

ADULT DAY SERVICES: Just What the Doctor Ordered

By: The Staff of the Heritage Day Health Centers

How often are you in a dilemma when one of your patients says, “I’ll never go into a nursing home”, or a patient comes into your office looking haggard and exhausted from caring for an adult loved one? Here is an option that will help both you and your patient find a viable alternative: ADULT DAY PROGRAMS.

How can adult day centers help physicians and their staff?

Adult day center staff can be the front line assistants in the care of the patient. Adult Day Services clients usually attend the center from two to six days per week. Our nurses, social workers, and other staff provide hands-on assistance to clients. They notice if a client has become suddenly confused or has experienced a health decline. Families will often communicate changes in mood, behavior, and cognitive status to our staff as well. Our staff, in turn, communicates this to the physician’s office, or encourages family to do so, thus alerting the physician to medical situations that may become problems if not addressed.

Our social workers and nurses can provide referrals to community resources for clients and can be sounding boards for clients and their families, eliminating some unnecessary telephone calls to the doctor’s office. Nurses can monitor vital signs, administer medications, or provide other nursing interventions, and provide

this information to the physician’s office as requested.

What are adult day care centers?

An adult day center is designed to meet the needs of functionally impaired adults through individual care plans. The day is structured with activities, meals, and social opportunities. Health monitoring is provided, along with transportation and bathing. Personal care assistance is given to those who require it. Podiatry and physical, occupational, and speech therapies are available to clients. Therapy services require a doctor’s order and are arranged through the Primary Care Physician

Staff at Heritage Day Health Centers include a registered nurse, social worker, program director, activity assistants, and personal care assistants. Services are available six days per week and hours are generally between 7:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., with our Livingston Avenue site remaining open until 6:00 p.m. Various funding sources are available to those who qualify. A sliding fee scale is also available based on the client’s income. Staff can assist clients and families in identifying and pursuing reimbursement sources.

.Who uses adult day centers?

A national survey of adult day centers determined that the average client age is 75 years. One-quarter of day program participants live

alone, while the remainder live with spouses, adult children, other family members, or friends.

The survey also found that one-half of adult day center participants have some cognitive impairment, while one-third require nursing services at least weekly. The majority of participants require assistance with two or more activities of daily living such as: bathing, grooming, dressing, etc.

Adult day centers offer the best of both worlds: “a therapeutic environment by day and the comfort of home at night.”

As an authoritative figure to patients and their families, you may want to consider actually writing a prescription for adult day services. A prescription for adult day services will help reinforce the benefits of adult day care for a patient, as well as the need for respite for a caregiver.

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