

**Report on**  
**Elderplan FIDA Participant Advisory Committee and Feedback Session**  
December 8, 2016, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Brooklyn, NY

Elderplan conducted a combined Participant Advisory Committee and Feedback Session (which we referred to as a Town Hall) for our FIDA Participants on Thursday, December 8, 2016. The meeting was held at Menorah Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing Care in Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn (part of the MJHS family). A conference line was also made available for all participants who preferred to dial-in.

**ELDERPLAN FIDA TOWN HALL MEETING**

The event was designed to educate, engage and obtain feedback from Elderplan FIDA participants. Each of the covered areas concluded with Q&A and discussion. Topics included:

- Brief overview of the benefits offered by our FIDA plan
- Recap of the Plan's performance to date
- Staying healthy during the holidays
- Feedback Session/Open Discussion. Participants were encouraged to ask additional questions or offer comments about their experiences with Elderplan FIDA.

Midway through the Town Hall, we took a break with a Restorative Breathing and Laugh Therapist. This gave participants a chance to relax and interact. Lunch was served at the conclusion of the session.

**Simultaneous Interpretation**

In order to make the Town Hall sessions more inclusive, Elderplan once again offered simultaneous interpretation for our Spanish speaking participants. Simultaneous interpretation is a specialized area of translation requiring accurate and complete oral translation, occurring at the same rate of speech as the speaker, with only a few seconds of lag time.

In order to achieve this, Elderplan hired the services of a company that provided the translation equipment, the interpreter, and a technician. Spanish-speaking participants were given headsets upon arrival. The volume of the headsets could be adjusted to the participant's comfort level. The intent was to allow the participants to fully participate during the presentations and discussion periods. In addition, both English and Spanish versions of the presentation slides were projected onto screens.

**Recruitment of Participants**

Elderplan was highly committed to recruiting participants for the Town Hall session. Invitations were mailed to the homes of all Elderplan FIDA participants. Spanish speaking participants received their invitations in Spanish. In addition, the Call Center conducted proactive outreach and Care Managers discussed the FIDA Town Hall during their regularly scheduled calls.

One week prior to the Town Hall, Elderplan had successfully recruited 14 Participants:

- 13 participants agreed to attend the meeting in-person

- 1 participant delegated family members to attend on their behalf
- 2 participants elected to come on their own
- 10 participants requested that their aide accompany them to the meeting
- 1 participant requested the opportunity to dial-in

The 14 participants accounted for approximately 4% of our membership. They represented the Bronx (36%), Kings (36%), New York (14%), Queens (7%) and Nassau (7%) counties. 4 participants had previously attended at least one PAC session in the past.

Transportation was offered to all Participants or their delegates and an accompanying home health aide. In addition, a Logisticare representative was onsite to coordinate transportation to and from the event, as well as be present to address any participant concerns that may arise during the discussions.

### **Attendance**

Given the age and frailty of many of our participants, there was a significant falloff in actual attendance. On December 8, 6 FIDA participants were represented:

- 4 participants attended with their aides
- The husband attended on behalf of a fifth participant
- 1 participant attended unaccompanied

The Town Hall attendees came from the Bronx (3), Brooklyn (2), and Manhattan (1)

2 attendees spoke Spanish—the participants and their aides all utilized the simultaneous translation equipment. All other attendees spoke English. 4 of the 6 participants had attended one or more of the previous Town Halls.

## **THE PROGRAM**

### **Introduction**

Diane Ashley, Vice President from Elderplan, welcomed everyone to the Plan’s fourth Participant Advisory Committee meeting and introduced the panel members from Elderplan.

At the start of the program, Participants were given a brief history of MJHS, how Elderplan was one of the original social HMOs and how the organization continues to carry on a tradition of compassion, dignity and respect first established by the Four Brooklyn Ladies when they founded MJHS in 1907. Attendees were also told about HomeFirst, Elderplan’s managed long term care plan.

Before proceeding with the program, participants were encouraged to ask questions and share their thoughts at the conclusion of each section of the program. Spanish speaking participants were encouraged to provide feedback if their headset devices were not working.

### **FIDA Benefits and Services**

Frank Polanco, Vice President from Elderplan, explained the benefits offered by Elderplan FIDA. Specifically, this included having a comprehensive benefit package that coordinates

Medicaid, Medicare, home and community-based services; 90-day transitional care; an interdisciplinary team (IDT); behavioral health and substance abuse coverage. There was an emphasis on the no-cost services that Participants should take advantage of, including PCP visits, transportation to a doctor's office, specialist care, preventive screenings, and eye, dental and hearing exams.

Participants were advised that the FIDA plan offered an integrated appeals and grievance process and the availability of Ombudsman resources. Mr. Polanco introduced Mr. Peter Travitsky, FIDA Ombudsman and staff attorney at New York Legal Assistance Group to the group, asked him to say a few words, and urged participants to speak with him and/or utilize the services offered by the Ombudsman Office.

Participants were reminded that FIDA offers a quarterly OTC benefit of \$150; they were asked if they had any feedback to give on the OTC benefit or other benefits, or if they have any questions or comments they would like to share. One participant stated they did not use the benefit as they were not entirely certain what was covered; a Participant Services representative was on hand to confirm the participant's contact information so that this information could be mailed to them after the meeting.

