

INFO-LINK Awarded Second National Accreditation



The Clearfield County Area Agency on Aging, Inc. recently received national AIRS accreditation for its INFO-LINK program. Staff working with the program, LeAnn Sedgwick, INFO-LINK Information & Referral Specialist, (left) and Debbie Liadis, CCAAA Director of Community Services, (center) presented the recognition plaque to John Kordish, CCAAA Executive Director (right).

The Clearfield County Area Agency on Aging, Inc. (CCAAA) is pleased to announce the national re-accreditation of their INFO-LINK program from the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS). The notification was received March 15. INFO-LINK continues to be the only nationally accredited information and referral program in Pennsylvania.

INFO-LINK is a comprehensive storage bank of accurate, current information on health and human services and programs in Clearfield County and surrounding areas that anyone can access without having to make numerous telephone calls.

Every five years, those programs accredited by AIRS must go through the re-

accreditation process. This tedious and strenuous process assures the public that the program meets all the national and international standards and is providing comprehensive and accurate information.

The AIRS accreditation process consists of two phases. During the first phase, local organizations, CCAAA Board of Directors, Advisory Council, and staff were anonymously surveyed about the INFO-LINK program and its performance. In addition, extensive documentation in relation to the national/international standards had to be submitted to and reviewed by a national AIRS committee.

The second phase of the process included a site visit by AIRS reviewers. Once these reviewers were satisfied that INFO-LINK was meeting all the standards, the accreditation is awarded. Staff will be attending the AIRS conference on May 26 in Rochester, New York, to receive public recognition for their successful accreditation.

Debbie Liadis, CCAAA Director of Community Services who oversees the INFO-LINK program, commented, "This is a rigorous and tedious process and these standards that were met are the same standards that large city and regional call centers such as Los Angeles, California or Dallas, Texas must meet."

In addition to its accreditation, both Mrs. Liadis and LeAnn Sedgwick, Information and Referral Specialist, are AIRS Certified Information and Referral Specialists. LeAnn maintains the INFO-LINK computerized database of resources and programs and is also an AIRS Certified Resource Specialist.

The INFO-LINK program, which is in operation Monday-Friday, 8AM-4PM, contains information on over 1,300 resources/programs in Clearfield County and surrounding areas. During non-business hours, callers experiencing a mental health crisis are referred to the county's crisis hotline while others may leave a message and these calls are addressed the following day.

The program is an outreach effort of the Clearfield County Area Agency on Aging, Inc. According to Clearfield County AAA Executive Director John Kordish, every AAA in Pennsylvania is required by the Older Americans Act to have information and assistance services for older residents and their families. When the CCAAA converted to a computerized database, they realized many calls received were regarding non-elderly inquiries. "Because we are a human service agency that is committed to the community, we did not want to turn those individuals away who were in need of human services and didn't know who to contact regardless if the inquiry was for an elderly service or not. As the INFO-LINK program advanced and became more sophisticated, we became committed to offer this as a community outreach program," said Kordish.

INFO-LINK, which first started gathering information in 1990 and became fully operational in 1995, provides assistance to individuals and organizations. To insure that their information is accurate and up-to-date, updates are mailed once a year to each resource in the database. New service organizations complete an intake form before they are entered.

INFO-LINK can be reached at 765-5014 or 1-800-494-5678. Persons with questions regarding this program or other CCAAA programs may contact the Clearfield County Area Agency on Aging, Inc. at 814-765-2696 or 1-800-225-8571.