

REBIRTH (Restoring Elder Bio-Medical Independence and Restoring Transformational Health)

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Brief Description:

REBIRTH is aimed at improving the health and wellness of elderly Franklin County residents, resulting in delaying entry into assisted living facilities and nursing homes.

This submission was selected as part of a national challenge issued to leaders in all communities seeking new “best practices” and “best possibilities” for the future of nutrition and aging.

The Woodlands at Eastland in Franklin County, Ohio is a well established retirement community. This organization, in partnership with the CAREgiving Institute, a non-profit, community based organization with goals to improve aging American's health and wellness, has recently implemented a 12 - 18 month program known as REBIRTH. REBIRTH stands for Restoring Elder Bio-Medical Independence and Restoring Transformational Health and is aimed at improving the health and wellness of elderly Franklin County residents, resulting in delaying entry into assisted living facilities and nursing homes. Baby Boomers make up approximately 28 percent of our national population (Corporation for National Community Service). As this population demographic continues to age and require more care at expensive rates, state funding continues to face a financial strain.

The goal of REBIRTH entails delaying assisted living care and nursing home care, delaying Medicaid funded services and extending the length of time and elderly person can enjoy a higher quality of life and independence in society. Improvements in Medicaid spending have already been documented when delaying assisted living and nursing home care becomes a priority. The Ohio Area Agencies on Aging states that with better referral services to alternative sources of elderly care, community integration and an emphasis on keeping elderly people in their homes for longer, the portion of this population that uses nursing home facilities has decreased from 90 percent to 58 percent over the last 12 years. This substantial drop in the use of expensive, state funded services was documented despite the 15 percent increase in adults who are part of this age bracket and in need of the services offered by nursing home establishments.

This staggering shift in eldercare services allowed Ohio to spend \$121 million less on long term care, such as nursing homes in 2009 than in 1997.

Since REBIRTH requires a certain level of independent living, there are certain requirements that must be met in order to be eligible for participation in the program. Eligible REBIRTH participants are between the ages of 62 and 85, do not require 24 hour care, are not participating in Medicaid funded activities and require minimal assistance in daily life activities. These participants are also required to be at risk for a drastic increase in care, determined by a hospitalization in the last two years and having been placed on between one and four new medications within the last year.

REBIRTH includes a comprehensive financial assessment along with a level of care assessment to develop specific plans for each elderly individual. This guarantees the most specialized care for each person and the highest chances for successful results. Through participating in REBIRTH, elderly adults are expected to show a decrease in required levels of care, provided by an increased participation in wellness programs. To reach these goals, REBIRTH plans to offer up to date wellness, physical, emotional and psychological assessments, complete with follow up services, along with access to a comprehensive care management model. Additionally, through REBIRTH, the family's assets will remain intact for longer periods of time due to this decrease in level of care and the participating elderly adult will enjoy independent living.

Upon entry into the REBIRTH program, participants will begin with a comprehensive care evaluation and financial assessment. Orientation includes a meeting with a Long Term Care Planner who is educated in long term care financial advising, to help allocate personal assets to include long term care costs and design a personal budget for each individual. Orientation also includes an appointment with a spiritual counselor and psychiatric evaluation.

Program participants will receive a physical evaluation, provided by a licensed physician and geriatric nurse, and will also meet with a dietician at the commencement to their enrollment into REBIRTH. The medical team and orientation team will meet and design a health and wellness plan specially tailored to all the individual participants in REBIRTH, taking into account differences in culture and changing demographics. This personalized wellness plan will include a healthy diet, physical activity, accompanied by an event calendar with an invitation to participate in the Woodlands various recreational activities. The wellness plan designed by the medical team is forwarded to a skilled therapist, to help integrate the healthy changes that are recommended to the REBIRTH participants into their everyday lives.

Transportation to and from the Woodlands is provided by the program. Participating adults will have the opportunity to make weekly visits to the grocery store, accompanied by an nutritionist or nutrition aid, to help them make the most knowledgeable decisions regarding their grocery shopping. They will also be invited to participate in group cooking classes on a weekly basis. Included in these classes will be healthy and simple meal preparation, recipes for distribution and a sense of community and companionship. The participants will learn how to prepare basic, healthy meals with the luxury of eating them together as a group.

Throughout the 12 or 18 months an elderly person is enrolled in REBIRTH, a follow up appointment will be made with the geriatric nurse, skilled therapist and dietician to document any changes the participant may have experienced due to REBIRTH. At this time, their wellness plan will be evaluated and adjusted to each individuals' needs.

