

Prospects of Great Improvements for ADRC

When I began this job nine years ago, whenever I asked seniors, their relatives or their caregivers about their concerns or problems, they frequently complained it was hard to find reliable information about senior services or care options. A corporate communications expert at a large company said she didn't know where to look for support services for her grandfather who lived with her family. If she



struggled to find out such basic information, what chance would the rest of us have?

Like other states, Rhode Island has an information and referral service known as an Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) funded by the federal Older Americans Act. Rhode Island's ADRC, called The Point, receives no supplemental state funding, unlike those in many other states. Many people told me that our ADRC wasn't very helpful. For example, sometimes a senior center would refer someone to the ADRC, which in turn would refer them back to the same senior center. I learned it lacked even a rudimentary Website with

links to information or ability to answer questions. Its information source was paper records instead of a computerized database. Many people didn't even know it existed.

For years the Senior Agenda has worked to improve seniors' opportunities to age in the community by getting state government to "rebalance" tens of millions of dollars in Medicaid expenditures from nursing home care to home and community-based care. We have studied other states that made great strides toward this goal, including the national leader--Minnesota. It turned out that two years before beginning its major "rebalancing" effort, Minnesota invested significant state dollars and created a well-funded and sophisticated ADRC called Senior LinkAge. Its lead designer told us "our goal was to get information to people way before they needed our services." He added that the ultimate aim was "to maximize peoples' ability to meet their own long-term care needs."

The Minnesota system's features that impressed us were: 1) it was Internet-based with interactive features---you could ask

questions on-line, but a phone consultation was also available; 2) it had a sophisticated 11-question

word out" about the system; 4) libraries had on-line kiosks for Senior LinkAge.

The good news is that

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pre-screen for people who might need services, followed by the ability to then directly connect the caller to the appropriate resource person at a provider agency; 3) a professional marketing firm was used to "get the

Rhode Island's Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) has also studied Senior LinkAge. Based on their findings, the Governor's budget before the General Assembly includes funding to create

a new, greatly-improved Rhode Island ADRC. Furthermore identical bills creating such an instrument are in the RI House and Senate (H5252 and S0270) thanks to sponsors Representative Lauren Carson and Senator Maryellen Goodwin. This improved ADRC would be a tremendous resource for all Rhode Island seniors and their families, enabling them to know what services are available and helping them to make care choices. We urge our readers to ask their state legislators to support these bills.

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