



OCCOA

OTSEGO COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING



Submitted by
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DIRECTOR

*We Help.
We Care*

120 Grandview Blvd., Gaylord, Michigan 49735

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Medicare / Medicaid Assistance Program (MMAP)

Otsego Haus - Adult Day Services

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- See What's New!

Technology & Aging

- Computer Club
- TAP

Volunteer Program

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THE OCCOA ADVOCACY TEAM CENTER - LORETTA MILLER, L TO R - JOHN PANCI, VOLUNTEER SANDY ALLISON, SARAH SKOWRONSKI, CHERYL BOROWIAK, AND ANNIE RIVERS

Because the Advocacy Department has been so helpful to many of our area residents, I wanted to introduce them to you, discuss what they do, and talk about how their work impacts people like you. Then, you will have what you need to decide when and what help you need.

The cornerstone of the Advocacy Department is Loretta Miller, who is also the OCCOA's longest-tenured employee at 22 years. In 1995, Miller took on the responsibility of counselor after working as an In-Home Service Provider for the agency. Without a template to follow, Miller has built a team and capability that is the model in Northern Michigan for helping seniors negotiate the programs and services available. "We give the clients a sense that someone cares and will help them through the process," she says about her team's approach.

Success, though, brought the challenge of capacity, and eventually Miller added Assistant Advocacy Coordinator John Panci to help with the workload. Panci's retail and Hospice experiences give him a well-rounded skill set for working with and helping clients, which he says is his favorite part of the job. "When I get to know clients individually, that's when I can help them the most" says Panci. Then, to provide even more capacity, Services Coordinator Sarah Skowronski joined the counseling staff in April. She, too, came with a strong background in management and the medical field, which has rounded out the team's expertise.

The three primary counselors do not go it alone, though. Assistants Anne Rivers and Cheryl Borowiak help with scheduling, research, and filing to keep the office working smoothly. And, finally, MAPP Volunteer Sandy Allison helps with Medicare Part D prescription drug plan counseling.

As a team, the Advocacy staff has an impressive impact on area seniors. In 2011, they logged over 4,700 hours meeting with clients, but that just tells part of the story. They also help seniors with:

- Conservatorships
- Guardianships
- Low Income Subsidies
- Medicare/Medicaid Enrollment
- Prescription Drug Plans
- Food Assistance Program Enrollment
- Housing Assistance
- Legal Issues (Power of Attorney, Medical Directives)
- Nursing Home Placement
- Social Security Enrollment

Some of these topics are legal issues, and while the Advocacy staff are not attorneys, they can give you direction for later consultation with an attorney.

So, you might be asking how does this all apply to you? Let's say that you are approaching your 65th birthday. Are you eligible for Medicare? What insurance do you currently have, and how will that work with Medicare? Do you need a Medicare Part D plan to cover your prescription coverage?

In another scenario, an elderly parent is unable to remain at home alone. What options does that person and his/her family have? Is assisted living a good alternative? Is a nursing home the right place? How will that person's assets affect what help he/she qualifies for? And, what, if anything, can be done to protect that person's estate?

A common situation that goes along with the last example is the planning that takes place to ensure that a parent or spouse's responsibilities and wishes are fulfilled. A number of tools exist to allow others to share the load, and in some cases, have the final say regarding decisions that are made late in our lives. Do you need a power of attorney, a medical directive, guardianship, or conservatorship? What considerations do you need to be aware of?

As you can see, there are many opportunities to help area seniors, and their families, with important issues. And, we are very pleased that the agency has a great team with the right training and tools to offer to the community. The major event in the Advocacy Department's calendar is the upcoming open enrollment for Medicare Part D prescription drug plans. Between October 15th and December 7th, the staff will help several hundred clients decide on the best insurance for them, possibly saving them thousands of dollars annually. To make an appointment to discuss the Medicare Part D prescription drug plan options, call the Advocacy Department at 989-732-9977. Milestones like this are a good thing, and with some sound advice, we can make the journey even better.



ADVOCACY COORDINATOR LORETTA MILLER ASSISTS CLIENT DOTTIE POIRIER WITH QUESTIONS



OTSEGO COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING

Presents...

Transitions In Life

Medicare Part D Updates

Monday, October 8, 2012
6:00 to 8:00pm
Gaylord Meal Site
120 Grandview Blvd. • Gaylord

~ Suggested donation of \$5 at the door ~

Speakers
Loretta Miller
Advocacy Coordinator / MMAP Counselor ~ OCCOA

John Panci
Advocacy Assistant Coordinator / MMAP Specialist ~ OCCOA

Make your reservations by calling
the OCCOA Advocacy Department at
989.732.9977

989.732.1122 • www.OtsegoCountyCOA.org • Advocacy 989.732.9977

IN-HOME SERVICE ~ 989.705.2574 • MEAL PROGRAM ~ 989.732.1746 • SPECIAL EVENTS ~ 989.732.4702 • VOLUNTEER ~ 989.705.2572 • WEATHER ~ 989.731.5652

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