

# *Northwestern Illinois Area Agency on Aging*

## **Aging & Disability Resource Center**

2576 Charles Street, in the Rockford Plaza, Rockford, IL  
• 815 226-4901 • (800) 542-8402 • Fax (815) 226-8984 •  
• E-mail: [niaaa@nwilaaa.org](mailto:niaaa@nwilaaa.org) • Website: [www.nwilaaa.org](http://www.nwilaaa.org) •

Presented at the N4A CONFERENCE – August 7, 2006  
By Robert G. Cleveland, Resource Center Director

## **ADRC**

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- One of two pilot sites in Illinois
- The ADRC is located in a shopping mall housed within Northwestern Illinois Area Agency on Aging. This allows for easy physical access for older adults and persons with disabilities.
- People can access the ADRC by phone (toll free in nine counties), face-to-face appointment, walk-in, e-mail, fax and via the website.

## Target Group

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- Older adults 60 years of age and older, individuals with developmental disabilities and caregivers of both populations.
- In FY 2003, before the ADRC grant began, we served 5,120 clients. In FY 2004 we served 5,245. In FY 2005 we served 6053 and thus far in FY 2006, we have already served more than 7,000 clients, with three months yet to go.

## Development/Activities of Local Advisory Board

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- The ADRC pulled together stakeholders from a variety of local agencies serving our target populations. Many of these agencies had previously served on a Systems Change committee that focused on helping individuals achieve independence while crossing the boundaries of existing programs and services.
- The ADRC Advisory committee was divided into four sub-committees to address Business Operations, Services, Stakeholder Input and IT/MIS issues.

## Training/Staff Development

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- Training in Pharmaceutical Assistance Programs
- Legal services for seniors struggling with debt
- Home Health Care – understanding Medicare options and coverage
- Strengthening Caregivers – Approaches to assist and support caregivers
- Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) training ADRC is a SHIP site
- Medicare Part D Training (several)
- Training to sit for the AIRS Certified Information & Referral Specialist for Aging Exam
- Computer training on Illinois Benefits.Org and Medicare Interactive
- Ongoing training and updating in various public and private benefit programs

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- **Kenosha County ADRC** has developed some excellent tools to assess staff competency and knowledge. There are four tools that track training, knowledge and skills:
    - Knowledge Evaluation (of programs and services)
    - Skill Evaluation (advocacy, client empowerment, computer, writing, etc)
    - I&A Training Survey (rates a staffer's knowledge and tracks recommended training)
    - Individual Training Log (tracks completion of required training/education)

*Materials available via Lewin website at [www.adrc-tae.org](http://www.adrc-tae.org)*

## Vision/Culture Change within the Organization

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- **Design** – As individuals enter the ADRC they are greeted by a receptionist. The waiting room is an open area containing several racks of brochures featuring various public and private programs. Tables and chairs offer comfortable places for clients to browse through materials.
- **Client Flow** – We looked at other ADRC models before establishing our own. Many other models had a tiered system of triage (hoops to jump through) to determine the client's need and which staff person the client would see depending on the need. We did not feel this was a client-centered approach. Therefore, when clients come into the office, they meet with any Resource Specialist to address their various needs. Staff are cross-trained in a wide array of benefit and services programs.

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- **Staffing** – The ADRC is comprised of four Resource Specialists, a Caregiver Specialist, an Employment Specialist, a receptionist, and Director. One of the Resource Specialists is bilingual while another has the ability to communicate in sign language. Two staff are AIRS certified; remaining staff will seek certification this year. In addition, trained volunteers are in the office at least three days a week providing direct assistance to clients.

Before the ADRC project, NIAAA provided Information and Assistance through a direct service waiver. Benefits Specialists advised clients on available programs and services and completed applications for various public assistance programs. If someone called about case management, staff would give the phone number to the appropriate Case Coordination Unit (CCU) or if a client wanted home delivered meals we would give them the number to call. We would send a directory of Long Term Care facilities when asked for information on local nursing homes

## Access

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- One of the concepts of Aging and Disability Resource Centers is to promote one-stop shopping and to help streamline access to services for consumers. Therefore, we try to do whatever we can for the client while they are in the office so that they don't have to bounce from agency to agency to have their needs met.
- ADRC staff now complete initial intake forms for the Home Delivered Meal Program. Prior to this staff would either give out the phone number to the meal provider or make the call on the client's behalf.
- Since the ADRC began, we now have intake forms for case management and the Community Care Program. ADRC staff can begin paperwork on a client while they are in the office and can arrange for a case manager to make a home visit. This results in fewer stopping points in the system, which is more seamless for the client.

