

The Alliance for Aging has been working closely with the Department of Elder Affairs in the development of an Aging Resource Center for PSA 11. In December 2006, the Alliance was notified by the Department of Elder Affairs that it would transition into an Aging Resource Center, and in October 2007, the Alliance was designated as the Aging Resource Center for Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. The efforts of our 2007 transition have presented many new projects, goals, and opportunities for the Elder Helpline!

The Elder Helpline is often the first point of contact for seniors in need, caregivers, or professionals to learn of available resources. Our goal is to help seniors maintain their independence by providing information about programs and services available in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. Our Information and Referral Specialists made and received over 25,000 calls in 2007, providing accurate information about community resources and advising callers on ways to access services and benefits. Information & Referral at the Elder Helpline often entails a lot of hand holding, as Specialists help their callers to navigate a complex service delivery network.

In addition to Information and Referral, our Intake Unit is responsible for screening and prioritizing clients in need of services by maintaining the waiting lists for four DOEA-funded programs (Community Care for the Elderly, Home Care for the Elderly, Aged and Disabled Medicaid Waiver, and the Assisted Living Waiver). In 2007, over 1200 individuals were assessed for these programs and 881 individuals were referred to receive services through these programs. The screening and prioritization process ensures that the frailest elders in need of in-home services to maintain their independence and avoid premature nursing home placement are the first to receive services.

Through coordination with the Department of Children and Families, and our Lead Agencies, the Alliance is able to ensure that clients identified by Adult Protective Services in need of immediate in-home services to prevent future harm are served expeditiously. In the past year, the Adult Protective Services unit referred 259 clients to the Elder Helpline, 238 of which were identified as High Risk and were processed for immediate services through the Community Care for the Elderly program funding. APS client referrals not in need of immediate services are contacted by Specialists to identify appropriate programs and services for assistance.

In collaboration with our network providers, the Elder Helpline assisted over 1200 households in 2007 through EHEAEP (Emergency Home Energy Assistance for the Elderly Program) funds. The EHEAEP program allows the Alliance for Aging to pay utility bills up to \$400 twice a year for low-income seniors.

The Elder Helpline continued its Elder Links program, in coordination with Fire Rescue departments. Seniors who call 911, but do not necessarily need emergency help, are contacted, assessed, and provided with information and

intervention as appropriate. A complete follow-up is conducted via phone on each case referred.

For several years, the Elder Helpline has partnered with Florida Power & Light for the AWARE program (Always Watching for At Risk Elders). If an FPL field employee (meter reader, collector, field representative) sees an elderly person who may be in a crisis situation, the situation is referred to the Elder Helpline with the senior's consent. An Information and Referral Specialist contacts the elder to assess the situation and identify services and resources to provide help.

A primary focus during this year's transition to an Aging Resource Center has been the additional and enhanced responsibilities of the Elder Helpline. The Aging Resource Center model is designed to streamline eligibility and increase access to services for seniors and their caregivers. This will be accomplished through collaboration with community social services agencies, our provider network, the Department of Elder Affairs CARES Units and the Department of Children and Families.

The primary functions of an Aging Resource Center are to provide Access to services, Information & Referral, Screening, Triage, Eligibility Determination, Long-Term Care Options and Choice Counseling, Fiscal Control, and Quality Assurance. In 2007, the Alliance established a Local Coalition Workgroup made up of partners and key stakeholders, to assist in the development of an Aging Resource Center in PSA 11. Principal outcomes of this effort were the development of a Strategic Plan and the creation of three Coalition work groups charged with making recommendations for ARC implementation and the creation of protocols.

The transition process has included the reconfiguration of the Elder Helpline to accommodate additional staff, to include co-located staff from CARES and DCF Economic Self-Sufficiency programs. Our telephone system has been upgraded to be more user friendly, streamlining access to the Elder Helpline for callers. This improves access to services for clients and facilitates communication and training with outside entities.

A key factor of this year's transition has been the development of the statewide web-based Information and Referral database (Refer). We are in the process of identifying and selecting ARC community access points in both counties which, in addition to the Elder Helpline, will utilize this database. Elders, caregivers and any other callers will receive consistent and uniform information and access to services, including private pay resources, through the Refer database.

Trainings have been provided in the areas of ARC orientation, the ARC Strategic Plan, ARC roles and responsibilities, and in the areas of screening, prioritization, triage and wait list management. Audiences for these trainings included Alliance for Aging staff, Elder Help Line staff, Alliance Board of Directors, Alliance

Advisory Council, Registered Services Provider Network and service providers both within and outside the aging services network. Ongoing training and support will continue to be provided as needed.

The Alliance will continue to work with the Local Coalition Workgroup, as we develop and refine the Aging Resource Center. Through ongoing review, the Aging Resource Center will ensure that the services provided are in the clients' best interest, are the most cost effective, of high quality, and are responsive and appropriate to the needs of seniors.