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Siouxland Aging Services Joins Nationwide Campaign to Encourage Discussion and Planning with Older Adults during the Holidays

Cost Savings and Better Health Outcomes Cited as Reasons for Older Patients and their Caregivers to Actively Plan for Hospital Stays

Sioux City, Iowa – Returning home from a hospital stay can result in unexpected challenges for many seniors and as a result, millions of older Americans are spending billions of dollars on health care costs every year that could be avoided through simple planning and preparation prior to being admitted to the hospital. Nearly one in five Medicare patients discharged from the hospital is readmitted within 30 days due to an injury resulting from medical management – not the underlying disease – costing over \$26 billion every year. Some studies have found that between 40 percent and 50 percent of readmissions are linked to social problems and lack of community resources.

This holiday season, Eldercare Locator, a public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging that is administered by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), launched its 9th Annual Home for the Holidays campaign encouraging older adults, caregivers and their families to use their time together this holiday season to discuss potential hospital visits and start planning ahead for a smooth transition from the hospital to the home. Siouxland Aging Services is supporting the campaign by raising awareness for more effective care transitions in the Siouxland area.

“This holiday season is an ideal time for families to get together and plan ahead,” said Kim Keleher, Executive Director at Siouxland Aging Services. “We strongly encourage Siouxland families to take some time to address these issues so that heading into the New Year, when medical issues arise, a plan is in place.”

Eldercare Locator and the United Hospital Fund’s Next Step in Care (www.nextstepincare.org) released a consumer guide that can be used by [region/city] families and caregivers to lead the discussion this holiday season. The guide, which provides planning tips for pre-hospital check-in as well as post-checkout from the hospital, is available at www.n4a.org/pdf/HospitaltoHome.pdf. Some of the questions the Eldercare Locator encourages the public to address prior to being admitted to a hospital include: What do you need to bring? If you are not going to be well enough to care for yourself when you are released, where will you go? Will you need help getting around? Will you need equipment and supplies? Will you be able to take the appropriate medications without help those first days out of the hospital? Who will assist you? How long will you need assistance?

“As we age, the likelihood of a hospital stay increases and it is critical to plan before that time arrives,” said Kathy Greenlee, Assistant Secretary for Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. “We encourage families and caregivers to take advantage of their time with older relatives this holiday season to talk about the brochure’s important cost-saving and potentially life-saving tips.”

Siouxland Aging Services in partnership with Mercy Medical Center and St. Luke’s Regional Medical Center are currently collaborating on a community Care Transitions project. For more information please contact Sandy Wienhold or Kim Keleher at Siouxland Aging Services, 712-279-6900.

About Eldercare Locator

The Eldercare Locator is the first step to finding resources for older adults in any U.S. community and a free national service of the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) that is administered by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a). Contact the Eldercare Locator at 800.677.1116 or www.eldercare.gov.

About Next Step in Care

The United Hospital Fund's Next Step in Care website (www.nextstepincare.org) has guides for family caregivers on many aspects of transitions, including medication management, discharge checklists, hospice and palliative care and many others. The guides are free and available in English, Spanish, Chinese and Russian.

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