

## **INFO-LINK Accreditation as Area Resource Connection**

Clearfield County's main information and referral service, known as INFO-LINK, is one step closer in preparing residents for the implementation of a possible nationwide 211 system and is the only accredited program in Pennsylvania. INFO-LINK, which just received its national accreditation from the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS), is a comprehensive storage bank of accurate, current information for the area that anyone can access without having to make numerous telephone calls to get the right answer.

The AIRS accreditation process consisted of two phases. In Phase One, INFO-LINK was required to submit an application, secure input from service organizations in the community as well as the Area Agency on Aging staff and Governing Board, and provide documentation supporting compliance with all national standards for Information & Referral programs. Due to the amount of documentation required, Phase One took several years to complete. Phase Two, the On-Site Review, took place on November 21, 2003, with a team of experts spending two days witnessing the operation. Notification was received on December 19, 2003 that INFO-LINK had successfully completed the accreditation process.

Whether you're an individual looking to find someone to care for an Alzheimer's parent, a single mother who receives a utility shut-down notice and needs funds to keep her service going or a teenager calling for information about a friend abusing alcohol, INFO-LINK is the one stop shop. The INFO-LINK program, which is in operation Monday-Friday, 8AM-4PM, contains over 2,100 resources in Clearfield County and surrounding areas that provide services and programs for individuals of all ages. Calls during off-times are answered through an answering service.

The program is an outreach effort of the Clearfield County Area Agency on Aging (CCAAA). According to Clearfield County AAA Executive Director John Kordish, every AAA in Pennsylvania is required by law to have information and referral services for older residents and their families. What the Clearfield County AAA realized when it changed over to a computerized database was the amount of calls 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 several services to individuals and organizations. It can produce lists, labels or rolodex cards in groupings, such as all the personal care homes in Clearfield County. Information requested by private individuals is done free of charge. However, there is a small fee for organizations.

To insure that the information is accurate and up-to-date, updates are mailed once a year to each resource in the database. New organizations complete an intake form before they are entered

into the database. There is an inclusion/exclusion policy in place that regulates if and when a new service is added.

Debbie Liadis, CCAAA Community and Services Supervisor, commented on the accreditation process. “We are very excited to be the first information and referral service to be accredited in Pennsylvania. It was a long and tedious process. The accreditation means we have met the national standards and can ensure we are providing a quality information and referral service for Clearfield County and the surrounding areas,” said Liadis.

To receive information and referral services call INFO-LINK at 1-800-494-5678.