



NY Connects:

Choices for Long Term Care

Statewide Update
June 2009

David A. Paterson, Governor

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NY Connects: Your Link to Long Term Care

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NY Connects is more than half way through its third year of operations. **NY Connects** provides free and objective Information and Assistance to persons of all ages and those with disabilities needing long term care. In doing so, the program helps to facilitate a consumer's ability to be informed about and choose appropriate long term care services and supports that will meet his or her needs.

While participating counties remain at varying levels of program implementation, 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 vital and essential components of local long term care reform.

Information and Assistance

A total of 53 out of the 54 (99%) participating programs are now operational. Individuals can access Information and Assistance by a scheduled or walk-in visit, phone, or email. Between July 2007 and March 2009 there were 185,144 contacts made to **NY Connects**. Almost half (48%) of these contacts were from consumers.

Preliminary data indicate that during the first half of Year 3 (October 2008 – March 2009), the number of contacts to NY Connects totaled 48,680. The most common referral sources to local **NY Connects** programs during this six month period were from local agencies and human service providers, representing 40% of referrals. The 60+ population continues to be the largest age demographic amongst the **NY Connects** contacts, representing 50% of the total number.

Increased consumer demand for home and community based services has been evidenced by the number of requests for this kind of information. This topic area received the highest number of information requests during the first half of Year 3, with requests totaling 16,258.

Update on Program Satisfaction Survey Pilot

NYSOFA worked in partnership with the Center for Development of Human Services to develop and implement a program satisfaction survey that was piloted with 15 county **NY Connects** programs throughout a three month survey period that closed in January 2009.

The results of the survey were extremely favorable demonstrating the effectiveness of the **NY Connects** program in its delivery of quality and objective Information and Assistance on long term care options and the importance of the program as a valued resource to the populations that it aims to serve. For example, results reveal over 90% reported satisfaction with the Information and Assistance

"I was very happy with the service that was provided to me. Please continue – you are helping the community." (survey comment)

received from **NY Connects** staff, and over a 90% favorable rating on every indicator that measured the perceived benefit and value of the **NY Connects** program to the community. In addition, 36% of respondents chose to provide written comments and suggestions. 84% of these were positive and described customer satisfaction with **NY Connects** services and the professionalism of the staff.

"NY Connects is all for the person they are working with...you are not a number but...a person in need." (survey comment)

A comprehensive report of the study methodology and findings is in final development and is anticipated for release this summer. Participating counties included: Albany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chemung, Dutchess, Essex, Genesee, Herkimer, Jefferson, Oneida, Orange, Rockland, Schenectady, St. Lawrence, and Wayne.

"I was surprised at all the services and help [available]. The person that worked with me was patient and explained everything clearly so I would understand. (survey comment)

NY Connects and the Aging and Disability Resource Centers

The Aging and Disability Resource Center Program (ADRC) is a joint initiative between The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) and the Administration on Aging (AoA). ADRCs serve as points of entry into the long term care system for older adults and people of all ages with disabilities. Forty three states and territories were awarded multi-year ADRC grants. Because New York State successfully applied for and received a Nursing Home Diversion Modernization Grant (NHDMG), both CMS and AoA now recognize New York as an ADRC state. Three counties are participating in the NHDMG – Oneida, Onondaga, and Broome – which are conducting the various functions required of ADRCs. In addition, **NY Connects** has been recognized as a model program for other states, due to county-wide implementation of Information and Assistance programs throughout most of the state. In an effort to provide technical assistance to other states, **NY Connects** has posted a sample of resources to the national ADRC technical assistance website (www.adrc-tae.org).

NY Connects Advances Reform and Improved Access to Home and Community Based Services

In addition to maintaining the quality provision of Information and Assistance to consumers in need of long term care, **NY Connects** programs are actively working towards systems reform on the local level. Following are some examples of the exemplary work that counties are leading in order to improve systems inefficiencies and offer solutions to identified gaps and barriers.

Home Delivered Meals – Putnam County

The Putnam County Long Term Care Council identified a gap in the availability of meals for the under 60 population. As a result, the Council has partnered with Putnam Independent Living Services (ILS) agency to apply for a contract that will allow the ILS to be the supplier of Home Delivered Meals to the under 60 population.

