



News Release

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For more information, contact

A.J. Hostetler, Public Relations Director

aj.hostetler@dars.virginia.gov

804-662-7372

DARS EXPANDS POPULAR CHRONIC DISEASE SELF-MANAGEMENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

“You Can! Live Well, Virginia!” to serve more than 5,000 in three years

(RICHMOND, Va.) —Following a successful introduction in Virginia, the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services is expanding a popular chronic disease self-management education program that has helped more than 3,500 Virginians learn to live healthier lives.

The program, “You Can! Live Well, Virginia!” is available for older adults as well as adults with disabilities through a partnership between local Area Agencies on Aging, DARS, and Virginia’s departments of Health and Medical Assistance Services.

These free workshops help adults with chronic illnesses, such as asthma, arthritis, diabetes and heart disease, learn to manage their conditions. Trained volunteers facilitate workshops, focusing on providing mutual support to build the participants’ confidence in their ability to manage their health and maintain active and fulfilling lives.

“Virginians who want to live independently for as long as possible need to stave off or manage chronic diseases, which typically increase with age,” said DARS Commissioner Jim Rothrock.

An initial, two-year, \$1.04 million grant from the federal Administration on Aging that funded the program for older Virginians ended last September. DARS was recently awarded \$575,000 for the first year of an expanded three-year grant to serve more than 5,000 Virginians.

In addition to the basic chronic disease self-management education program, some areas of the Commonwealth provide a version focused on managing diabetes or offer the programs in Spanish, Korean, Chinese or Vietnamese. Some regions focus their programs on serving veterans, Virginia tribal populations and offenders in correctional facilities who are preparing to re-enter their communities.

At least 80 percent of older adults in Virginia live with at least one chronic condition and 50 percent have at least two, according to a VDH 2006 report on chronic disease. In a 30-day

period, people with disabilities experience an average of nine days of restricted activity due to health challenges, a VDH 2007-2009 survey found.

Research shows that participants manage symptoms better and communicate more easily with their doctors, family members and caretakers. Participants feel better and less limited by their illness and may spend less time at the doctor or in the hospital. Over the course of six weekly workshops, participants discuss:

- Coping with fatigue and pain
- Learning appropriate exercise for maintaining and improving strength, flexibility and endurance
- Learning appropriate use of medications
- Eating for good health
- Evaluating new treatments and communicating effectively with family, friends and health professionals

Contact information for details on the chronic disease self-management education programs at participating Area Agencies on Aging is at www.vda.virginia.gov/aaalist.asp:

- Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens
- District Three Senior Services
- Fairfax Area Agency on Aging
- LOA Area Agency on Aging
- Peninsula Agency on Aging
- Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services Board and AAA
- Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging
- Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia
- Southern AAA
- Valley Program for Aging Services

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The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services provides and advocates for the highest quality of services to help older Virginians and those with disabilities maximize and secure their employment, independence, and full inclusion into society. For more information, visit www.vadars.org or www.facebook.com/vadars.