



NY Connects Program Overview

Introduction

The increasing need for long-term care services, due to the impending dramatic shift of individuals over the age of 60, concomitant with the number of disabled adults and children with impairments, demands innovative policy and programs. Currently, long term care services are administered by multiple agencies and providers and are supported by numerous funding streams. Navigating the long term care system in order to access needed services is complex, fragmented and difficult, not only for persons who qualify for publicly funded support but also for those who pay privately. To respond to these inadequacies and address the need for coordination of long term care service availability, the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) and Department of Health (DOH) have established local information and assistance programs known as **NY Connects: Choices for Long Term Care** in counties across the state.

NY Connects provides locally accessible, consumer-centered access points that provide comprehensive information about long term care options and linkages to services for individuals of all ages with long term care needs. To empower individuals to make informed choices and to streamline access to long term care services and supports, **NY Connects** intends to advance the following vision: self-determination and personal responsibility; consumer-centered and meeting consumer needs; high quality care; efficiency and affordability.

Why implement a single entry system in New York?

NY Connects is part of the national movement to redesign long term care. **NY Connects** enhances the delivery of quality medical and non-medical long-term care services through a single coordinated system of long-term care information and assistance that minimizes confusion, supports informed decision-making and enhances consumer choice. It improves quality of life through early intervention and prevention, promotes the most integrated long term care setting, reflective of consumer preference. **NY Connects** helps consumers identify appropriate levels and types of services to prevent or delay the need for institutional care. Linkages with appropriate levels of care improve the ability of New York State and local governments to manage resources, address system problems, and create efficiencies in the long term care system.

Implementation

NY Connects is an essential component of the restructured long-term care system that is currently underway in New York State. It serves as a bridge between consumers of all ages needing long term care and the necessary services (medical and non-medical) to meet those needs regardless of payment source, be it private pay, public pay or a combination of both.



NY Connects functions consist of the development of an infrastructure to support operations including staffing, planning and collaboration, establishment of a Long Term Care Council (LTCC), and the following functions:

- **Information and Assistance:** Provision of comprehensive, objective information and support for individuals and their caregivers/families about home, community based and institutional long term care services and linkage to services and resources to meet their needs.
- **Screening:** A comprehensive screening consisting of a preliminary evaluation of the consumer's and their caregiver's general social, medical and financial needs in order to identify available services and options.
- **Public Education:** An on-going education and awareness campaign to educate all residents about NY Connects, the long term care services in their community and to assist consumers in preparing for their long term care needs.

Each participating county is charged with establishing a Long Term Care Council (LTCC), which is representative of consumers, providers and local government. Its mission is to assist in the evaluation of the local long term care system on an on-going basis, identifying gaps and duplication in the system and making recommendations to address identified needs.

NYSOFA and DOH have created the **nyconnects.org** website, which is dedicated exclusively to long term care information and services and is the initial web presence for the **NY Connects** initiative. The site provides easy access to a wealth of information about long term care and services. It also serves as a vehicle for obtaining additional information and assistance by providing useful links to local **NY Connects** programs that are currently operational and serving consumers, including Area Agencies on Aging, Departments of Social Services, Departments of Health, and other local offices. As more local **NY Connects** programs are established, direct contact information will be added to the website.

NYSOFA, in conjunction with the DOH, will purchase an off the shelf automated system that will establish a comprehensive statewide provider resource listing of local long term care services. This system will expand the ability of **NY Connects** to provide current, comprehensive, consistent and objective information on an array of local long term care provider's resources across the state to consumers, caregivers and helping professionals. Further, this statewide provider listing will be publicly accessible through the **nyconnects.org** website. NYSOFA expects to issue the RFP soon.

NY Connects builds on the power of community by focusing on partnership. By improving communication and collaboration between existing resources, counties are able to break down silos of care to improve availability of services and responsiveness of the system to the long term care needs of the community.