



New York StateWide Senior Action Council, Inc.
275 State Street, Albany, NY 12210 • (518) 436-1006 • Fax (518) 436-7642
www.nysenior.org

Budget Requests SFY 2019-20

Patients Rights Helpline: Calls related to health system changes, rights of dual eligibles (Medicare and Medicaid joint enrollees), the increased demographic of older New Yorkers, the use of observation status in hospitals, and the shortage of home care workers has created a heightened need for assistance. StateWide's Patient Rights Helpline originally was funded in SFY 1987-88 at \$180,000 annually. Funding was reduced during economic crises. While the program was in the SFY18-19 Executive budget for \$31,500 (in the Aid to Localities budget through the NYS Office for the Aging), an additional \$100,000 funding was added by the Legislature to ensure that the program is viable and meeting the needs of callers.

The additional resources have allowed *StateWide* to provide thorough, personalized assistance to the increasing amount of callers, to provide more community education throughout the state, to upgrade our web site, and to add staff to support the program, including opening a Buffalo office to supplement the work done in our Albany, Tompkins County and NYC offices.

Recommendation: Continue StateWide's Patient Rights Helpline funding of \$131,500 annually.

Managed Care Community Assistance Program (MCCAP): StateWide is one of six not for profit providers included with a line in the state budget to provide assistance to Medicare enrollees. StateWide's current funding is \$354,000 and was a specific line item in the SFY18-19 proposed Executive budget, and the Legislature concurred (in the Aid to Localities budget through the NYS Office for the Aging.) This funding enables StateWide's Counselors to assist older New Yorkers in: choosing the Medicare coverage that best meets their needs; with billing problems; with enrollment and benefit information on other initiatives

including the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage program (EPIC); and provides updates to the community on coverage issues. Counselors also provide enrollment assistance in the Medicare Savings Program (MSP) that gives low income Medicare enrollees premium relief and prescription drug assistance.

Additional resources are needed to increase outreach and provide enrollment assistance for the Medicare Savings Program. According to the Congressional Budget Office, failing to enroll in these programs costs these low-income New Yorkers, on average, \$5,200 every year in out-of-pocket expenses. Only 38% of eligible New Yorkers are receiving the benefit– far under the national average of 51%, making New York one of six states with the lowest enrollment.

Recommendation: Increase funding for the StateWide's MCCAP program by \$200,399 so that it could increase its capacity in reaching more underserved and hard to reach seniors who are not accessing all of the benefits programs for which they rightfully qualify.