



*From the
Director.....*

Sharon Foerster, L.C.S.W.



Elder Independence of Maine

Challenges....we all face

challenges in some way, shape or form – on a daily basis, ongoing, every once in a while, or from right out of the blue, when we’re least expecting it. It seems in recent months, we cannot turn on the

television, read a page in the newspaper, or even listen to a neighbor,

without hearing about one more tough situation; another downturn in the economy, job losses, loss of a loved one, being able to stay warm during frigid temperatures. Challenges come in all forms - physical, mental, spiritual.

Such challenges remind me that no matter how tough the situation presented is, the person who faces the situation can always be tougher. For as many problems, there are solutions. I believe in the “toughness” that people can find to meet challenges because I have seen it myself, especially early in my career when I worked directly with older people in the community. All had physical challenges and needed help to stay at home and in their own communities. Despite their challenges, however, they found ways to cope, get by, even thrive. I recall one man could not make it any further than his bed due to his physical challenges. Yet, he found a way to fill his days in meaningful ways that mattered to him. He was also uplifting to all who knew him. Another woman in her nineties said her “secret” to rising above her challenges was to “have a list” of things to do and always add to it. Others’ message was always to “fight.” And others knew simply that in order to meet their challenges, they may need to accept help from the hand that reached out to them, even if that meant going against their independent spirit for a time. These real peoples’ stories of “toughness” always made me picture that first crocus one sees when snowy patches are still on the ground - the first sign of spring! In the midst of snow and still-cold winter days, the first spot of green can be seen in a sunny patch of garden, pushing through the soil in order to bloom and signal spring is on its way.

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Here at EIM, the care managers hear first-hand of the daily challenges faced by our some 3000 consumers and family members throughout Maine. We strongly appreciate the value in staying at home, but know it also can be challenging to stay independent. From dealing with an ongoing physical illness, to not having enough heat, to needing staffing or not having enough, the EIM staff are here to help find solutions. But we also know that it is *you* and *your ways of finding solutions* and meeting such challenges that make the difference. In this newsletter, you will read some “tips” from us. Along with our tips, we would also *like to hear from you* on your own “tips” on meeting challenges. We can all benefit from learning about your life experiences in dealing with the challenges that brought you to EIM and having help at home. If you have a story or “tip” that you (or a family member) are willing to share on meeting a challenge, you can either submit it to me through the EIM website at www.elderindependence.org or send it in written form to my attention at P.O. Box 659, Lewiston, ME 04243-0659. I would like to share your tips or stories in future newsletters. (This can be done without sharing your name.) I hope to hear from you – it is *your* experience and know-how that makes the true difference in meeting or rising above challenges that come up when needing help at home. And until then, I look forward to warmer days of spring and knowing the crocuses, somewhere, are getting ready to spring forth through the cold earth and snow!



Here for You!

Care Managers at Elder Independence of Maine



Care Managers are at the heart of Elder Independence of Maine’s mission to “Serve People First” and to help people stay as independent as possible in their own homes. As a group, the care managers serve over 3,000 consumers and family members on a daily basis. Some carry out their work on the telephone so their work seems “behind the scenes.” Others carry out their work with you at your home. All are licensed social workers or registered nurses and care about you!

The care managers help by finding the staff and services to come to your home. They also work to connect you to needed resources available in your community like transportation, heating assistance, and Meals on Wheels. They know that one key to staying at home is meeting basic needs like personal care, but being connected to resources in the community like Meals on Wheels and transportation also comes into play. Care managers are available for your questions and to help find solutions. It is rewarding to see a consumer who first comes on to the program struggling to stay at home, but then able to get to a point where being at home is a possibility as services get into place. Staying at home is not an easy feat, challenges can arise and availability of resources can vary throughout the vast state of Maine.

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Care Managers Continued

A back-up plan should always be in place in the case of bad weather or staff not being able to make it to your home. Despite the challenges, the care managers hope you experience a good working relationship with them, and encourage you to call if they can assist you to attain what you need to stay as independent as possible at home.

While much of the care manager's work may be spent coordinating a service with one of your own in-home care providers, if you ask what they enjoy most about their job it would be connecting people to what they need and "the contact with consumers and families, knowing I make a difference every day." They always appreciate hearing consumers' personal stories and learning how they have successfully made it through difficult times in their lives. Assisting people to stay at home is more than a "job duty," says one care manager. She describes her job as "an honor to be able to help people stay in their homes as long as possible." The care managers are here for you!





New Consumer Services Manager

We are pleased to introduce Denise O'Connell, our new Consumer Services Manager. Denise is a licensed clinical social worker and certified case manager. She began her new role in September 2008.