## Access continued...

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- The ADRC has partnered with Rockford's Human Services Office to take applications for the city's Homeless Prevention Program. Clients on the verge of eviction, foreclosure, or otherwise facing homelessness can apply at the ADRC.
- The ADRC provides comprehensive benefit screening for individuals returning to the community from a long-term care facility. The ADRC coordinates with Visiting Nurses Association on the Long Term Care Transition Program pilot.
- The ADRC has partnered with Social Security to complete "Extra Help" applications for beneficiaries eligible for Medicare Part D. Currently, the Rockford area Social Security office, which includes five counties, has processed more "Extra Help" applications than any region in a six state area. The ADRC has been a significant part of this effort.
- The ADRC coordinates with the Rockford Salvation Army in their Paint-A-Thon program. We identify eligible senior households and send them letters and applications, which the Salvation Army provides.

## Coordination/Partnerships with Other Initiatives

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- The ADRC had partnered with Rockford Business College to provide interns for data entry into the computerized database of programs and services and client information.
- Buttita Brothers Automotive partners with the ADRC to offer a Senior Auto Winterization Program, providing an oil change, radiator flush and fill, and safety check at no charge. We identify clients and complete program paperwork and send this information to the Buttita staff.
- Culture change across agencies has come more slowly. Some agencies have bought in and partnered with us. We believe the way to break some of the ownership barriers is to keep the focus on the client's needs and how we can meet them by streamlining access to services. The Systems Change committee was very successful in this venture. They focused on meeting the client's needs rather than making those needs meet some existing program guideline or eligibility standard before assistance could be provided.

## Assistance

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**Options** – Clients receive information on a variety of topics and help applying for an array

- **Counseling of Public & Private Benefit Programs.** Programs such as Medicaid; Homestead Exemption and Tax Deferral; Medicare A, B, C and D; Veterans Benefits; Hear Now; Circuit Breaker; Advance Directives; Transportation; LIHEAP; Housing (including independent, subsidized, assisted living, supportive living and long term care); Home Delivered Meals pre-assessments; Supplemental Insurance (the ADRC is a SHIP site); Income Tax Preparation and much more.
- **Referral** – Referrals are made to various providers, such as Legal Services, Adult Protection Services, Long Term Care Ombudsman, Outreach, Home Again Transition Program
- **Employment** – The ADRC offers employment and training services through the Senior Community Service Employment Program.

## Assistance continued...

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- **Emergency Response** – The ADRC offers information on Emergency Response Units and offers the ADT Companion Service System through a partnership.
- **Income Tax** – AARP Tax Volunteers provide income tax preparation at the ADRC. Preparation is offered four days a week during income tax season and is free of charge.
- **GAP Funds** – Gap funds are used to meet emergency needs that are not met by other programs. Home renovation and repair and medical needs take priority as they are often key in helping individuals remain in their own homes.
- **Crisis Fund** – The Community Foundation of Northern Illinois' Crisis Fund grants up to Foundation \$1000 to aid individuals in crisis situations. Often, GAP and Crisis Funds are combined to address needs that require substantial dollars, such as a roof repair or ramp. The ADRC is a Referring Agency to the Crisis Fund, and as such, reviews and submits any request for funding for an older adult.

## Assistance continued...

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- **Caregivers** - ADRC staff provide information and assistance to caregivers, whether they be a spouse, family, friend or neighbor. Along with providing information, services to caregivers fall under these categories.
  - **Respite** – Caregivers have the choice of having their loved one cared for at home, in Adult Day Care, in an Assisted or Supportive Living Facility, or Long Term Care Facility.
  - **Support Groups** – Groups for caregivers provide encouragement, support, and information. The ADRC hosts a meeting every third Wednesday of each month.
  - **GAP** – Caregiver Gap funds are used to meet the needs of caregivers. Typical requests have been for ramps, hearing aids, home renovation, etc. Without this assistance caregivers could not continue to provide care to their love one.
- **Grandparents** - The same services offered to caregivers are offered to grandparents raising their grandchildren. Information, Respite, Support Groups and GAP are available to help grandparents as they assume a role in taking care of their grandchildren.

## Awareness

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- **Brochure** - ADRC brochure was developed and printed. They have been distributed to hospitals, pharmacies, community agencies, etc.
- **Open House** - The ADRC Open House was held in July 2005. The event was attended by ADRC Advisory Board members, clients, other providers of services to seniors and staff. The event was covered by a local TV station and aired that evening on the local news.
- **Newspaper** - An article was in the Rockford newspaper about the ADRC and inviting the public to visit the Aging & Disability Resource Center. Other articles have mentioned the ADRC and quoted staff.
- **Radio** - ADRC Director and staff have been on several radio programs, promoting the ADRC and available programs.

## Awareness continued...

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- **Newsletters** - The ADRC has been featured in the NIAAA News, the City of Rockford's employee newsletter, and the local Diabetes Coalition's publication.
- **Presentations** - ADRC staff have given a number of presentations on a variety of topics to senior groups and clubs, medical students, hospital social workers, etc. In addition, the services of the ADRC have been displayed at many health fairs.

## Challenges

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- Medicare Prescription Program
- Coordination with Local Disability Agencies
- Resource Database
- Cooperative relationships with Illinois Department of Human Services