

New York StateWide Senior Action Council

MEMBER UPDATE

WINTER 2021



Maria Alvarez

Please Join Our Campaign

\$50 for 50 Years

*Starting in January 2022
StateWide will be Celebrating
its Golden Anniversary!*

Over the past 50 Years our members have been:

Organizing Regional Chapters throughout
New York State

Attending Our Annual Conventions

Preparing and Voting on Annual State and
Federal Legislative Agendas

Keeping Up to Date with Our Bill Trackers

Making their Voices Heard at Grassroots Days

Meeting with our Local Elected Officials

Fighting for Patients Rights in Hospitals and
Institutions

Counseling Beneficiaries on Health Choices

Passing and Keeping the Elderly Pharmaceutical
Insurance Coverage alive

Passing the 1st Observation Status law in the
Country

Fighting for Increases in Senior Services
Throughout the State

In essence – for the last 50 years, StateWide Members have been fighting for the dignity and quality of life not only for themselves, but for generations to come.

This year, when you renew your membership, please consider making a contribution to our 50th Anniversary Campaign.

- If you are an Individual Member, \$20 for membership and \$30 for the 50th Anniversary Campaign = \$50.
- If you are a Lifetime Member, please consider giving \$50 to the 50th Anniversary Campaign

All donations are tax deductible.

Your generosity will help put us on a sure footing for the next phase of our group.

Happy Holidays!

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Medicare, Medicare Fraud and Patient's Rights Helpline 800-333-4374

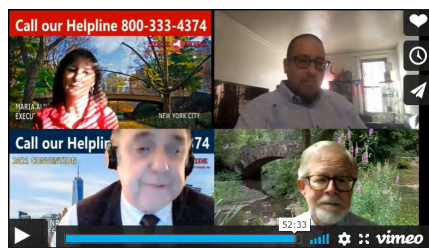
Adoption of the Public Policy Agenda

10/6/21 - StateWide's Public Policy Committee presided over the annual Convention session to determine the state & federal policy priorities for 2022. Changes to the documents, drafted by the Committee with input from the membership, were voted on by delegates representing each Chapter. Revised documents will appear on the Advocacy section of our website after the first of the year. Also available on our website, our state bill tracker has been updated showing new laws and pending bills of importance to older New Yorkers. Members without computer access who would like printed copies of the documents can request they be mailed by calling our office.

StateWide Convention (Oct. 12-14)

10/12/21 - Despite holding our Annual Convention virtually for the second year (we hope this is the last time we have to do so), our panels featured experts who didn't disappoint.

We were able to maintain the quality of presentations that our members have been accustomed to receiving over 50 years! We heard from US Senators Schumer & Gillibrand, the lead lobbyist from the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, and the Director for the Administration for Community Living's Office of Healthcare Information and Counseling. We rounded up our panels with the Assembly & Senate Chairs of the Committees on Health & Aging. Recordings are on our website www.nysenior.org.



Pictured (Top L to R): Maria Alvarez, Senator Rivera, Assemblymember Gottfried, Mario Henry;
Not pictured: Senator Rachel May, who also participated on this panel.

Listening Session

11/9/21 - StateWide provides access to our members and friends to important policymakers. When a consumer voice is needed, Statewide members show up with comments, testimony & their stories!



Pictured (Top L to R): Lowell Green, MaryDel Wypych, Maggie Sanchez, Charlie Battaglia, (Middle L to R:) Jean Stone, Kathleen Otte, Antonia Manuela, Anthony Jamrozy, (Bottom L to R:) Kim Swire, Rhonda Schwartz, Maria Alvarez, Doris Karpeh-Diaz

StateWide on the Move



11/1/2021 - Vicki Ellner testified on behalf of StateWide before the Assembly Health Committee on Medicaid program efficacy and

sustainability. Main points of the testimony included recommendations to end the use of austerity budgeting and the use of the Medicaid Global Cap, raising the Medicaid income level for persons who receive Medicare to 135% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), end the need for asset testing for Medicaid applicants, increase the income limits for the Medicare Savings Program to 200% FPL, repeal limitations on home care qualifications (yet to be implemented) to increase the look back period & the number of tasks needing assistance, provide a livable wage to the home care workforce, improve the use of care coordinators in managed care to ensure help with system navigation and denials, and to adopt the New York Health Act.



