

Program adapts to address challenges of aide shortage

A nationwide shortage of qualified home health workers is causing service delays and interruptions for Warren County seniors who use ESP's home care assistance service (help with personal care, housekeeping and errands).

Several home care agencies are contracted with Council on Aging to provide home care assistance to ESP clients, but as the economy has improved in recent years, providers have struggled to recruit and retain staff. As a result, new ESP clients often face delays in starting their services and existing clients experience irregularities in their service schedule and the aide who provides their care (especially in rural areas).

That was the case for Chris, 81, a client in Warren County's ESP. An aide helped her with personal care, housekeeping and errands. But Chris' daughter, Cheryl, and her niece, Lynn, were stepping in more and more to provide care, taking time away from work and other family responsibilities.

Then Chris' ESP care manager, Maggie, told the family about a new option available to Warren County ESP clients. Called consumer-directed care (CDC), this option was added as a way to help alleviate local service problems caused by the nationwide shortage of home health workers.

Here's how it works: Instead of using a home care agency, clients become "employers" and hire their own "employees" to provide certain services, which are paid for by ESP. In many cases, the employee is someone the client already knows – a relative or friend. CDC increases independence and program satisfaction for the client, while using ESP resources more effectively.

Chris' niece, Lynn, was hired as her aide. Lynn helped Chris with everything a traditional aide would do – cleaning, laundry, shopping and bathing. CDC offers more flexibility in the services the aide can provide. For example, Lynn provides transportation to Chris' appointments.

Chris' ESP care manager, Maggie, helped the family complete the paperwork to enroll in CDC and provided some training on how to track Lynn's time via a web-based portal.

"There is extra administrative responsibility for the client," said Maggie. "But it's easier than they think and clients are much happier – and more independent – as a result."

Chris' health took a turn in 2018 following a series of falls and a case of diverticulitis. Doctors said she would need 24-hour supervision to live independently.

For Lynn, who had kept her own father at home thanks to help from Chris, the solution was obvious. "Right there in the emergency room, I said, 'You're moving in with me!' I didn't want her to go to a nursing home because that's something my dad didn't want – we kept that promise to him – and I told her we would do whatever we can."

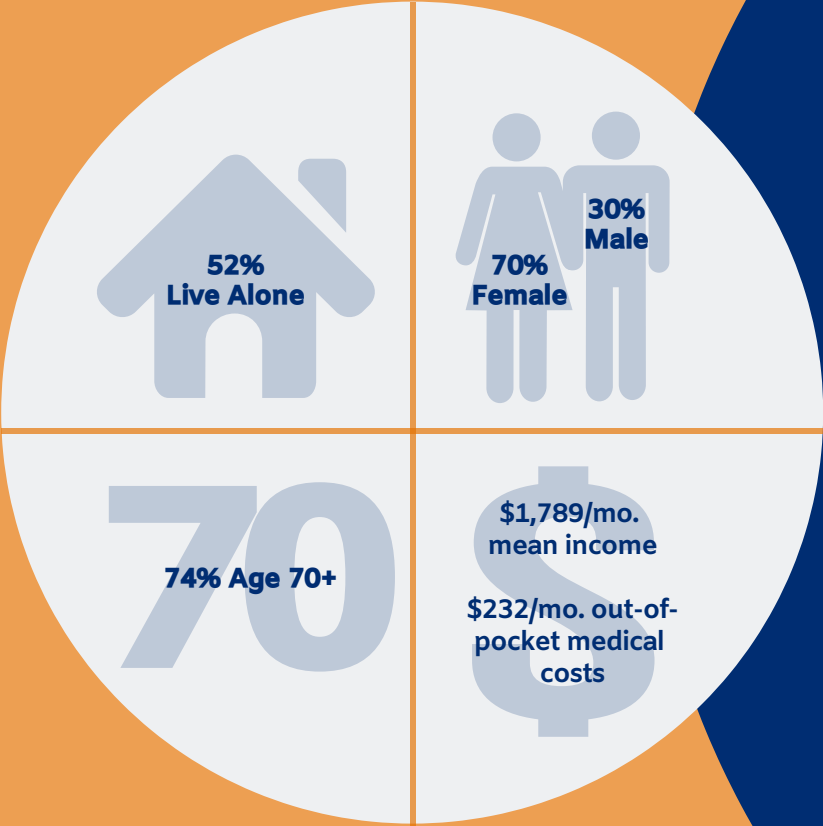
Nodding in Lynn's direction, Chris said, "This one has saved my life. I would have been in a nursing home without her – and my daughter."