Denise comes to EIM with over 22 years of social work experience; 17 of those years spent in a medical and rehabilitation setting. She worked as a case manager for survivors of brain injury and stroke as well as with elderly and disabled adults in need of physical rehabilitation. Denise was also a clinical coordinator of a brain injury program and day treatment program. Denise has provided staff education over her career. She also has personal experience with in-home family care giving and family members with stroke and brain injury.

Denise shares the EIM mission and care management philosophy of equipping consumers with options about their care; protecting consumers' right to self direct; coordinating care while promoting quality of life; providing advocacy; and treating all with an attitude of respect and service.

Denise is currently working to develop in-house case management training, provide mentoring to the staff, and further develop program policy. Denise has found the Elder Independence of Maine/Seniors Plus staff to be caring, compassionate, and committed in their work with consumers as well as welcoming to her.

Denise is a proud Maine native and works out of the Bangor office.



Another option to find help to come into your home....

Finding staff to come into your home to help can sometimes be a challenge. In some parts of the state it can be especially hard to find staffing. We know that Hancock, York and Cumberland counties have the highest rates of staffing needs, for instance. Sometimes, consumers would prefer to have family or a friend take care of their needs. You may want to hire your own staff. If so, the Family Provider Service Option might work for you.

What is the Family Provider Service Option (FPSO)? This Option is open to consumers served by EIM under any one of the programs EIM oversees. The Option allows an eligible consumer or family member to become an Employer and hire Personal Support Services staff.

Who can be a FPSO Employer? A consumer served under an EIM program or a family member can act as the FPSO Employer after meeting certain requirements. Training is provided. EIM staff provide training. There are a variety of options available for training and the EIM staff will work with you to choose the method that works best for you. There are some related costs to choosing this Option.

What do current consumers who have chosen this Option have to say about it?

“This option works for me because I am able to schedule my worker when **I** need her. EIM has made it very user friendly. Whenever I call EIM I can depend on someone getting back to me no matter what. I have dealt with every kind of agency and this is the best-- by far.”

– EIM Consumer

“FPSO works for me because I am able to schedule help when I need it. I am always having needs that vary day to day, I am able to plan accordingly. I schedule for **ME** not the other way around!”

– EIM Consumer

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FPSO Continued

This Option “works wonderfully for me and my mom. One of the most important pieces is finding the right caregiver. I have the control to do this and I do not have to count on anyone else. I know who my mom will respond to best and I can pick and choose the right people. My mom responds extremely well to consistency and we are able to provide this. The people at EIM are really great to work with and provide all the help and expertise that anyone could ask for in the start-up and after you have set up your agency.”

Who do I call at EIM to say I’m interested? Contact your EIM Care Manager or the EIM Provider Relations department at 1-888-234-3920, ext: 3315.



Your Home Heating Rights

Sarah Peterson, Esq., Legal Services for the Elderly

With talk of fuel costs skyrocketing, our thoughts turn to the daunting prospects of home heating. There are many questions as Mainers try to pay for oil and utilities, and as we try to make sure that our services get delivered.

But what if you run low on money when needing fuel? What if you or a loved one gets sick and can’t pay the utility bills? What if your oil carrier is threatening not to deliver to your home? The Maine Attorney General’s Office has issued Home Heating Rules, and published the Consumer Law Guide, which is an excellent resource that describes how Maine law will help protect you during the winter heating season, which runs from October 15th to April 30th. You may call the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division at 800-436-2131 or visit their website at http://maine.gov/ag/consumer/consumer_law_guide.shtml .

If you need help paying your home heating bills this winter, please call the nearest Community Action Agency to see whether you qualify for assistance, or call the Maine State Housing Authority at 1-800-452-4668.

If you have legal concerns and would like to consult with an attorney, please call the Legal Services for the Elderly Helpline at 1-800-750-5353. Legal Services for the Elderly provides free and confidential legal advice to Maine residents age 60 and over.



Your Release of Information Protects your Privacy

- Raymond Gagnon, Privacy Officer

Elder Independence of Maine values your privacy. We require that you have a valid release of information on file with us at all times. Your release of information instructs us on who we can share your health care information with. As Privacy Officer it is my responsibility to ensure that your health information is not released to anyone without your permission. What follows are some basic questions and answers regarding releases of information. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your records or your release of information do not hesitate to call me at 1-888-234-3920. I hope that this information is useful to you!

Are there different kinds of releases of information?

Yes, Elder Independence of Maine has two types of releases of information.

1. Release/Authorization to Disclose or Obtain Protected Health Information
2. Release/Authorization to Disclose or Obtain Protected Diagnosis Information

What is the difference between the two?

1. The Release/Authorization to Disclose or Obtain Protected Health Information gives us permission to get and share information about you with the exception of information regarding HIV/AIDS, Mental Health or Substance Abuse with those you have listed on your release of information. The release is valid one year from the date you sign it.

