



Tompkins County Office for the Aging

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Strategic Planning-2014 Long Term Care

A Consensus Conference on the topic of Long Term Care was convened on October 3, 2014 at Tompkins County Health Department. Lisa Holmes, Director of The Tompkins County Office for the Aging and Betty Falcao, Director of the Health Planning Council of Tompkins County co-facilitated the meeting. Participants included:

Suzanne Motheral, Tompkins County Office for the Aging
Jan Lynch, Finger Lakes Independence Center
Ed Bergman, Tompkins County Department of Social Services
Lisa Monroe, Tompkins County Office for the Aging
Brenda LaPierre, Cayuga Medical Center
Diane Dawson, Lifelong
Nancy McKeon, Caregivers
Caryn Bullis, Tompkins County Department of Social Services
Marge Hansel, Community Foundation of Tompkins County
Jane Segelken, McGraw House
Margherita Fabrizio, Staying Put in Ithaca
Paula Davis, Ithaca College Gerontology Institute
Teri Reinemann, Ithaca College Gerontology Institute
Stephen Griffin, Foodnet, Meals on Wheels

The following is a summary of the discussion and findings of this Consensus Conference.

Introduction and Demographics

The likelihood of needing long term care assistance increases with age. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (2010), 15% of individuals with a disability between the ages of 75-79 require assistance, while 30% of individuals with a disability age 80+ require assistance.

According to the 2010 Census, there was a 34% increase in the Tompkins County 60+ population from 11,967 people in 2000 to 16,042 people in 2010. This population will

continue to increase with the projection peaking at approximately 21,590 people in 2030. The 85+ population alone will increase 54% from 1,252 in 2000 to 2,721 in 2040. At the same time, the younger populations will be smaller in size relative to the older population, exacerbating workforce and caregiving issues. The combination of these factors will place additional pressures on an already strained local long term care system.

Strengths and Highlights

Tompkins County is a well networked community with a vast array of services for the size of the community. The Office for the Aging is an excellent clearinghouse of information and referral, offering more comprehensive listings of local services than those offered by OFAs in other regions. There are a variety of ways of linking people to community based services, including 211, the Human Services Coalition Listserve, NY Connects, and through word of mouth. Hospicare and Cancer Resource Center have both been pioneers in service delivery and assisting people in sorting through options. In addition to these there are many community organizations that serve as entry points for people to get information on long term care services and resources such as Lifelong and Foodnet Meals on Wheels.

Relative to its size, Tompkins County has a broad array of housing and in-home support services that address needs and allow people to maintain independence as long as possible. Tompkins County has 5 home care agencies and others in contiguous counties who will serve Tompkins County clients. Home care services include essential patient education and teaching to empower individuals to perform self-care. The Finger Lakes Independence Center's loan closet allows people to try out and borrow adaptive equipment. Foodnet's Meals on Wheels service is readily available for people when they are discharged from the hospital and will provide meals with no waiting list. Titus Towers, Tompkins County's largest senior housing complex, recently received a significant grant from the New York State Department of Health to hire 2 full-time nurse case managers, allowing residents to age in place with more supports. There are also many informal support networks, and "neighbors helping neighbors." in our community, which has helped to create safe places for people to make connections and to share personal triumphs and challenges with each other.

The community is starting to look at long term care as a multigenerational issue. The family caregiver is a huge component of the local long term care system. Tompkins County has a wide array of caregiver services, as well as the ability to connect long distance caregivers with local agencies and community resources. There are state and local sources of funding for long term care services which are not available in other states or localities. This makes a big difference for consumers and families. For instance, Medicaid and the Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP) are two long term care programs which are not available in other states.

There is a wide range of transportation options in our small community, including Gadabout, ADA Paratransit, FISH, wheelchair-accessible taxi, car share, and others.

In the past several years, local health care services and treatment facilities have expanded, including those at Cayuga Medical Center. This has made it possible for patients and caregivers to receive needed treatment within Tompkins County and lessened the need for out of town medical travel.

Our local higher educational institutions provide training opportunities in gerontology for those who work in aging services. Cornell holds pre-retirement workshops and hosts a listserv for Cornell retirees and caregivers. Tompkins County has a highly educated and engaged volunteer community. There are many highly skilled retirees who contribute to making the community better. There is some degree of cultural competency among providers and a community which appreciates and embraces diversity. There is a sense of local community spirit and progressivism, a willingness to experiment and be groundbreaking, and a culture of being “better than good.”

Issues and Needs

Medicaid is transitioning to Managed Long Term Care, and there is concern that the managed care organizations will not grant services at the same level as traditional fee for service Medicaid. Another concern is that managed long term care organizations tend to offer telephonic case management instead of in-person home visits. With legislation changes and as health care shifts to managed care, we could use more monitoring of commercial payers.

Many local primary care physicians are not accepting new Medicare clients and low Medicare reimbursement rates are driving this decision. This is likely to continue into the future.

