prescription drugs as possible with the least restrictions. Clients can use Plan Finder on Medicare's website (www.medicare.gov), call Medicare (1-800-633-4227) or contact the Office for the Aging (349-3484) to find plans that fit their needs.

HEAP season is starting. It is a program that will help with heating costs. The income limits this year are $2,146 for a one person household and $2,806 for two people. Call OFA at 349-3484 for assistance with the application or to have an application mailed to you.

Dear Queen Bee,

Now that my mother is dependent on me I want to be prepared in case of an emergency. Can you suggest some things I would need for an emergency kit? Signed, "want to be prepared".

Dear "want to be prepared", An emergency kit is a great idea! You could use a duffle bag or a container on wheels. Use a watertight container for copies of important documents (ID, contact numbers, medical and home insurance info, med list including dosage amounts), matches, a whistle and extra medications. Include another set of season appropriate clothing, incontinence and hygiene products, bottled water and snack items. Garbage bags, cash, coins, extra house and car keys and a first aid kit might be necessary. Batteries for the cell phone, flashlight and portable radio are essential. If you have room, add blankets, extra nonperishable food (peanut butter, crackers, granola bars), and a can opener. Remember to pack specialty items such as eyeglasses or contact lenses and solutions. Store these items in an accessible location, check expiration dates regularly and replace items as needed. Call Oswego County Emergency Management Office at 591-9150 for more info.

TAKE NOTE! Admission Practices to Consider

The admission of a person to a nursing home typically comes at a confusing and stressful time. It arrives when one's guard is worn down from stress, confusion and exhaustion. It is a time that requires one to be all the more diligent when handed papers at the nursing home admissions office. The documents require careful reading and attention before signing.

The typical scenario is that mom, dad or spouse has been in the hospital for a week as a result of a fall, stroke or other acute health issue. Everyone in the family is exhausted from running to the hospital. Then the news comes as a nurse, doctor, or discharge planner informs the family a bed is available at a local nursing home and the patient is being discharged the next morning for rehabilitation. At the end of a long and tiring week, a family member is told to go to the admissions office of the nursing home as soon as possible to sign papers.

This is the point at which one should be especially on guard to carefully review the admissions documents with other family members as well as with one's attorney **before** signing. There are a few important points of which one should be aware, and special attention should be given to them.

The first point is that a family member will be asked to sign a document called "Responsible Party Addendum," or will be asked to sign as "Responsible Party." The importance, impact and meaning of this document are regularly downplayed by the admissions director. Despite what the admissions director may indicate, the phrase "Responsible Party" in this circumstance has the meaning which it has everywhere. If the patient's money is not applied appropriately and a Medicaid application is not approved, there is a definite possibility that the "Responsible Party" is held responsible for the nursing bill. One can never be sure how the patient handled their finances in the past. It is possible that a Medicaid application could be denied because of some poor record keeping by the patient several years ago and the nursing home will then turn to the "Responsible Party" to assume payment of the bill.

It should be noted that the patient, if conscious and competent, can sign all admission documents for themselves and such self-signing should be encouraged.

The family member is also frequently asked if the patient has a Power of Attorney. The admissions director will encourage the patient to immediately sign one insisting that it is necessary, and will encourage the patient to appoint as their Power of Attorney the family member whom accompanied them to the nursing home. The admissions director will then insist that the family member must sign as "Responsible Party." The admissions director requires this using the rationale that the family member now has control over the patient's money because they were appointed as Power of Attorney which, one will note, was done at the insistence of the admissions director.

If it is possible that you or a family member could be heading to a nursing home, even initially just for rehabilitation, that status could always change to permanent resident. It is strongly suggested that you clip out this article, review it, and keep it handy. Most importantly, you should be aware that the patient can sign all admission documents if capable, and both the family member who is asked to sign as "Responsible Party," as well as the patient, have the right to review all admissions documents with their attorney before signing and are strongly advised to do so.

This article was provided to Office for the Aging by Thomas A. Reynolds, Esq. as a service to the seniors and their families in Oswego County.