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AgeOptions Provides Information on Resources and Fraud Prevention to Spanish-Speaking Residents

Once a month, Jesus Armando Enriquez, Outreach and Information Specialist at AgeOptions, speaks to a large crowd at the Consulate General of Mexico in Chicago. He also visits other communities with the Mexican Consulate on Wheels and makes presentations to Spanish-speakers at the Centro de Información in Elgin.

At these presentations, Armando connects with older adults and their family members to increase awareness of the services AgeOptions provides to the Latino community in suburban Cook County, including the Spanish Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP). He often connects participants who need additional assistance to their local Area Agency on Aging. Recently that included a visitor from Missouri who hadn't received their Medicare card yet. Armando instructed them to contact the Medicare National Hotline and connected the family to the Missouri Senior Medicare Patrol through the national SMP Resource Center so they could further educate themselves about Medicare fraud.

"Many of the participants at the Mexican Consulate have not heard of what Medicare entails," Armando says. "Latino caregivers and Medicare beneficiaries are at a great disadvantage when it comes to receiving reliable information."



Armando makes regular presentations at the Mexican Consulate in Chicago.



Rocio Robledo takes a selfie with participants at Centro de Información in Elgin.

Once participants get the information, they typically request assistance from their local Area Agency on Aging, Armando says. They also acknowledge that they want to learn more about Medicare as a way to prevent themselves or their loved ones from being victims of fraud.

Armando makes presentations and provides information to older adults throughout suburban Cook

County. His connection with the consulate came about when he participated in a community event where he was able to reach out to a staff member from Ventanilla de Salud and initiate the partnership between AgeOptions and the consulate. Ventanilla de Salud is a program to help people identify health services available to them and provide information and education on health topics.

“It is very important to educate Latino communities about how to prevent consumer and Medicare fraud,” Armando says. “SMP at AgeOptions is a statewide program and our partnership with the consulate offers the possibility of reaching people wherever they are in Illinois. The Mexican Consulate has offered me a channel to communicate to the Latino communities within and outside Cook County and spread education, reliable resources and information in Spanish. Many partnerships have been created because of my participation with Ventanilla de Salud through community events including their annual resource fair in the summer and International Health Week in October.”

In Elgin Armando also provides information about resources, benefits, Medicare and fraud prevention to workshop participants, many of whom are part of intergenerational families. Often they have no knowledge of how Medicare works and are afraid they may not be covered, he says. They also tend to be unaware they can get their Medicare Summary Notice in Spanish or that they can speak to Medicare counselors at SHIP, the Illinois Senior Health Insurance Program.

When he talks about SMP, Armando finds people are surprised to learn there can be health care fraud in underserved communities. They talk about the calls that seem suspicious but aren't sure what they are. As in all SMP presentations, participants learn to protect themselves from fraud and prevent, detect and report Medicare abuse. "I look forward to continuing to reach out to these communities," Armando says.

For information on participating in or scheduling presentations, call AgeOptions at (708)383-0258.