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February 2019

AgeOptions Client Story:

Benefits Access Unit Helps Veronica Get SNAP and Prescription Coverage

Veronica (we've changed her name) was in emotional and financial distress when she called AgeOptions Information & Assistance a month after the death of her husband. The 73-year-old was having trouble paying her bills and had no Part D Medicare prescription drug coverage. The Social Security Administration referred her to AgeOptions so we could help her apply for a program called Extra Help, a government program that helps pay for Medicare Part D prescription drug costs.

The Benefits Access Unit staff talked to Veronica and did a screening, which showed that without her late husband's income, Veronica was now eligible not only for the Extra Help benefits, but also for SNAP, also known as food stamps. Using copies of the required documents, AgeOptions staff applied online on her behalf for both SNAP and Extra Help.

Veronica was approved for both programs. She was excited and relieved to get \$192 a month in SNAP benefits. She told Joy, the Benefits Access and Information specialist who assisted her, that her refrigerator and cupboard had been pretty empty but she didn't want to ask family members for help. Veronica also said that she had worked all her life and didn't want charity from the government. Joy was able to reassure her during the benefit application process that this program is not charity, but government benefits that are funded by our taxes. Veronica was also thrilled to be able to get her glaucoma prescription covered by the Extra Help program.

Veronica has checked in with Joy several times to let her know how helpful these benefits have been in her life. She also mentioned that she might like to work part-time, both for extra money

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and to get out of the house. Joy referred her to the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), a federally funded program administered through the U.S. Department of Labor and based on the Older Americans Act, which promotes job readiness and community service for low-income people over the age of 55.

Often, older adults and those who care for them don't know about benefits they may qualify for and how to apply for them. AgeOptions Information & Assistance specialists are here to help residents of suburban Cook County identify benefits they may be eligible for and complete the application process, as they did for Veronica. Call us at (708) 383-0258.