StateWide Welcomes New NYS Commissioner of Health Mary Bassett, MD

Governor Hochul announced the appointment of Dr. Mary Travis Bassett and StateWide could not be more thrilled to have our lifetime member steering the NYS Department of Health!

Dr. Bassett, daughter of esteemed members Priscilla and the late Emmett Bassett, is well aware of StateWide's mission and priorities to improve the lives of older New Yorkers. She has been a staunch supporter of the right to access quality health care and has helped us lead the charge for adoption of Improved Medicare for All, the New York Health Act.

With more than 30 years of experience in public health, Dr. Bassett has dedicated her career to advancing health equity. In 2020, as the Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Professor of the Practice of

Health and Human Rights at Harvard University, Dr. Bassett was our Convention keynote speaker. She addressed the important topic of how to reduce the impact of health, racial & economic disparities. Dr. Bassett formerly served as the Commissioner of the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

"I am humbled and honored to return to my home state of New York to lead the Department of Health at this pivotal time," incoming Health Commissioner Mary T. Bassett said.

"The pandemic underscored the importance of public health, while also revealing inequities driven by structural racism. As we move to end the pandemic, we have a unique opportunity to create a state that is more equitable for all New Yorkers. I look forward to working toward this with Governor Hochul and the team at the Department of Health."

StateWide and its members stand ready to assist Mary Bassett, MD as she takes on the many challenges facing her and the NYS Department of Health.



Pictured: Dr. Bassett (right) & Priscilla Bassett with Assemblymember Dick Gottfried at a New York Health Act Rally

Enrollment Periods

The Medicare Annual Open Enrollment ended **December 7th**, but that doesn't mean the only opportunity to change has ended. The Medicare Advantage Annual Open Enrollment is upon us, but there are also Special Enrollment Periods that allow an individual to change their insurance.

January 1st through March 31st of each year is Medicare Advantage Annual Open Enrollment Period for those who have existing Medicare Advantage Plans and would like to make a change. During this period, a change can be made to either Original Medicare with a Medicare Supplement and a Prescription Drug plan or another Medicare Advantage Plan. The change made goes into effect the first of the following month.

Special Enrollment Periods are circumstantial allowances that permit a change in coverage. For example, moving to another county or state, having a skilled nursing facility stay, or losing your current coverage.



Another way of gaining a Special Enrollment Period is being a member of NYS Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC). Just being a member of EPIC grants you a Special Enrollment Period to use at your discretion any time of the year. **Individuals can join NYS EPIC if they are a resident of NYS and are 65 or older**

with an annual income up to \$75,000 if single or \$100,000 if married.

Call a certified Outreach Counselor at New York StateWide Senior Action Council for a free and confidential appointment to discuss your situation. New York StateWide Senior Action Council can assist with Medicare questions, appeals and billing issues, Medicare Fraud, and Patient's Rights. Call an Outreach Counselor at 1-800-333-4374.

NEW TO MEDICARE?

You are first eligible to sign up for Medicare 3 months before you turn 65 during the Initial Enrollment Period



- **Apply for Medicare Parts A and B online at Social Security** (www.ssa.gov) or call 1-800-772-1213.
- If you enroll during the 3 months preceding your Birthday month, Medicare will start the *1st day of the month of your Birthday*
- If you have questions about enrollment, our certified counselors can walk you through the basics. **We provide FREE confidential and unbiased information about Medicare options. Call us at 1-800-333-4374, or visit us online at www.nysenior.org.**

Federal Update

As we go to press, the President has signed the Infrastructure bill that will bring much needed resources to New York State & will also improve availability of high speed internet services. Congress and the White House are completing negotiations on the “social infrastructure bill” otherwise known as Build Back Better. Stay tuned to StateWide for updates on what is included in the final version. We expect the framework to include three important gains for older residents.

