

Medication Assistance Program
Office of Rural Health, DHHS

Summary Report for End of First Program Year

I. Introduction

The Office of Research, Demonstrations and Rural Health Development (ORDRHD) serves as technical consultant to the Medication Assistance Program project under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Health & Wellness Trust Fund Commission. Under the terms of the MOU, ORDRHD has fulfilled a range of functions for the Commission and the MAP project over the first year of the program.

Prior to the approval of the initial round of grantees in October 2002, ORDRHD provided consultation and support in developing the Request for Proposal, and in screening and selection of 24 grantees from among 61 applicants located across the state. Of those approved for funding, the 24 grantees represented 61 actual delivery sites for prescription assistance and medication management services.

Prescription Assistance involves helping citizens in applying for and obtaining free and low cost prescription drugs. Medication management encompasses the services of a pharmacist in evaluating patients' drug regimens.

This group of MAP service sites includes a cross-section of public and private not-for-profit organizations possessing a broad range of experience and skills in serving the health, and social service support needs of North Carolina's seniors and low income citizens. This diversity of organization types and experience presented an implementation challenge that ORDRHD has spent a significant amount of time in addressing. After assisting in the development of the grant agreements, ORDRHD held three major day to day and a half long orientations and operations trainings for all grantees. These trainings covered a full range of operational readiness activities. Standard forms and procedures were distributed and advice given on setting up the MAPs to meet the service requirements of the target populations.

ORDRHD developed the Medication Access and Review Program (MARP) software using funding provided by the Duke Foundation to the North Carolina Foundation for Advanced Health Programs. This software was developed and distributed free of charge to all 61 sites funded under Commission grants. It automates the eligibility determination and application completion process for nearly 100 manufacturers' free drug programs. MARP also allows pharmacists to efficiently and effectively conduct "brown bag" reviews that involve a careful review of the medications, risk factors, and medical history of patients. MARP allows the pharmacist to automatically check for adverse drug reactions as well as to price the drugs that are provided at free or reduced rates through the program.

In addition, ORDRHD has provided software training to all but one site at this point through day and a half intensive hands-on sessions. A total of 26 training sessions have

Summary Report for End of First Program Year (continued)

been done for 208 Prescription Assistance Coordinators and Pharmacists. A comprehensive user manual was also prepared and distributed to assist sites in using MARP. Users also receive technical support from ORDRHD by telephone from project staff. This includes assistance with downloading MARP, connectivity, and troubleshooting actual usage of the software. An updated version of the software is expected to be out by the end of 2003.

As a follow up to software training and as part of operational implementation, ORDRHD has conducted site visits throughout the state. Site visits involve on-site troubleshooting, training and technical assistance with local MAPs that last up to half a day. They have proven invaluable in providing hands-on assistance to the sites in using the software, and implementing their operations. Thus far ORDRHD has done over 60 site visits.

Monthly conference calls are held with all grantees. They are divided into four groups of 5-6 each for the purpose of these calls which allow them to update one another on their progress, get questions and concerns answered, discuss issues of common concern and hear about the statewide activities of the project.

ORDRHD working with its Senior Care enrollment contractor, ACS, Inc., has set up a process for identifying Senior Care enrollees who might benefit most from accessing the services of the Medication Assistance Programs. As part of the Senior Care enrollment process, applicants complete a "Medication and Health Questionnaire" on which they self report on risk factors that may predispose them for having medication related problems. Problems identified include adverse drug interactions, use of risky medications, and polypharmacy. Through this process over 4200 individuals have been identified and referred to the MAPs for follow up and evaluation of whom approximately 1500 have been seen on-site.

MAPs report monthly on total patients seen and services provided as a result of these efforts. In addition to the 1500 high risk referrals, they have reported serving over 3,000 other patients for some combination of prescription assistance in applying for the free and low cost drug programs, and medication management.