At the end of the program, each participant will undergo a final assessment. The geriatric nurse, dietician, physician, psychiatrist and skilled therapist will have a final appointment with the REBIRTH participant to evaluate this persons health and document any changes that may have occurred through participating in the program. At this time, the participant will be given the option to return to their homes to integrate their newly learned healthy lifestyles into their everyday life. Participants of REBIRTH will receive follow up contacts from the REBIRTH team, through personal appointment or phone call, after completion of the program to determine if they are, in fact, prolonging the life outside a nursing facility and successfully integrating the newly found health habits acquired in REBIRTH.

Through REBIRTH, the Woodlands plans to prove that it is possible to delay the need for assisted living and nursing facilities by utilizing what resources the community has to offer to increase the level of health and wellness a senior citizen has. Integrating basic healthy habits and delaying costly Medicaid funded services results in a drastically decreased federal Medicaid budget and a better quality of life for our aging family members.

Recruitment for REBIRTH has already begun at The Woodlands. Currently there are four participants. The Woodlands at Eastland is an established community resource on aging with a substantial number of residents currently taking part in the retirement services offered there. Participation in REBIRTH will cost \$1,690.00 per person. This fee includes room and board at The Woodlands, utilities, cable TV, laundry facilities, transportation to and from medical appointments, breakfast and dinner, along with the comprehensive care management services. Services that are not included in the REBIRTH fee are snacks outside breakfast and dinner, toiletries and laundry detergent.

Physicians visits and medications are also not included in REBIRTH but will be billed to the participants private insurance provider or Medicare, appropriately. Home making and home care with minimal medication management will be provided by a contracted outside home health agency and provided for by the initial REBIRTH fee.

The average stay in a retirement facility can be more than \$50,000 a year, according to the AARP, with one third of the residents paying these fees out of their own funds. The rest of the fees are billed to Medicaid. Participation in REBIRTH offers a more affordable experience with the same amenities The Woodlands has to offer it's permanent guests. Using the financial deal as incentive, The Woodlands plans to promote REBIRTH among it's current residents receiving minimal care and falling within the guidelines the program outlines. Additionally, REBIRTH plans to visit local senior citizens centers, area offices on aging, rehabilitation centers, recreational centers and local physicians offices to educate key members of the community on the program at The Woodlands and the benefits the program has to offer. Using these key resources in the community for referrals and a medium for promotion, REBIRTH will be able to recruit new members to participate in the program.

Upon enrollment, participants will complete a comprehensive financial assessment and a level of care assessment performed by an elder care nurse. The nurse will collect baseline health data and will work with a physician, a dietician, gerontology experts and a psychologist as a team to develop an individually tailored health and wellness plan for the participant. Each individual will sign consents that their participation in the program is strictly voluntary and if the situation arises that more care is needed, compromising their independence, the individual will be removed from the program and incur the cost of their required care on their own.

As our population over 65 years old ages, at a rate of three times more rapidly than the network available to offer care for them can sustain, a strain has been increasingly put on the medical system, the elder care community and the families of aging adults. Approximately 80 percent of Ohioans that receive caregiving support are over the age of 50. This number is only projected to grow in the upcoming years. Educating more elderly adults on the benefits of maintaining a healthy lifestyle in the community provides for the opportunity to be proactive. Healthy lifestyles can include physical activity, diet, nutrition, weight management and mental health, for example. Keeping these aspects a priority can result in better balance, reduced number of falls, reduced instances and severity of preventable chronic diseases and mental sharpness and clarity, all of which are essential to elderly independence.

While promoting REBIRTH in the community and recruiting participants, the opportunity for outreach and education is presented. Senior citizens centers, rehabilitation center and recreational centers offer appropriate settings for educational seminars and placements of materials on the benefits of delaying nursing home entry. In many cases, adults that can be reached through these mediums are still independent and have the opportunity to remain independent for a longer period of time, when integrating healthy lifestyle changes. Utilizing these facilities as an additional site to disseminate information regarding healthy diet and lifestyles to our elderly population ensures that adults who do not have the means to participate in REBIRTH directly still have the opportunity to receive the vital information and benefits associated with REBIRTH.

The fastest growing portion of the population is the elderly. This segment, on average, outlives their savings and suffers from two or more chronic diseases, resulting in admission into nursing home facilities. Oftentimes, assisted living facilities and nursing homes require spending above the means of many retired individuals, leaving Medicaid to cover the costs. Many of the services covered by Medicaid are preventable or premature, and can be dealt with in the home by a family caregiver or hired professional. Delaying enrollment into Medicaid provided services will provide the states with an opportunity to reduce the cuts these benefit programs so often receive, making it possible for individuals who are in serious need of aid to gain access.

For every one elderly adult that receives care in a nursing home, four elderly adults can be cared for in their own homes, based on the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging. This increases the elderly person's quality of life and comfort, ensuring better health for a longer period of time. REBIRTH plans to prove, that with increased emphasis on community based programs that specialize in health and wellness, aging adults will require less care for longer periods of time, allowing them to remain in the comfort of their own homes.