1. Hearing Benefits

The proposal invests \$89 billion in a new Medicare benefit for hearing care. Beginning January 1, 2023, the bill allows for:

- Qualified audiologists to deliver aural rehabilitation and treatment services under Medicare.
- Qualified hearing aid professionals to deliver hearing assessment services.
- Coverage of prescribed hearing aids under Medicare Part B for individuals with severe or profound hearing loss in one or both ears, once every five years.

2. Lowering the Cost of Prescription Drugs

- Limits the out of pocket costs of life-saving insulin at \$35 per month. This change would apply to both Medicare enrollees and to workers and families on commercial insurance.
- Some drug prices in Medicare Part D and Part



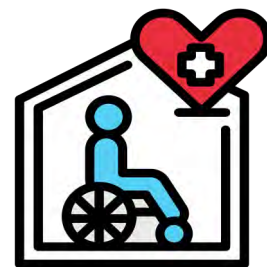
B will be negotiated rather than unilaterally decided by the drug corporations, lowering prices on a small number of high cost prescription medicines by 2025.

- Stops drug corporations from raising the price of prescription medicines faster than inflation by penalizing companies that price gouge.
- Creating a new cap on out of pocket prescription drug costs in Medicare so that enrollees no longer would pay an unlimited amount for their medicines.

3. Medicaid

The Home and Community Based Services proposal includes \$150 billion to:

- Expand access to affordable home care for older adults and those with disabilities.
- Address the existing backlog of applicants waiting for services.
- Improve wages and working conditions to support recruitment and retention of home care workers.



The Medicaid policy is also changed to:

- Improve transition care from institutional settings to the community for seniors and people with disabilities.
- Make the successful Money Follows the Person program permanent.
- Make permanent the spousal impoverishment protection.



StateWide Legislative Action Team

As we enter our 50th year, StateWide will be strengthening our Grassroots Advocacy

Campaign to Improve the lives of seniors and families in New York State.

As such, we will be conducting an intensive training that will cover:

- The History & Accomplishments of StateWide
- Organizing in Your Community
- Techniques for Effective Local Advocacy
- Re-seeding our Grassroots Efforts for the Future

The meetings will take place every 3rd Thursday of the Month at 3PM from January - June 2022.

Those who complete the course will be recognized at our 50th Anniversary Celebration.

Requirements: Participants must be members in good standing and commit to attending all 6 sessions.

Our first meeting will be on Jan 20 at 3:00 PM:

- **Guest Speaker: Mike Burgess**, former SW Executive Director, former NYS Office for the Aging Director
- **Meeting Topic: Protecting & Improving the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) program**

All meetings are **via ZOOM** using a computer or phone. To register for the meeting, visit **www.nysenior.org**, or call our Helpline at **800-333-4374**.

All meetings will be hosted by StateWide's Public Policy Committee

ACTION ALERT

Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC):

There is important legislation before the state government, and we urge you to call your elected representatives in support.

Senate Bill S 4603 and Assembly Bill A 5422 calls for the expansion of EPIC, a program that helps keep prescription drug co-pays affordable.

- The bill keeps the application a simple process
- ensures that a cost-of-living benefit change does not throw someone off the program
- allows Medicare enrollees under age 65 to apply.

This is legislation StateWide wrote after hearing about problems on our Help Line.

We should all remember the EPIC program was created by StateWide's advocacy efforts.



We would like you to:

- **Call your State Senators at 518-455-2800 and**
- **Assembly members at 518-455-4100**

Ask them to support the legislation by co-sponsoring the legislation.

Nursing Home Visitation Reopens

Throughout the pandemic, there have been restrictions on visitors at nursing homes. Early on, all visitation was closed. The doors opened briefly, but would be closed again when any staff or residents tested positive for COVID-19. Often this went on for months while infections spread in the nursing home. StateWide's Patient Rights Helpline fielded questions on how to visit under the compassionate care exception and heard reports of poor care and residents whose conditions had rapidly degraded. Isolation created negative health consequences for many, and low staffing resulted in losses of mobility, weight, teeth and much more.

StateWide has led the way on advocacy – for both individuals by coaching them on how to uphold their rights, and for all New Yorkers through systems advocacy.