Cheryl works full time but lives nearby and stays involved in her mother's care. "Lynn is a Godsend," Cheryl said. "That's all I can say. I do what I can for my mom – visiting and cooking – but I wouldn't be able to work without ESP."



Who are Warren County ESP's clients?

In 2018, there were 2,519 of them. They are seniors caught in the middle: with income too high to qualify for Medicaid, but too low to pay for private in-home care. They need help with basic activities like personal care and transportation. Family helps as much as they can, and ESP fills in gaps in care so they can continue to live independently in their homes and communities.



WARREN COUNTY ELDERLY SERVICES PROGRAM

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

ESP Warren County's Elderly Services Program is a community partnership

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Warren County ESP services are funded by a special tax levy. ESP does not supplant care provided by families but rather secures the necessary additional care the family is unable to provide. ESP expects families to take responsibility to care for family members to the fullest extent possible. ESP does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, age, sex, national or ethnic origin, or disability.



Dear Friends and Supporters,



On behalf of the Warren County Elderly Services Program Advisory Council, I am pleased to present our 2018 annual report. This report shows how tax dollars are spent and gives a picture of the program’s impact on our county.

The Warren County Elderly Services Program (ESP) is a taxpayer supported program that has helped vulnerable older adults remain independent in their homes since

2002. In 2018, ESP served 2,519 seniors in our county.

Enrollment in ESP has remained consistent in recent years, despite challenges created by the ongoing shortage of home health workers. This nationwide issue is impacting seniors in our county, especially those who rely on ESP's home care assistance service – help with personal care tasks (bathing), housekeeping and errands.

As the economy has improved, home health agencies – including those which have contracts to serve ESP clients – have struggled to recruit and retain staff. As a result, new clients often face delays in starting their services and existing clients experience irregularities in their service schedule and inconsistency with the aide who provides their care (especially in rural areas).

This advisory council has worked with Council on Aging, ESP’s administrator, to find solutions to the problem. In recent years we’ve adjusted training requirements for aides who provide only housekeeping services and we’ve tried to create efficiencies to improve scheduling and travel time for aides. We also piloted a rate increase for home care aides, the results of which showed an increase in client satisfaction but little evidence that it kept aides from leaving their jobs.

Another improvement in the ESP approach to care that is having an impact is called consumer-directed care. This new option allows clients to hire their own caregiver, instead of going through a home care agency. Already, more than two dozen clients are using the service. You can read more about consumer-directed care and a local family’s experience with the program in this report.

I am honored to be a part of this important program. Because of the Elderly Services Program, Warren County is in a better position to serve our growing older adult population. I thank you for your continued support.

Charles W. Peckham, Jr.
Chairperson, Warren County Elderly Services Program Advisory Council

COA’s role in Warren County

COA’s responsibilities for ESP in Warren County include: program development; provider management; data analysis and reporting; financial services and oversight; information technology; quality improvement; and community engagement. As a state-designated Area Agency on Aging, COA provided these additional services to county residents in 2018:



Aging and Disability Resource Center
COA's call center and “front door” to services and community resources responded to 47,431 inquiries.



Home and community-based services via Medicaid Waivers
PASSPORT, Assisted Living, Ohio Home Care, Specialized Recovery Services and MyCare Ohio programs provided care for 457 Warren County residents.

About the Elderly Services Program

ESP helps eligible county residents age 60 and older remain safe and independent in their homes by providing help with certain activities of daily living (bathing, cleaning, cooking, transportation and more), filling gaps in care that may already be provided by family caregivers.

ESP offers flexible care to meet clients’ changing needs. Eligibility and care needs are determined during an in-home assessment and a professional care manager coordinates and monitors clients’ care. Income is not an eligibility factor for ESP, but some clients have a co-payment based on their income.

