



Talking Points on NY Connects: *Choices for Long Term Care*

Overview of NY Connects:

In 2006 the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA), in partnership with the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), established **NY Connects: *Choices in Long Term Care*** as an essential vehicle in rebalancing long term care in New York State.

- √ **NY Connects** is a statewide program that has established consumer-centered entry points in nearly every county throughout the State, where individuals can obtain comprehensive, accurate, and unbiased Information and Assistance on long term care. Through this program, consumers, which include older adults, and adults and children with disabilities, and their caregivers, can make informed choices about long term care based on their real needs.
- √ **Long term care** refers to medical and non-medical support services needed to improve or maintain one's health and/or daily function. Such services may be provided in the individual's home or other community-based and residential settings. Examples of long term care include transportation, respite, home delivered meals, personal care services, and home modifications and repairs.
- √ Information and Assistance on long term care services and resources can be provided through the county call center, on-site locations, off-site consumer visits, or a web site.
- √ **NY Connects** promotes independence and dignity, and supports those in need of long term care to remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

History of NY Connects:

- √ New York State realized that if it did nothing to reform the long term care system, the system would soon become unsustainable and unaffordable. NYS's general population is expected to grow 3 percent between 2000 and 2015 while the 85 and older population is expected to grow 56 percent.
- √ As a result, in early 2006 NYSOFA and NYSDOH released a Request for Application (RFA) for **NY Connects** to all counties. Nearly every county in New York State, including the City of New York, decided to participate in the first year of **NY Connects**, which began on October 1, 2006 and concluded on September 30, 2007; Oswego County was the only county that chose not to participate in **NY Connects** during the initial contract period.
- √ NYSOFA and NYSDOH developed a total of 57 contracts for the first year of **NY Connects**. The second program year of **NY Connects**, which began on October 1, 2007, matches the first year funding levels that were awarded to counties.
- √ The establishment of the **NY Connects** program follows a national trend towards long term care systems reform, set forth by the Administration on Aging (AoA) and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), which allows for greater community empowerment. With funding from the Federal



New Freedom Initiative, 43 states and territories have established Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) in certain areas of the State to streamline access to long term care.

- New York is the first of only three states to establish access points to long term care Information and Assistance statewide, and according to the federal government (i.e. CMS), is a model for other states.

- √ In order to establish **NY Connects**, the local Department of Social Services (LDSS) and local Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) collaborated through a formal Memorandum of Understanding. Some counties invited other government agencies to participate in planning such as Veterans Affairs, Mental Health and Public Health.
- √ During the first year of **NY Connects**, counties were responsible for developing an infrastructure that would allow for the provision of Information and Assistance on long term care options to consumers, caregivers, and health care professionals. As of January 2008, forty-five counties (79 percent) are providing Information and Assistance on long term care options to the community.

Current Status of Local NY Connects Programs as of January 18, 2008:

- √ In every county the AAA and LDSS collaborated to establish **NY Connects**. A lead agency is responsible for the operation and administrative oversight of the local **NY Connects** program. In 43 counties the lead agency is the Area Agency on Aging (AAA), while in 14 counties, the lead is either the local Department of Social Services (DSS) or another agency integral to local long term care in the community. The lead agency is charged with establishing formal relationships between the AAA, DSS, and other stakeholder agencies (deemed appropriate by the county) to ensure that **NY Connects** has a single voice and recognized identity.
 - NYC reports that as a result of NY Connects, there is now a strengthened relationship between the Human Resources Administration/DSS, NYC Department for the Aging, and NYC Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications.
- √ The great need for **NY Connects** has already been demonstrated by the sheer number of individuals who have contacted **NY Connects** for long term care Information and Assistance. Thirty counties reported more than 19,000 contacts to **NY Connects** during a three month period of time.
- √ The top ten Information and Assistance requests reported by 30 counties during the last quarter of the first year were: home health care (1419 contacts), personal care (839), home delivered meals (673), case/care management (615), Adult Protective Services (546), senior ride programs (616), home maintenance services (492), low income subsidized housing (567), PERS (425), and utility payment (435). In addition to providing information on home and community based topics, **NY Connects** program frequently provided information on topics related to consumer empowerment, such as advocacy (1321) and legal services (724).
- √ The second year of **NY Connects** focuses on stabilization and enhancement. The local **NY Connects** programs are working to advance their delivery of Information and Assistance, conduct public education and promotion campaigns, further develop data collection and evaluation systems, and address identified gaps and weaknesses in the local long term care system.



- √ As of January 2008, fifty-two (52) counties have established a Long Term Care Council, comprised of consumers, caregivers, advocates, providers, and local government representatives. Over 1039 individuals throughout the State are serving on local Long Term Care Councils. These Long Term Care Councils have already started to evaluate the local long term care system, identifying gaps and duplication in the system and making recommendations to address identified needs.
- √ Moreover, counties have developed innovative strategies to promote their **NY Connects** program. For example, Monroe County developed NY Connects posters and informational cards, which they plan to distribute to provider agencies and pharmacies. Erie County developed a comprehensive and informative website, which contains information on the long term care services and supports available in the community. This site can be accessed at: <http://www.erie.gov/nyconnects/>. To date, 43 counties (75 percent) have implemented a public awareness campaign for **NY Connects**.
- √ Counties have started to determine the effectiveness of their own **NY Connects** program. For example, Nassau County plans to use faculty at the local universities and colleges to design evaluation tools for their **NY Connects**.
- √ **NY Connects: Choices for Long Term Care** has its own website with long term care information and services, as well as links to local **NY Connects** programs that are already providing Information and Assistance. Counties will be added to the site as they become operational. The **NY Connects** website can be accessed at www.nyconnects.org.