There is a lack of home health aides and certified nursing assistants in Tompkins County. Contributing factors are the low pay, lack of local training, and cumbersome regulations to offer training. Tompkins County’s low unemployment rate affects the number of people who apply as aides, as there are other employment opportunities for equal pay. A national or state program is needed which offers incentives to provide aide training and pay a living wage.

Currently there is only one certified home health agency in Tompkins County, and this raises issues around consumer choice.

The long term care system is fractured, and there is a lack of person-centered care on all levels. People are forced into various situations and systems based on income. Demographics indicate that the younger generations are too few in number to provide the caregiving that will be needed, and people with reasonable resources cannot afford long term care assistance for long. It is important to promote person-centered care in small communities, and this care should not be defined by income.

There is a lack of affordable assisted living in Tompkins County, and no Medicaid funded assisted living. In addition, changes are needed in the existing assisted living regulations. Current regulations limit the facilities from assisting residents with very basic needs. Adult homes and long term care facilities should be able to offer a more person centered approach which is not based on a medical model.

Future generations could be assisted by changing the codes under which new housing is planned and developed. Input must be shared with planners, builders and developers to create living environments which enable people.

There is a lack of dementia care in the community already and there will not be enough to meet future demands. Increasing the number of facilities that can provide care for people with dementia, and can do so without separating spouses will enable a better quality of life.

Lacks of funding and scarce resources are a concern for many programs. Funding is needed for Better Housing and the Office for the Aging to enable small home repairs and modifications to improve accessibility. There will soon be an Ombudsman program created for managed long term care beneficiaries, and the existing Ombudsman program for residents of long term care facilities has very limited funding. Transportation is not always available or affordable, particularly in rural areas. There is no affordable out-of-county medical transportation. The community needs to advocate for the restoration of state and federal resources to support these home and community based services. At the same time, taxes in Tompkins County are high and getting higher, especially school taxes, and this threatens people's ability to keep their homes and age in place for those who would like this.

Although many of the systems need to change as the needs increase, the privatization of long term care services to older adults opens the doors to fraud and abuse at a period of time when they are most vulnerable.

Recommendations and Priorities

1. Promote effective public information and consumer education about long term care, using a variety of technologies, with messaging that speaks to Baby Boomers. Consider the unique issues and needs of various groups residing within Tompkins County including rural residents, various racial and ethnic identities, and the LGBT community.
 - o Educate patients and caregivers to make informed decisions about insurance, health care and self-care. Include within this education about where to find the information they are looking for. (7 dots)

- Assist individuals in planning ahead to pay for long term care including educating about long term care insurance and the New York State partnership plans.
- Educate and support palliative care before and at end of life.
- Educate people and explain what Medicare does and doesn't pay for.
- Promote more effective information sharing about long term care supports to clients and families through medical providers (i.e. physician offices, hospital), as these are often the points of entry into needing long term care assistance. Simultaneously, multiple community organizations should promote a similar message.
- Raise the general awareness of aging and long term care issues among philanthropic organizations in the community.

2. Engage in advocacy efforts for broader systems change

- Advocate for Medicaid funded assisted living options in Tompkins County. (5 dots)
- Advocate for accessible design in new housing, making it desirable and safe for seniors and people of all ages. (4 dots) Engage in grassroots advocacy for elders, including County officials, interested individuals and developers as a think-tank for development to serve these needs of older adults in community. Encourage the County to take lead and to present models and set guidelines to help engage developers in culture change.
- Advocate to change regulations for assisted living, making it person-centered care on all levels rather than system centered.
- Advocate for housing legislation requiring landlords to accept Section 8 as payment.
- Promote a living wage and training, recruitment, retention and development of healthcare workforce staff. Advocate for streamlined training for PCA, HHA and CNA.
- Protect, preserve and expand federal funding for volunteer management, training, and recognition of their value. Explore Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Program funding for Tompkins County.
- Advocate for legislation promoting public/private LTC insurance to make it more affordable for more people.

3. Actions which can take place on the local level

- Promote the seniors helping seniors concept through establishing a “village” in Tompkins County. Ensure it is structured managed and has continuity to provide reliable assistance. *(6 dots)*
- Elevate the way our community values and honors personal care aides on a professional level, including how they are treated, as well as the income, benefits and training they receive. *(4 dots)*
- Increase the access to after hour and weekend community support services to ensure important services are available when needed. *(2 dots)*
- Explore community funding sources to help pay for LTC insurance. *(1 dot)*
- Encourage Tompkins County Area Development to develop businesses which make this community a desirable place to age and retire.
- Explore an “age friendly” designation for Tompkins County
- Investigate long term care service delivery in other countries, and whether they have effective volunteer programs
- Explore whether the home sharing concept is a viable program.
- Explore the use of time banking models to structure /manage volunteer time.
- Consider holding a large community forum on long term care.
- Coordinate the approach to discharge planning and connection to community resources.