### **Elderplan FIDA Performance Update**

Frank Polanco went on to discuss the plan's performance for 2016. As of November 2016, Elderplan had 313 participants enrolled in the FIDA plan. There were 397 disenrollments since the first through third quarter of 2016. It was emphasized that FIDA was a relatively new offering with a unique structure that required a lot of internal and external education; however, Elderplan is committed to the FIDA plan and is continually working to improve it.

In addition, there were 18 FIDA-related appeals and 24 grievances during the first quarter through third quarter of 2016. 9 of the appeals were filed by the participant or their delegate; 9 appeals were filed by providers. 11 of the 24 grievances were related to PCW services.

### **Staying Healthy During the Holidays: Tips for Managing Holiday Stress**

Dr. Melissa Miller, Assistant Vice President of Medical Affairs discussed strategies to reduce stress during the holidays. While the holiday season is associated with fun and festivities, it can be a stressful time for many; therefore, it is important to plan ahead. Some practical steps shared with participants include:

- Acknowledging feelings of stress—if someone close has passed or you are alone and unable to be with loved ones, it is okay to feel sadness and grief;
- Reaching out and asking for help—if you feel alone, try to seek out and participate in community, religious or other social events to connect with others, or speak to your Care Manager about your feelings;
- Setting realistic expectations—holidays do not have to be exactly the same as they were in the past and try to find new things to enjoy;
- Knowing your limits—understand what your triggers of stress are and find ways to decrease them so they don't become overwhelming;
- Taking a breather—make time for yourself;
- Not abandoning healthy habits;

- Seeking professional help if you need it; and
- Remembering to laugh—some examples include watching your favorite movies.

### **Healthy Break: Restorative Breathing and Laugh Therapy**

Following the discussion on how to deal with and manage stress, Elderplan invited Sharia Jones-Bey from SJBsFresh Aire to conduct the Restorative Breathing/Guided Meditation/Laugh Therapy session. This provided a relaxing break for the FIDA Participants, their guests and aides, the Ombudsman, and the Elderplan staff. Participants were encouraged to integrate learnings from the session with Ms. Jones-Bey into their overall strategy to manage stressful times in their lives.

The break provided an opportunity for interaction and laughter for all involved. Feedback from caregivers and participants was very positive. At the conclusion of the session, a Spanish speaking participant (through a translator) expressed her appreciation and wished Ms. Jones-Bey a happy send-off by facilitating a round of laughter from the group.

### **Staying Healthy During the Holidays: Healthy Eating Tips**

After the break, the program focused on providing healthy eating tips so that participants can stay healthy during the holidays. Josephine Frisari, a Director at Elderplan suggested that participants do the following:

- Be aware of extra calories in food and beverages—consider substituting a starch with something green
- Don't feel as if everything on the table must be eaten—have a reasonable portion of your favorite and pass on the rest, or get smaller portions so that you can try everything
- Choose food with less sodium—high sodium is harmful for blood pressure
- Make sure holidays meals are not close to bedtime—it may overwork your digestive system and may affect sleeping patterns
- Spread meals out throughout the day—do not go extended hours without food, and make sure you snack between meals. This will be easier on the stomach and blood pressure and sugar levels will be more in control, which is especially important for diabetics
- Keep taking medications on time—holidays can be a distraction, so make sure not to skip a dose. If you miss a dose, contact your doctor. If you need help managing your medications or getting refills, contact your Care Manager
- Stay physically active—start with moving away from the food; if you able to take a walk after your meal, this will help your digestive system and help burn calories

After the presentation, the group was asked if they had any questions. One participant stated that they eat their largest meal late at night and that is affecting how they sleep. The ensuing discussion emphasized the points made earlier, which was to eat smaller meals more frequently, and to avoid eating and lying down immediately afterward if at all possible. The participant was urged to speak with their doctor if their symptoms were severe or if their problems persist.

### **Feedback Session/Open Discussion**

Participants, their family members and home health aides were asked if they had any additional questions or comments they'd like to share.

One participant stated concern that many doctors don't accept the FIDA plan. The participant was urged to speak with an Elderplan staff member to discuss concerns about their providers and find providers in the network. There was also discussion regarding Elderplan's OTC benefit, which is a quarterly benefit in the amount of \$150. When asked if participants utilize the benefit, one participant stated that they prefer the quarterly benefit over a monthly benefit, as it allows them to purchase many items at once, and prevents participants from having to pay out of pocket many times for any items that go over the allotted amount.

### **Conclusion of Program**

At the end of the program, Elderplan reminded participants about the Ombudsman services offered to FIDA participants, and encouraged everyone to write down the FIDA Participant Ombudsman contact information:

FIDA Participant Ombudsman  
1-844-614-8800  
Monday – Friday from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM  
Online: [icannys.org](http://icannys.org)

In closing, all participants were thanked for choosing Elderplan FIDA and for traveling to attend the Town Hall Meeting. Participants were given the contact information for Elderplan FIDA Participant Services:

Elderplan FIDA Participant Services  
1-855-462-3167  
TTY: 711  
8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, 7 Days a Week

### **Lunch and Informal Conversation**

Members of the Elderplan panel and staff joined the participants and ombudsman for lunch. During this time, Elderplan staff followed up with the participants who had voiced any concerns during the presentation. 2 representatives from Elderplan's Care Management team were also in attendance; they visited each table and introduced themselves to participants and made themselves available during the lunch. At the conclusion of the Town Hall meeting and lunch, all participants were provided transportation so they would be escorted safely back to their homes.