- We raised the problems due to lack of visitation with the NYS Long Term Care Ombudsman, the Department of Health, and legislators.
- We successfully advocated for a new law that allowed personal care/essential visitors. Unfortunately, when Governor Cuomo ended the declaration of pandemic disaster this law no longer was in effect – even though visitation restrictions were still in place.
- We sought a fix to the legislation to say that visitation is always allowed – and that has been introduced and is pending.

- We created an ongoing set of meetings - our Virtual Resident Family Action Council - to inform participants about laws that protect resident rights and, more importantly, to hear firsthand about problems they were encountering.
- We brought those concerns directly to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), appealing to the staff that oversee quality and surveillance.



Now we are pleased to announce that on November 12, CMS heeded our calls for action and released a directive that nursing homes

must be open to visitors. We followed up to urge the NYS Department of Health to comply and a day later, NYS informed nursing homes that they must comply with the CMS directive.

The doors are open – but we must continue to ask you to monitor care and report your concerns to us. We will continue to advocate for policy changes that improve nursing home quality of care, including new staffing rules and a requirement that facilities invest in direct care – both laws go into effect January 1, 2022.

Virtual Resident Family Action Council Meetings

January 24, 10 AM: How Monitoring of Nursing Homes are Carried Out

March 21, 10 AM: Transfer & Discharge Rights

To Register: Visit www.nysenior.org

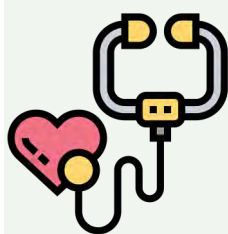
Cardiovascular Genetic Testing Fraud - How to Protect Yourself

The latest genetic testing fraud trend focuses on cardiovascular genetic testing. Scammers are offering Medicare beneficiaries cheek swabs for genetic testing to obtain their Medicare information for fraudulent billing purposes or possibly medical identity theft.



Examples of Cardiovascular Genetic Testing Fraud:

- A company offers you **“free” testing** without a treating physician’s order and then bills Medicare.
- A company using **“telemedicine”** to offer testing to you over the phone & arranging for a **“teledoc”** to order the tests.
- **Billing Medicare** for a broad range of cardiac genetic tests that you **did not request or receive**.
- A company calls you stating your **doctor or cardiologist requested that you have the testing done and they will send you a testing kit**.



Always consult with your primary care doctor before agreeing to tests. If the test is denied by Medicare, you may be responsible for the entire cost of the test.

The average cost is \$9,000 to \$11,000.

What Can You Do to Stop It?

- **Be sure your doctor has assessed your condition.** Although Medicare covers many genetic tests to detect heart disease, **it is not a test to predict or screen for cardiovascular disease.**
- Do not give out your personal information to someone calling claiming your **cardiologist has requested the testing.**
- Do not give out your personal information or **accept screening services** from someone **at a community event, a local fair, a farmers’ market, a parking lot, or any other event.**
- **Always read your Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) or Explanation of Benefits (EOB).** The words **“gene analysis,” “molecular pathology,” or “laboratory”** may indicate questionable genetic testing has occurred.
- If you received a **cardiovascular genetic testing kit** or test that was not medically necessary, report your concerns about billing errors or possible fraud and abuse to your local SMP.



Report it!

Call the NYS Senior Medicare Patrol at 800-333-4374 to report suspected fraud or abuse or with any questions about genetic testing fraud.

Run 4 All in Cortland County



10/21/2021 - StateWide and our wonderful Cortland County partners Access to Independence of Cortland County, the Cortland County Family YMCA, the JM Murray Center, and the SUNY Cortland Student Government Association hosted the first annual "Run For All" 5K and 1 Mile Walk. This race was focused on being accessible for the whole community and we are already planning next year's event!

Community Telehealth Access Project (CTAP) Update

- 11/10/2021 - Tompkins Rotary Club awarded a \$1,000 grant to the CNY Health Access Task Force in partnership with St. John's Community Shelter of Ithaca to launch a telehealth site for their homeless shelter.
- 11/5/2021 - Marcellus Free Library joins the list of 62 Libraries and 5 community-based organization sites as part of our Community Telehealth Access Project!

CNY Health Hub

Do you have questions about your COVID-19 booster shot?



