

HomeCare Options

The Community
Home Care Option
For Over 50 Years

Fall 2011

Wessel Participates in Medicaid Roundtable

Ken Wessel, Executive Director of HomeCare Options, was among the panelists in NJ Spotlight's recent roundtable on the pros and cons of the state's Comprehensive Medicaid Waiver that was submitted to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The aim of the waiver is to keep the aged and those with disabilities out of institutions and allow them to be cared at home for as long as possible (at a cost of about 1/3 of institutional care). New Jersey presently ranks 49th in the U.S. when it comes to providing home and community care for the elderly and disabled.

This summer, certain services for long-term care patients living at home were moved into managed care. As a result, about 95 percent of the state's 1.3 million Medicaid beneficiaries today are in managed care programs delivered by four companies – Amerigroup, Healthfirst, Horizon and UnitedHealth.

With the waiver, the state's Department of Human Services hopes that some patients now in institutions who are covered by managed care will be able to return to their homes for care. The big savings, however, would come from seniors avoiding placement in a nursing facility in the first place.

According to Wessel, the four managed care companies are

"committed to keeping people healthy and at home, and the system is being designed with financial incentives to do that."

Other members of the panel included State Senator Joseph Vitale, vice chair of Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee; Valerie Harr, Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services, NJ Department of Human Services; Michael Scarbrough, senior vice president, Amerigroup; and Marilyn Askin, chief legislative advocate, AARP-NJ.

Employee Wellness Program Also Aids Health of Business

Employees at Chestnut Hill Rehabilitation were the latest to reap the benefits of a corporate wellness program given by HomeCare Options at companies throughout the state.

The program offers health care screenings and education and assistance in such areas as nutrition, smoking cessation, exercise and weight control. This is particularly important in light of research that shows that keeping a healthy workplace is not only good for employees, but it's also good for business. A study by the Health Management Research Center at the University of Michigan shows that workplace wellness programs save employers on average up to **\$225 per employee** each year in medical costs and productivity gains. In a study published in the *American Journal of Health* researchers found that more than half of the expenditures created by sick employees can be attributed directly to such unhealthy lifestyles as smoking, inactivity and obesity, which cost U.S. businesses \$13 billion annually.

Such a program can also be good in terms of tax credits. A provision of the Affordable Care Act will offer a break on federal withholding taxes for those employers who participate in employee wellness programs and can document better health outcomes.



Flu shots are an important factor in limiting disease transmission. Here, Aneasha Jean, Intake Field Supervisor at HomeCare Options gives a free flu shot to Certified Home Health Aide Maria Yrrizarry. Vaccinations were made possible by a grant from Round Valley Wealth Management.

For more information on HomeCare Options' wellness services: Call 973-523-1224

www.HomeCareOptions.com

Seniors Take Advantage of Seasonal Cleaning Program

Bags of clothes lay strewn across the floors of the house. Appliances were caked with grime. And cockroaches had free run of the kitchen and bathrooms.

This is what social workers found when they examined the home of two disabled brothers who faced eviction due to the poor sanitary conditions. Enter Darren Hickson and Jesus Perez from HomeCare Options' Seasonal Cleaning program, who began the heavy duty cleaning needed to overcome the concerns of the landlord and improve the living conditions of the brothers.

This program, funded by a grant from the county's Office of the Aging, targets the frail and disabled over age 60 throughout Passaic County. These are people whose health and safety are threatened because they cannot perform seasonal cleaning services by themselves, have no family or other caregiver available or capable of providing these services, and/or are at risk of institutional placement.

Over several visits, Darren and Jesus cleaned the stove, refrigerator and cabinets, got rid of the bags of clothes, and had an exterminator come in to eliminate the pest infestation. They will return on an ongoing basis to make sure the problem does not reoccur.

Nearly 200 homes and apartments are cleaned annually by the HomeCare Options' program. For more information, call 973-523-1224.



Ken Morris, chairman of the Board of Trustees at HomeCare Options, tastes the goods at the agency's annual wine tasting fundraiser at historic Lambert Castle in Paterson.

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HomeCare Options' nurses and social workers teamed up with nursing students at William Paterson University to perform memory screenings at National Memory Screening Day at the Paterson Museum. This year, for the first time, HomeCare Options has been designated a community screening site and will perform memory screenings in its offices by appointment.

We Speak Your Language

For many elderly patients, having a caregiver who speaks their language and is sensitive to their customers and traditions, can make a huge difference.

"In our training programs, we spend a great deal of time on body language, social customs and generational differences," says Alexis Barry, HomeCare Options' Director of Services.

In addition to the agency's many certified home aides who speak Spanish, there are also those who speak Polish, Arabic, Russian and other languages.

"Matching aide and patient is critical," says Barry. "Language is just one concern, but it can be an important one."

Volunteers Shoppers Honored

On December 8th, HomeCare Options will hold its annual Volunteer Shoppers Appreciation dinner at Francesco's in Paterson. Honored will be its nearly 80 volunteer grocery shoppers, who shop for about 100 homebound seniors and made more than 2,100 visits last year. According to Virginia Statile, program coordinator, more volunteers are needed to grocery shop and provide companionship for the many seniors and disabled in need. Call (973) 523-1224 for more information.