The program is operated by Council on Aging (COA) via a contract with Warren County Commissioners, who appoint a board to advise on program needs and policies. COA contracts with Warren County Community Services, Inc. to assess, enroll and care manage clients in the program. Provider agencies deliver ESP services under contract with COA.

ESP is a compassionate and cost-effective alternative to nursing home care. On average, it costs \$318 per month to help a senior stay in their home with services through ESP, compared to more than \$4,000 a month for Medicaid nursing home care, also funded by tax dollars.

2018 highlights

More clients hiring their own workers

Giving clients the ability to hire their own caregivers is one way to alleviate the effects of the nationwide home care worker shortage, and increase client satisfaction at the same time. In Warren County, ESP care managers have been working to identify clients who would be a good fit for the program’s consumer-directed care (CDC) option. CDC allows ESP clients to hire their own “employees” (a friend, neighbor, or family member other than a spouse) to provide services such as help with homemaking and personal care. ESP care managers work with clients to determine if CDC is appropriate and complete the required paperwork. Since the program began in February 2018, nearly 30 clients began using the service.

Council on Aging invests in new case management and billing system

As administrator of the Elderly Services Program in four counties, Council on Aging invested in, and owns, a new system to manage care and costs for clients enrolled in the program. Called CareDirector, the cloud-based system replaces an outdated, unsupported technology platform and aligns the program and COA with current industry standards for security and privacy. Once fully-optimized, CareDirector will provide flexibility to grow and adapt programs to better serve clients.



Transitional care
Support to transition from hospital or nursing home care to in-home care via Community Transitions, Home Choice and other programs was provided to 846 residents across COA's service area.



Title III of the Older Americans Act
Warren County organizations spent nearly \$716,000 in Title III funds allocated by COA for services such as congregate meals, legal assistance, wellness education, caregiver support and transportation.

How tax dollars are spent

ESP would not exist without the senior services tax levy and the generous support of voters. The most recent levy was passed in November, 2016 by 75.76 percent of voters. The 1.21-mill levy costs property owners approximately \$34.18 per \$100,000 of property value annually. COA’s goal is to ensure the highest quality services at the lowest cost in order to serve as many people as possible with the tax dollars available.

As the Area Agency on Aging for Southwestern Ohio, including Warren County, COA leverages state and federal funding to cover nearly 7 percent of ESP expenses. Additional funding comes from voluntary client donations and client co-payments (40 percent of clients make a co-payment based on their income).

Revenue

Federal and State (via Council on Aging)	\$487,269
Client Donation	\$13,181
Client Co-Payment	\$156,839
Warren County Elderly Services Levy	\$6,517,904
TOTAL REVENUE	\$7,175,193

Expenses

SERVICE*	CLIENTS SERVED	SERVICE UNITS	COST
Care Management	2,519	N/A	\$1,392,657
Electronic Monitoring Systems	1,437	14,053 months	\$247,619
Home-Delivered Meals	1,276	255,262 meals	\$1,708,508
Home Care Assistance	1,245	109,541 hours	\$2,488,019
Medical Transportation	321	9,033 one-way trips	\$430,295
Minor Home Repairs	127	136 repairs	\$115,151
Adult Day Services	56	2,675 days	\$149,648
Independent Living Assistance**	55	839 hours	\$21,563
Consumer-Directed Care	27	153 months	\$32,150
Environmental Services***	19	30 jobs	\$21,005
Adult Day Transportation	9	10,134 miles	\$28,112
Intake and Assessment	N/A	N/A	\$82,948
Administration	N/A	N/A	\$457,518
TOTAL EXPENSES			\$7,175,193

*Services listed in order of clients served.
**Help with benefit applications and organizing personal and household records.
***Pest control, major housekeeping and waste removal.

Additional Expenses

To provide additional help to older adults in the county, including protection from neglect and abuse, Warren County Commissioners distributed \$41,250 in Elderly Services Levy funds to the Warren County Department of Human Services Adult Protective Services Unit.

“Lynn is a Godsend. That’s all I can say. I do what I can for my mom – visiting and cooking – but I wouldn’t be able to work without ESP.”

–Cheryl, Chris’ Daughter

Pictured: Warren County ESP client Chris (r), and her niece Lynn, her caregiver through the ESP consumer-directed care program.

