



OTSEGO COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING



Submitted by
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RESEARCH &
VOLUNTEER
COORDINATOR

*We Help.
We Care*

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PAMELA CARLSON, RN
OCCOA MEDICAL
RESOURCES COORDINATOR

Your Starting Point for OCCOA Services is Pamela Carlson, RN

One of the scariest things for all of us as we age is to risk losing our ability to live independently in our homes. Luckily for the residents of Otsego County, the OCCOA (Otsego County Commission on Aging) is here to help. The agency's very mission is promoting the independence and well-being of the older adults of Otsego County and supporting caregivers. The OCCOA provides over 45 programs, activities, and services, including a Home-Delivered Meal Program, In-Home Service Program, and the Otsego Haus, an adult day services program. But how best to access them?

OCCOA Executive Director Dona Wishart notes that a would-be client's starting point for initiating services is with Pamela Carlson, RN. Wishart shares, "Pamela is the agency's Medical Resource Program coordinator and a registered nurse. We are very fortunate. Not every agency, like ours, has a registered nurse on staff. Pamela brings her medical expertise to our agency and helps with the integration of community services and medical care for our clients. She conducts all of the initial client assessments, oversees training for our staff, and is a resource for our Otsego Haus staff and clients."

Through its In-Home Service Program, the OCCOA provides such services as light housekeeping, laundry, shopping, meal preparation, and maintaining a safe environment. Personal care services, such as assistance with showers, hair care, and dressing, are available. Respite care is available for caregivers in need of it. The OCCOA also offers a Home-Delivered Meal Program, made possible through partnerships with Gaylord Community Schools, the Otsego County Bus System, and the Area Agency on Aging Region 9.

In order to qualify for these services, clients need to be 60 years of age or older and residents of Otsego County. They also need to have a reason that makes performing their own homemaking, personal care, or meal preparation difficult without help. Reasons may include physical, cognitive, or emotional challenges.

Pamela Carlson outlines, "Each person must have an initial assessment in order to be scheduled to receive services." (She notes one exception; home-delivered meals can be started prior to the initial assessment on the next delivery day following a request.) "During this assessment, I make sure they are eligible to receive services. I talk to them about their unmet needs and explain the agency's available services that may help." She adds, "I come to their home for the assessment to make it easy and comfortable for them."

Once the assessment is completed and a client is qualified for services, Carlson develops a care plan. The client's commitment to the plan is important. After the initial assessment, service may begin within one to two weeks.

Carlson notes, "Most of the Older American Act (OAA) funded in-home services and the home-delivered meals are made available to clients on a donation basis. No one is turned away because they cannot afford to make a donation, and all donations are kept confidential. She adds, "If a client has needs that are above and beyond the help that our agency is able to provide through OAA services, I will arrange for additional paid services through the OCCOA's Fee-for-Service Program, or do my best to assist the client in obtaining a referral to meet their needs."

Carlson reflects on the joy she finds in her work, noting, "Most people have a goal of remaining in their homes as long as possible as they age. Our agency is here to help them do so as long as it is safely possible. It brings great meaning to my life to help them to achieve this goal."

Carlson shares that once a client has been approved for in-home, personal care, and/or respite services, Marcie May, the OCCOA In-Home Service Program coordinator, and her team work hard to schedule and provide quality services. May's team includes In-Home Service Program Administrative Assistant Sheila Markle, and fifteen service providers.

"We all support one another, working as a team," Carlson reflects. "Marcie does the required twice-a-year reassessments with the assistance of Service Provider Shannon Gapinski. Sheila takes phone calls and schedules clients for services and is assisted by Service Provider Theresa Ross. Theresa also schedules Marcie and Shannon's reassessments and helps with files."

Marcie May notes that her goal is to be available to clients, staff, and agency. "I am doing reassessments with the clients every six months, and having daily communications by phone, as needed." She shares, "We work very hard as an administrative team, starting with the initial assessment, to get to know the client and to meet their needs. We also try very hard to match clients with service providers by looking at the personalities and needs of the clients." She adds, "I feel like we have the best administrative team. They have passion for their work and dedication to the clients, to each other, and to the agency."

Making up the rest of the team are the agency's service providers. May highlights, "Ten of our fifteen service providers are CNAs [Certified Nursing Assistants]. Four more are scheduled to earn their certifications this fall." She emphasizes, "We have the best and most dedicated service providers. Not only are they extremely hard workers, but they have the most beautiful hearts. They are always looking at how we can best serve our clients."

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE AGENCY'S IN-HOME SERVICES, PERSONAL CARE SERVICES, RESPITE SERVICES, OR HOME-DELIVERED MEALS, PLEASE CONTACT THE IN-HOME SERVICE DEPARTMENT AT (989) 705-2574 OR VISIT THE OCCOA'S WEBSITE AT WWW.OTSEGOCOUNTYCOA.ORG



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