



Westchester Library System (WLS) will launch Health Advocacy Resource Centers (HARC) to help older adults and their caregivers get reliable health care information through one-on-one counseling and access to print and on-line materials. It will also train participants to act as their own health care advocates.



According to health care counselors, when people seek information about health care, often it is because they have recently received a brand new diagnosis and are “shell-shocked.” Others are chronic illness “experts” who want to know the latest treatments. Yet others are frustrated and angry with the health care system itself.

The NEED:

Health literacy affects a person’s ability to understand and interpret health information. People who don’t have adequate health literacy skills are more vulnerable to misinformation.

The PROGRAM:

The goal of these centers is to assist health information seekers to gain basic information, become more capable in evaluating health information, formulate better questions when interacting with health professionals, know their basic health care rights, and generally be a more informed health care consumer.

WLS will sponsor Health Advocacy Centers initially at two libraries: the Grinton I. Will branch library of the Yonkers Public Library and the John C. Hart Memorial Library. Each center will use specific space at each library to ensure privacy for visitors.



The centers will provide:

One-on-one counseling:

Where counselors will speak with seniors or their caregivers to address basic health care and screening questions, issues patients may have with health care providers, and concerns about insurance coverage, etc.

Updated and reliable health care information:

A rich mix of print materials and on-line access to health care information.

Programs that help seniors and their caregivers become their own health advocates:

These programs are particularly important because learning to advocate for oneself is crucial to accessing appropriate health care services. The programs will initially be offered only at the Grinton I. Will branch of the Yonkers Public Library.

LOCATION IS KEY:

By locating the Health Care Resource Centers in public libraries, we make health information more widely available to people in a setting convenient to them.