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Your Privacy Continued

2. The Release/Authorization to Disclose or Obtain Protected Diagnosis Information gives us permission to get and share information regarding HIV/AIDS, Mental Health or Substance Abuse with those you have listed on your release of information. You must give us specific permission to share information about these diagnoses. A release for HIV/AIDS or Mental Health is valid one year from the date you sign it. A release for Substance Abuse is valid for six months from the date that you sign it.

If I signed a release of information with Goold Health Systems when I had my assessment why is Elder Independence of Maine sending me a new one to sign?

- ◆ If we send you a new release of information to sign it is because while speaking with you we have identified that there is one or more important people not on your original release of information completed by Goold Health Systems.
- ◆ You may have a protected diagnosis. Elder Independence of Maine requires that you sign a specific release of information for a protected diagnosis.

Who can sign my release of information?

- ◆ You, your guardian or active power of attorney may sign your release of information.

Can my Care Manager share information with others if I give my verbal permission?

- ◆ Yes, your Care Manager may share information with your verbal permission. They will document your permission in your consumer record and then follow up by sending you a release of information to sign within 24 business hours.

How do I change my release of information?

- ◆ It's easy to change! Just call your Care Manager and ask to have a new one sent to you with your changes. Sign it and return it in the self-addressed envelope.



Scam Proof!

Every day it seems, you hear of a new scam, someone trying to get your personal information and ultimately your money. They try everything: they're friendly or they offer to come visit you or they sound official or they sound urgent or they send notices in official looking envelopes, ...

You have good trusting relationships with businesses, banks, agencies – and they should continue. It's those people you've not heard of before, or people posing as your trusted business people that are the problem.

So here are some basic rules for scam-proofing.

Be very, very skeptical. Of everyone, everything, on the phone, in the mail, in person, in an e-mail. No more being nice and trusting.

Don't give personal information over the phone. The IRS, Social Security, the State of Maine...will never call you on the phone unless you've called them first. They will correspond with you by mail only. So if someone calls you on the phone, saying they're a Social Security representative - they're NOT. If you wonder, hang up and call the Social Security office or your bank or the State of Maine and ask them about it first.

Don't let anyone in your house *unless you invite them.* “We're in your area”, “I'd like to talk with you in person at home”, or ringing the doorbell – are all signs of scams. Do not let anyone in your house unless you call them and make an appointment yourself.

Don't send money. If someone asks you to send money – “You've won this marvelous prize, just send us money for shipping and handling.” – it's a scam Do not send anyone money to get anything.

Please see Scam Proof on page 11

Scam Proof Continued

Deadlines are deadly. Urgency is one of their favorite tricks. “You must...” are two words that you should question. Deadlines are often ones they’ve made up and it’s a way to pressure you and make you give them information before you have time to think it through. Nothing is so urgent you have to give an answer when they call. One trick of the trade – tell them you’re busy right now, and ask for their number to call them back. They’ll most likely hang up – a true test of a scammer! Give yourself time!

Don’t do anything. Be very, very skeptical of everything. And how do you figure it out? If you’re not absolutely, positively sure, **don’t do anything.** Instead, call SeniorsPlus, the local police, the Attorney General’s office, and check it out before you give anyone any answers.

Got those numbers?

Area Agency on Aging – 1-877-353-3771

Your Local Police Station

The Maine Attorney General’s Office –1-800-436-2131

Connie Jones, Director of Community Services,
SeniorsPlus

Assistance Available Through Your Area Agency on Aging

Did you know that additional services and resources are available through your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA)? There are five AAAs throughout the state of Maine. Services such as meals on wheels, caregiver respite, support groups, and Medicare D insurance enrollment assistance may be available. Give them a call today!

For contact information or to be connected to your Area Agency on Aging’s website, go to EIM’s website link or call toll free, **1-877-353-3771** and you will be connected to the Area Agency on Aging in your Area!

Your Input is Important to Us!

Dear Elder Independence of Maine Consumer:

Elder Independence of Maine is interested in what you have to say about the services you receive from us. Our job as care managers is to help ensure that you receive your home care services in order to help you stay as independent as possible at home. Our care managers work with you to help coordinate your home care services.

We send out a survey each year to all of our consumers but we would like to hear from you any time of the year.

I write to invite you to participate. How? Would you or your family member like to give your input on the services we provide? Maybe you have an idea of how services could work better. Maybe you would like to learn more about how we work. If so, you may participate in a number of ways:

- ◆ Attend meetings every three months (by phone or in person) and be a part of the EIM Quality Review Committee **OR**
- ◆ Be available by phone for input on specific projects **OR**
- ◆ You tell us how you can be available and how we can make best use of your time and input

We want to learn more about your experience being a consumer of our services. If you are interested, please contact Tammy Thatcher at EIM at 1-888-234-3920, extension 3353 or by e-mail at tthatcher@elderindependence.org. She will take your name and contact information and ask how you want to participate.

Thank you for considering,
Sharon Foerster, Director