



Connecting Older Adults with Community-based Resources and Options

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 24, 2012

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AgeOptions Joins Nationwide Campaign to Encourage Discussion and Planning About Hospital Stays with Older Adults

Cost Savings and Better Health Outcomes Cited as Reasons for Older Patients and Their Caregivers to Actively Plan for Hospital Stays

Returning home from a hospital stay can result in unexpected challenges for many older adults, and as a result taxpayers are spending billions of dollars on health care costs every year that could be avoided through simple planning and preparation prior to being admitted to a hospital.

Nearly one in five Medicare patients discharged from a hospital is readmitted within 30 days, costing more than \$26 billion every year. The reason is not the underlying disease, but difficulty understanding the instructions provided at discharge or inability to comply because of the lack of community resources.

Some studies have found that between 40 and 50 percent of readmissions are linked to these issues.

Eldercare Locator, a public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging that is administered by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), recently launched a national campaign encouraging older adults, caregivers and their families to discuss potential hospital visits and start planning ahead for a smooth transition from hospital to home. AgeOptions, the Area Agency on Aging of suburban Cook County, is supporting the campaign by raising awareness for more effective care transitions.

“We strongly encourage families to take some time to address these issues and plan ahead so that when medical issues arise, a plan is in place,” said Jonathan Lavin, AgeOptions president and CEO. “Consumers can save on health care costs and, most importantly, save lives.”

AgeOptions serves on the Advisory Council for the Illinois Transitional Care Consortium (ITCC) which has overseen implementation of the Bridge Model, an initiative to prepare older persons for discharges from hospitals through such institutions as Rush University Medical Center, Adventist LaGrange Hospital and MacNeal Hospital.

ITCC leaders are Rush University Medical Center, Health and Medicine Policy Research Group, Solutions for Care, Aging Care Connections, Shawnee Alliance for Seniors and the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Some of the questions Eldercare Locator encourages older adults and those who care for them to address prior to being admitted to a hospital include: What do you need to bring? If you are not going to be well enough to care for yourself when you are released, where will you go? Will you need help getting around? Will you need equipment and supplies? Will you be able to take the appropriate medications without help those first days out of the hospital? Who will assist you? How long will you need assistance?

Eldercare Locator and the United Hospital Fund's Next Step in Care (www.nextstepincare.org) have created a consumer guide that can be used by families and caregivers to lead the discussion. The guide, which provides planning tips for pre-hospital check-in as well as for leaving the hospital, is available at www.n4a.org/pdf/HospitaltoHome.

“As we age, the likelihood of a hospital stay increases and it is critical to plan before that time arrives,” Kathy Greenlee, Assistant Secretary for Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, said in a statement provided by n4a. “We encourage families and caregivers to take advantage of their time with older relatives to talk about the brochure’s important cost-saving and potentially life-saving tips.”

About Eldercare Locator

Eldercare Locator is the first step to finding resources for older adults in any U.S. community and is a free national service of the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) that is administered by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a). Contact Eldercare Locator at (800)677-1116 or www.eldercare.gov.

About Next Step in Care

The United Hospital Fund's Next Step in Care website (www.nextstepincare.org) has guides for family caregivers on many aspects of transitions, including medication management, discharge checklists, hospice and palliative care and many others. The guides are free and available in English, Spanish, Chinese and Russian.

AgeOptions and its network of community agencies are the principal source of information regarding senior services in suburban Cook County, Ill. A nonprofit organization located in Oak Park, AgeOptions has served the older adults of suburban Cook County and their caregivers as an Area Agency on Aging since 1974. For more information, please visit the Agency website at www.ageoptions.org.

AgeOptions connects adults age 60 and over with resources and service options so they can live their lives to the fullest and remain in their homes as long as possible. In 2010 we met the needs of more than 198,500 individuals in 130 communities within 30 townships that have a diverse population of 460,000 older adults. AgeOptions advocates, plans, develops and funds programs and coordinates a network of community-based senior service agencies to ensure an effective and efficient system of service delivery. Support is provided through the Older Americans Act, Illinois General Revenue Funds, local funds and individual contributions.