



Resourceful Thinking

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VETERAN'S PROGRAM IN DECEMBER

VETERAN'S PROGRAM FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

There are continuing education changes for licensed social workers in West Virginia that will affect the next renewal cycle. Beginning July 1, 2017, all licensed social workers must ensure at least two of the forty contact hours shall be in mental health conditions specific to veterans and family members of veterans.

Bethany College, Valley Hospice and Altenheim Resource & Referral Services will be collaborating to offer a FREE program on veteran's issues on Friday, December 8 from 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm. Lunch will be provided. Sign in at noon and lunch will be provided from 12:00 noon – 1:00 pm.

Helping Veterans and Their Families Process Their War Experience will be held at Liza's Place (Valley Hospice's Care Center South), off Pogue's Run, Wheeling WV with special guest presenter John Looney, LICSW, Veteran's Outreach Services. Two Continuing Education Credit hours for social workers will be offered through Bethany College (490052). The program will meet the new WVBSW requirements.

Pre-registration is required. Call us at 304 243-0996 for information or to reserve your seat.

SUBSTANCE USE AND OLDER ADULTS

Older adults may be impacted by substance abuse for several reasons. They may be empty nesters: children have grown up and left home. Other life changes include giving up a job or giving up a home to move to a smaller, more manageable residence. We may lose friends due to relocation or death. Physical health fails. A partner of many years gets ill or dies. The very real difficulties of aging can easily pile up and become

overwhelming. Or a person may have had a problem for a long time that has continued to get worse over the years. Perhaps chronic pain has gotten worse and other conditions may have worsened the pain.

Aging brings on many changes in our lives. Health, lifestyle, family obligations, work roles and sources of support change as we age. Aging can also bring physical pain, stress, loneliness and loss of mobility and independence.

We need to be aware that the signs of alcoholism and drug dependence are different in older adults than in younger people. Abuse among older people is often hidden, overlooked and misdiagnosed.

However, there are some signs that may indicate a drinking or drug problem, such as:

- *Solitary or secretive drinking.
- *A ritual of drinking before, with, or after dinner.
- *A loss of interest in hobbies or pleasurable activities.
- *Drinking in spite of warning labels on prescription drugs.
- *Immediate and frequent use of tranquilizers.
- *Slurred speech, empty liquor and beer bottles, smell of alcohol on breath, change in personal appearance.
- *Chronic and unsupported health complaints.
- *Hostility or depression.
- *Memory loss and confusion.

Substance abuse is harmful for all age groups but it is especially harmful for older adults. The impact of alcohol- and drug-related injuries is much more severe, the risk of harmful medication interactions is much greater, and the general physical effects of alcohol and drugs are more debilitating.

We need to be aware that substance use / abuse can have serious consequences. Alcohol and/or medications may have sedating effects which can lead to falls. Falls are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries for older Americans. Falls threaten seniors' safety and independence and generate enormous economic and personal costs.

Did you know?

*There are 2.5 million older adults with an alcohol or drug problem.

*Six to eleven percent of elderly hospital admissions are a result of alcohol or drug problems — 14 percent of elderly emergency room admissions, and 20 percent of elderly psychiatric hospital admissions.

*Widowers over the age of 75 have the highest rate of alcoholism in the U.S.

*Nearly 50 percent of nursing home residents have alcohol related problems.

*Older adults are hospitalized as often for alcoholic related problems as for heart attacks.

*Nearly 17 million prescriptions for tranquilizers are prescribed for older adults each year. Benzodiazepines, a type of tranquilizing drug, are the most commonly misused and abused prescription medications.

*Alcohol and drug problems, particularly prescription drug abuse, among older adults are among the fastest growing health problems facing the country.

What about older adults and prescription medications? Although people 65 years of age and older comprise only 13% of the population, they account for almost 30% of all medications prescribed in the United States.

As a result, older adults are at significant risk for prescription drug abuse and addiction. In addition to prescription medications, many older adults also use over-the-counter (OTC) medicines and dietary supplements, including sharing them with friends. Due to increased rate of illness, changes in the body's capacity to process medications, and the potential for drug interactions, older adults are more likely to experience

Persons aged 65 years and older comprise only 13 percent of the population, yet account for more than one-third of total outpatient spending on prescription medications in the United States. Older patients are more likely to be prescribed long-term and multiple prescriptions, and some experience cognitive decline, which

could lead to improper use of medications. Alternatively, those on a fixed income may abuse another person's remaining medication to save money.