11/4/2021 - We partnered with Family Health Network of CNY and their Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Doug Rahner, to deliver vital information on the COVID-19 vaccines and virus variants to residents across the state. Visit our website at nysenior.org to watch our pandemic updates from Dr. Rahner!



Dental Health Access Initiative

8/2021 - StateWide and our Cayuga County partners have been focusing on dental health access!

Together, we pooled supplies to assemble and distribute more than 400 bags containing dental hygiene kits and information on community resources in Auburn, NY. With help from the NYS Dental Foundation, we gave out over 1000 toothbrushes to community members.



StateWide Team Out in the Community

10/7/2021 - It's been a busy month for StateWide and Community Organizer Melissa Kinney. Her recent visit to the **Copper City Community Connection**, a not-for-profit organization, was welcomed by seniors in Oneida County. Melissa presented on Fraud Prevention and distributed jelly bags and jar grippers to the members in the community.

New Individual Members:

Kellie Bolden	Buffalo
Martha Bolden	Buffalo
Vanderbilt Brabson	Bronx
Marion Cleaver	Brooklyn
Barbara Crosier	East Berne
Linda Curtis	Rhinebeck
Doreen Day	Yaphank
John Egan	Queensbury
Pat Boyle Eglund	East Meadow
Annette Fisher	Brooklyn
Rosalyn Foote	Albany
Kathleen Foster	Oyster Bay
Paula Friedman	Fort Lee
Denise Fryburg	New York
Anthony Connor & Paula Gannon	Bronx
Tom Gerson	Bayside
Roberta Gonzalez	Brooklyn
Marjorie Gurd	New York
Maxine Hall	Buffalo
Joel Herbst	Rego Park
Gloria Johnson	Brooklyn
Freyda Kolinsky	Wantagh
Mary Paige Lang-Clouse	Yulan
James Lint	Lawtons
Karen Millard	Brooklyn
Eileen & Gary Mund	New York
Carmen Negron	Wesley Hills
Sarina Nicola	Lake Placid
Mary & Jim Nowocien	Amherst
Susan O'Brien	Brooklyn
Arlene Oey	Canton
Geralyn O'Reilly	Troy
Roshelle Orgel	Boca Raton
Cynthia Platteter	Fairport
Leanne Rorick	Honeoye Falls
Sharon Russell	Little Neck
Shalom Schwartz	New Paltz
Ellen Smiley	Levittown
Allene Smith	Lawtons
Bethany Smith	Duanesburg
Denise Soffel	New York
Stephen Spiller	Hamilton
Jacynth Stewart	Brooklyn
Joseph Sweeney	Flushing
Celeste Thomas	Brooklyn
Gerald & Mary Trevor	New Rochelle

New Individual Members:

Barbara Waldmann	Staten Island
Mary Walker	Buffalo
Evette Weeks	Brooklyn
Avon & Ava White	Buffalo
MaryDel Wypych	Rochester

New Lifetime Members:

Florence Anthony	Bronx
Judith Block	Bronx
Sheila Davis	Brooklyn
Gail DeMarco	Rensselaer
Gail Galitzine	Kingston
Laura Mason	Brooklyn
Helen Porter	Brooklyn
Kenneth Traub	Rochester

New Organization Members:

Cerebral Palsy Association of the North Country Community Service Society	Canton New York
Hunger Solutions, NY	Albany
Jewish Family Services	Kingston
NYS Council of Churches	Albany

Kryzak Fund Contributors:

Florence Anthony	Bronx
Susan Beckley	Ithaca
Constance Clausen	Fresh Meadows
John Eadie	Rensselaer
Gloria Goodman	Brooklyn
Margaret Graham	NY
Virginia Love	Woodstock
Laura Mason	Brooklyn
Frances Mayers	Brooklyn
Henry & Mary Moss	Bronx
Susan O'Brien	Brooklyn
Arlene Oey	Canton
Cathy Picciocca	Amsterdam
Helen Porter	Brooklyn
Mary Pritchard	Schenectady
Michelle Rogers	Saratoga Springs
Kathleen & Herb Sanders	Albany
Mark Schaefer	Albany
Nelsa Selover	Aurora
Annabelle Staber	Kingston
Joseph Sweeney	Flushing
Kim Swire	Clifton Park
Judy Wessler	New York
Linda Wilkinson	Potsdam
Levi Young	Buffalo

In Memoriam

The energy and spirit of our active members who passed will carry us into our next fifty years.

