



## CSA helps ease seniors' transition between hospital and home

Written by Pam Walatka—Special to Town Crier

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**A** new hospital-to-home transition program sponsored by the Community Services Agency (CSA) in cooperation with the Community Benefits Program of El Camino Hospital benefits local seniors who have been in the hospital due to chronic illness.

With the goal of avoiding repeat hospitalizations, the program sends case managers and nurse interns to the senior's home to help the senior understand the importance and relevance of health and medical issues. Topics addressed include nutrition, medication and exercise.

A grant from El Camino Hospital's Community Benefits Program enabled CSA to make the case-management support available to seniors at no cost.

The program is open to any local resident – in Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Mountain View, Cupertino or Sunnyvale – who lives independently, is at least 60 years old and has been hospitalized. Living “independently” means living in a house, an apartment or a senior apartment. If a senior meets the requirements, he or she will be accepted in the program.

Naomi Gomez, director of the CSA Senior Services Program, encourages all eligible residents to take advantage of the free service.

“It's a wonderful program and everyone should call,” she said.

If a senior meets the age and residency requirements but has not been hospitalized, he or she is eligible for CSA's long-standing senior program, in which a CSA caseworker visits the home and helps seniors understand the myriad services available to help them stay healthy and in their own homes.

The new service, which began in July, is based on a medical model. Ideally, seniors are introduced to the program before they even leave the hospital – CSA managers and interns work with hospital discharge planners. With the client's permission, CSA caseworkers can access lab work results and discharge instructions to help the senior transition.

Many senior patients return to the hospital with a recurrent illness that might have been prevented with effective self-care. Many are back in the hospital within 30 days of their discharge. The partnership between CSA and El Camino aims to reduce the recidivism rate for chronically ill seniors. Patients with chronic diseases such as congestive heart failure, diabetes or renal failure improve their health and quality of life when they receive help taking their medications, exercising and eating properly.

The nurse interns and CSA case managers visit the home of the client and examine the surroundings to make sure they have been adapted to the client's needs – for example, grab bars in the bathroom to minimize falls. They talk to the client about organizing a routine for remembering to take medications and suggest an exercise regimen. They can also make referrals to community resource providers – CSA case managers know the various resources available and can help the senior sort the options.



Naomi Gomez, right, Director of the CSA Senior Services Program, works with client Patti Simons.

For more information, call 968-0836, e-mail Naomi Gomez at [ngomez@csacares.org](mailto:ngomez@csacares.org) or visit [www.csacares.org](http://www.csacares.org).