[Sources: National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Inc; Alcohol, Drug Dependence & Seniors; www.ncadd.org; National Council on Aging, Falls Prevention Facts, www.ncoa.org]

HOLIDAY ENERGY SAVINGS

Our colleague Andrew Tinkham of the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel recently shared a fact sheet about holiday energy savings. Here are a few tips to help with your holiday energy use.

For your refrigerator, clean the coils so that the compressor doesn't have to work as hard. You will also want to watch how often you open the refrigerator door to keep the cold air in.

Your hot water tank can be turned down to 120 degrees. Higher temperatures cause excess heat loss from the tank, and lower temperatures could cause bacteria build-up. Make sure your hot water heater is working efficiently. Also, make sure to repair leaky faucets, and install energy efficient shower heads.

With your heating system, you can turn down your thermostat by 7 – 10 degrees when you are away from home. Seal air leaks around doors and weatherize windows to help reduce heat loss. Replace furnace filters every 1 – 3 months as recommended in your owners' manual.

Consider using LED or DVL bulbs instead of incandescent bulbs for holiday and year round lighting. When shopping for bulbs, look for lumens not watts. Lumens measure the actual brightness of the bulb and watts measure the power a bulb uses.

Avoid 'vampire' power which is the electricity that electronics continue to use when the power is turned off. When practical, unplug all electronics that have a standby mode.

To learn more about how you can make simple changes to lower your utility bills, go to www.occ.ohio.gov.

[Source: Holiday Smart Energy Living, Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel]

OLDER ADULT EXPO – FORMERLY THE CAREGIVER SUPPORT FAIR

Our Older Adult Expo (formerly the Caregiver Support Fair) will be held on the first Tuesday of May from 10am – 3pm at the Ohio Valley Mall. Our culture of aging is changing. Our attitudes are changing about how we age. We hope to add some diversity

to the event to represent those changes. We have decided that the time has come to change the name of our event and broaden the focus. We will still include the exhibits that have made our event such a success, and will have plenty of info on caregiving resources and services for older adults. We also hope to include more information on activities and other services. The steering committee is now meeting. If you'd like to help, contact me for meeting dates.

ADULT SERVICE GROUPS

Adult Service groups meet around our area. The purpose of these groups is to provide an educational and networking opportunity for local professionals who serve adults in our WV – OH area. Groups meet in Belmont County, Guernsey County and Jefferson County in Ohio, Marshall County and Monongalia County in WV. Call me for dates and contact information.

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS

There are several support groups in the area that focus on different needs. Call Ann at 304 243-0996 for information on groups that include Alzheimer's disease, Lewy Body disease, Grief & Loss, and Mental Health.

SYMPATHY

We would like to offer our sympathy to the family of Regina Mayolo who for many years worked with WVU's Center for Excellence in Disabilities and the WV Assistive Technologies program. Regina died on October 12. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family.

I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who sent prayers and positive thoughts on the death of my mother Jennie Lee Sweeney. Mom volunteered with Altenheim Resource Services for many years. She died on October 25.

CAN WE HELP YOU?

Internet searches have become our way of gathering information. But – are the websites reliable? Is the information accurate? Do the services meet YOUR needs? Are helpful suggestions offered? (One service told a caregiver to "check the Yellow Pages" for the information she needed and offered the Yellow Pages website as a solution!)

Let us help. We serve anyone in need of assistance regardless of location, age or income.

Altenheim Resource & Referral Services has been helping older adults, caregivers and professionals locate services and learn about aging issues for over 22 years.

Consultation, information, and referrals are provided without charge and remain confidential. If we are unavailable and you need to leave a message, our answering system is easy – just speak after the beep!

We also

*offer programs that are free and open to the public

*offer workshops with Continuing Education Credit for social workers and nurses

*offer presentations to your group

Feel free to call us at 304 243-0996, email Ann at akoegler@frontier.com or akoegler1995@gmail.com or contact us through our web site at www.altenheimcommunity.com. We'd be happy to help you!

HOLIDAY HOURS

Our office will be closed on Thursday, November 23 and Friday, November 24.

We will also be closed on Monday, December 25 and Monday, January 1, 2018.

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Let us be
Your Gateway to Care for Older Adults!

Hours:
Monday – Friday
8am – 4pm

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