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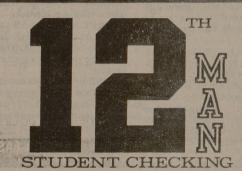
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## Social worker: Local programs help elderly to remain at home

By Pam Tragesser

In Brazos County there are a variety of programs — such as Meals on Wheels and Home Health Care that help to keep elderly people out of nursing homes and in their own homes, says Albert Benavides, a social worker associate with the Texas Department of Human Services.

To provide community care for homebound people who have little or no family resources, the Department of Human Services in Bryan arranges for in-home care through contracted services, he says

Texas Home Health Care Inc. is the only agency in this region under contract by the Department of Hu-man Services to cover Family Care, which is for people who don't have a medical problem but still need assistance in the home, says Connie Neugent, lead supervisor at the agency.
Texas Home Health is a non-

profit, state-funded organization that provides services for the elderly and handicapped, although the majority of the clients are elderly.

"The goal of our program is to try to provide a home atmosphere," Neugent says. "Keep the elderly person at home as long as possible.

If this program weren't available, most of the elderly people would have to go to a nursing home or have some other type of supervision, she

"The majority of the clients canout," she says. "A lot of them are weak."

The agency has three supervisors, a lead supervisor, and a secretary. They are in charge of hiring workers and then monitoring the work to make sure it is done to a caseworker's specifications, Neugent says.

When a provider wants a job, he goes through the agency, she says. Clients of home health live in both apartments and homes, and some live with family members, Neugent

'The goal of our program is to try to provide a home atmosphere. Keep the elderly person at home as long as possible."

 Connie Neugent, Texas Home Health Care Inc. lead supervisor

Many times when an elderly person is living with his family, the family members need a few hours to get out of the house. They can do this while a provider is there, she says.

This type of service can only be provided to each client for a few hours a day. This allows the elderly to be in a home atmosphere while still receiving the help they need, Neugent says. The extent of the service given depends on the indi-vidual's needs.

Since the Home Health supervisors are licensed vocational nurses, they are responsible for showing the providers proper lifting techniques so they can correctly help the patients, she says.

They also teach the providers other things they need to know, such as how to dust the home of a person who has emphysema, Neugent says.

In the Bryan office, there are several hundred providers who help these elderly people, Neugent says. The providers go into the home and prepare meals, do laundry, give

personal care, go shopping and keep the client in a clean, safe environment, she says. The provider is responsible for

basic housekeeping, Neugent says.
"Everyday things that you would do at home would be the things you would do for this person," Neugent

If the elderly person lives with family members, the provider's major responsibility is to keep the major living areas clean, especially the bedroom and bathroom, she says.

Clients cannot be transported with workers on company time. If a functional capabilities are analyzed Council and local churches

provider wants to volunteer to take the client somewhere on his own

time, it is between them, she says. Providers don't do any skilled nursing, such as taking blood pressure, Neugent says. If they discover a problem with a particular client, the case is handled through the client's doctor.

"If we feel a client's condition has worsened, we usually refer it to skilled nurses," Neugent says. "We also refer it (the case) to the casewor-

the case and a lot of times make changes in the amount of service that can be given, she says.

Another program is called Pri-

The caseworker will re-evaluate

mary Home Care, Benavides says. This covers all the services of Family Care and some medical services.

The supervisors for this program are registered nurses who can perform skilled nursing care. Primary Care services are not under contract. so clients are given a choice of the agency they want to use; there are three main agencies in the Bryan-College Station area.

To become eligible for either Family Care or Primary Care, a cli-ent must contact the Department of Human Services, Benavides says. A caseworker from the department is sent to determine the eligibility of a client based on income and physical abilities, Neugent says.

In analyzing these cases, the Department of Human Services looks at the minimal care needs of the cli-

Along with income, the person's

form. A series of questions are (for example, "Do you have getting dressed?") and then from zero to three, with th ing a need for total assistant derly person is eligible for son of assistance, providing he is the income and resource guid Benavides says.

If a client scores 18 points, he igible for Meals on Wheels. tain the emergency response the required scores are even

These response systems those elderly people who live or who are by themselves most day and have trouble dialin phone. This system comes transmitter that is connect telephone system so all thed to do is push it and the signa to a base station. This ted can be life-saving.

a.m. was suffering a hear mashed the button and with utes the ambulance was disp and she was brought to theh Benavides says.

If the system isn't used, the station will test it once an make sure it is in working order

Costs for these prografunded through Medicare caid. Medicare insurance is a to any person age 65 or ol sically, it covers hospital e Medicaid is funded thro

state. This gives the individua cal insurance to supplement Medicare would pay, Benavi

If the elderly person has come over \$670 per month sources greater than \$5,000, ment of Human Services can't be provided, Benavid The department tries to find programs to help these people as the Brazos Valley Development

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