Transitional Case Management – Livingston County

Livingston County has developed a transitional case management program for older adults residing in primarily rural areas. The project involves the implementation of an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) based system, which works with **NY Connects**, to screen, identify, and refer rural dwelling older adults at risk for preventable conditions and ensure access to health and social services using aging services case managers and primary care physicians. EMS providers were educated on the appropriate care of older adults and taught to implement screening during emergency responses for risk of falling, medication errors, and depression. At-risk patients were referred to a transitional case management program, which offered patients home visits to evaluate needs and facilitated education and referrals to community services and communicated with primary care physicians. The project leaders plan to further develop innovative models that will build upon the success and collaborative efforts of the **NY Connects** program.

Transportation – Orange County

The Orange County Transportation Sub-Committee worked with the county's transportation department to assist in scoring a request for proposal (RFP) to establish an extended fixed bus routing system. The new bus service will benefit seniors, people with disabilities, home health care workers, and social service recipients. Fixed stops will be available in strategic areas near clinics, substance abuse treatment programs, health and human services facilities, and day care centers.

Community Needs Assessment – Nassau County

Nassau County **NY Connects** conducted a Community Needs Survey with their provider network in Program Year 2. This survey determined transportation to be the major issue in Nassau County. This was supported by the number of transportation information inquiries received by staff on the **Nassau*NY Connects** Help Line. To further explore this identified issue and solicit specific input from consumers, the Long Term Care Council is conducting a targeted survey that will hone in on the subject of transportation. The results will be used by the Council in formulating advocacy initiatives.

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Advancing Reform (cont'd)...

NY Connects Ambassadors – Broome County

The Long Term Care Council has discussed how to educate caregivers about resources in the community. Broome County CASA/**NY Connects** is developing an “Ambassador” program. Many caregivers participate in support groups and can act as natural referral sources for their peers. Consumers will be educated through lunch and learn programs to be referral points for **NY Connects**. These sessions will be followed up in 6 months to obtain input on the effectiveness of the information sessions. The Long Term Care Council has also developed a newsletter to be distributed to physician offices to educate them on **NY Connects**.

Albany County Executive, Michael Breslin, Discusses the Importance of Long Term Care Reform in County Government

New York State Office for the Aging Director, Michael Burgess, and Albany County Executive, Michael Breslin, co-presented at the Albany County Long Term Care Council meeting on May 4. Director



Burgess applauded the Council for their noteworthy accomplishments thus far, including the development of a comprehensive plan for Albany County to meet the long-term care needs of its residents, and discussed the status of reform at the state level. County Executive Breslin explained that one of the most important issues in county government is long term care. He stressed the need for increased alternatives in long term care, which are not government-driven, but, rather driven by consumer need. He further mentioned the need for increased home and community based services, as today’s older population and individuals with disabilities have a desire to live at home and in the community. County Executive Breslin and Director Burgess addressed questions from Council members and participated in planning discussions with members.

From Left to Right: NYSOFA Director, Michael Burgess; Albany County Office for the Aging Commissioner, Ralph Scarano; Albany County Department of Social Services Commissioner, Vincent Colonno; and Albany County Executive, Michael Breslin

William Steinhaus Receives the Third Annual NY Connects Excellence in Leadership Award

On June 3, 2009 the third annual **NY Connects** Excellence in Leadership Award was presented by the New York State Office for the Aging and the New York State Association of Counties. This year’s recipient was William Steinhaus, County Executive in Dutchess County. Mr. Steinhaus was nominated by John Beale, Director of the Dutchess County Office for the Aging, for his continued support for and dedication to the Dutchess County **NY Connects** program. The award was presented during the Aging Concerns Unite Us Conference. Past winners included Albany County Executive, Michael Breslin and Cattaraugus County Executive, Crystal Abers.

RTZ Selected As Information Technology Vendor for Statewide Resource Directory

RTZ Associates, Inc. was selected as the winning vendor to design the **NY Connects** Information and Assistance statewide web-based resource directory. County information will be migrated to the state data base, which will allow the public and **NY Connects** programs to access information on the long term care options programs and services available to them. The data migration is expected to begin this summer. Individuals will also be able to contact the local **NY Connects** I&A staff through web links, e-mail and webmail. Further, the system will provide capacity for ad-hoc reporting and management. Finally, it will provide the means to assemble, build-on, and utilize existing resource information. The contract has been approved for March 1, 2009 through February 28, 2011. It is anticipated that the database will be available for use at the end of 2009.

NY Connects Hosts Information Table at Senior Citizens' Day

On May 6, 2009 the New York State Office for the Aging held the annual Senior Citizens' Day at the Governor's Mansion. Ceremonies and exhibits were also held at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center. **NY Connects** staffed a table at the event in which they provided various public education materials, as well as information on how to access the local programs throughout the state.

NY Connects:

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



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