Contributor

Gail Myers
Maria Alvarez
Gail Myers
Maria Alvarez
Maria Alvarez
Yvonne Plummer
Maria Alvarez
Barb McBurnie

In Memory of

Franklin Clark
Sidney Emerman
Bob Kasprak
Margaret Klotz
Edith Paley
Pearl Reeves
Adele Rogers
Elizabeth "Peggy" McDermid

**THIS IS YOUR 2022 BILL
RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW**

Check box:

☐ New Member ☐ Renewal ☐ Gift of Membership*

*Gifted by _____

Check box:

- | | | | |
|--|---------------|--|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership | \$ 20/yr | Contributions | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Couple Membership | \$ 25/yr | <input type="checkbox"/> Rose Kryzak Legacy Fund | \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Membership | \$ 150/ind. | <input type="checkbox"/> In Honor of _____ | \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Membership | \$ 200/couple | <input type="checkbox"/> In Memory of _____ | \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organization Membership | \$ 75/yr | <input type="checkbox"/> 50th Anniversary Contribution | \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 50th Anniversary**: | \$ 50/yr | **\$30 Individual Membership and \$20 Contribution | |

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ County _____

Affiliated Organization _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

You can contact us at **518-436-1006**. Please make your check payable to: NY StateWide Senior Action Council
Mail this form and your check to: c/o Gail Myers, 46 Commonwealth Drive, Glenmont, NY 12077

All dues and contributions are tax deductible

VOLUNTEER AT STATEWIDE

Join or Start a Chapter in Your County

Distribute our Information in Your Community

Become a Member of Our Senior Medicare Patrol

Join Our 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee

Tell Your Friends About Our Services

Ask Your Friends and Family to Join StateWide

Help Keep Our Movement Alive & Strong!

**Stay Tuned for more
information about
our 50th Anniversary
Celebration!**

New York StateWide



Senior Action Council

*Improving the lives of seniors & their
families in NYS for over 50 years*

Medicare, Medicare Fraud and Patient's Rights Helpline 800-333-4374



New York StateWide Senior Action Council, Inc
275 State Street, Albany, NY 12210 • 800-333-4374 • Fax 518-436-7642
www.nysenior.org



Going to the Hospital for an Invasive Procedure - New Brochure

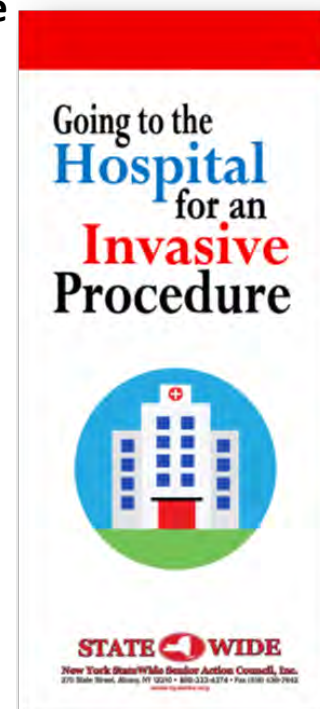
Over the decades of work with patients and families we have learned that there is no such thing as a "risk free operation". While the health care system strives to assure that patient safety is protected, invasive procedures carry significant risks and negative outcomes often occur.

To help prepare and protect patients and their families StateWide and our Patients Rights workgroup have recently developed a special brochure titled, **"Going to the Hospital for an Invasive Procedure"** that is now included in our Toolkit.

This brochure provides important tips for patients and families to:

- help them prepare for an invasive procedure
- advocate for good care during their stay,
- and act if they are confronted with a negative outcome.

StateWide is available to do presentations on this new brochure to our Chapters and other groups interested in protecting the rights and safety of patients. **Visit our website www.nysenior.org to view and download the brochure.**



Medicare, Medicare Fraud and Patient's Rights Helpline 800-333-4374