

Formerly NJ Foundation for Aging

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(digital photos available)

Obtain “Pandemic Updates: One Year Later” on March’s Aging Insights TV episode



Trenton, NJ (March 8, 2021) – NJ’s Long-Term Care Ombudsman, Laurie Facciarossa Brewer, and Senior Medicare Patrol of New Jersey’s Project Director, Charles Clarkson, are the featured guests on the March episode of Aging Insights TV. Produced by NJ Advocates for Aging Well (NJAAW, formerly NJ Foundation for Aging), this 114th episode tackles “Pandemic Updates: One Year Later.”

Now in its 10th year, Aging Insights can be viewed on NJAAW’s YouTube channel at youtube.com/njadvocatesforagingwell, at njaaw.org and more than 70 public-access TV stations across NJ (check local listings for channels and times).

On the show, Facciarossa Brewer explained that her office is a state agency and, “We advocate for residents of long-term care by investigating allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation. In addition, we do a lot of systems and legislative advocacy.” The pandemic, she said, “Dramatically changed all of our lives as an advocacy organization,” and that the lives of residents of long-term care “have been turned upside down” due to severe restrictions on visitation and the residents being restricted to their rooms.

Facciarossa Brewer noted that currently, “We’re not getting as many of the desperate calls that there’s nobody here, that there’s one CAN [Certified Nursing Assistant] for the residents...I have to tell you that lack of staffing is a huge problem in long-term care and always had been.” Brewer added that, “New Jersey has really leaned into figuring out what went wrong and fixing it.”

When the topic turned to the COVID-19 vaccine, Facciarossa Brewer said, “There are fewer staff [in long-term care] than residents who are agreeing to have the vaccine. I hope that changes and that more members of the staff decide to get the vaccine because that is really the only way that we’re going to get back to normal.”

Clarkson explained that the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) is a federally funded program in every state, plus a number of territories. “Our mission is really quite simple: to educate seniors about Medicare fraud, waste and abuse so they don’t become victims,” he said.

Clarkson noted that the COVID-19 vaccine is like a perfect storm. “There’s a lot of built-up demand for this so that’s a perfect thing for fraudsters,” he said. He advised that people not read any emails or text messages or listen to callers who are offering COVID-19 vaccinations and requesting personal information or saying there’s a cost involved. “If they ask for any identifying information that you feel is not appropriate for you to give to register or receive a vaccine, you should call the Senior Medicare Patrol, Medicare of the Department of Health. The only thing you have to do is sign up at a legitimate site.”

Laurie Facciarossa Brewer was named the New Jersey Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) in March 2019. In this capacity, she heads the NJ Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman. Prior to being appointed Ombudsman, Facciarossa Brewer served as the Chief of Staff of the LTCO from 2010 to 2019. She’s a former newspaper reporter and elected public official who has more than 20 years of experience in the government and non-profit sectors. Contact the LTCO at 1-877-582-6995 or visit <https://www.nj.gov/ooie/>.

Charles Clarkson, Esq., is Project Director of the Senior Medicare Patrol of New Jersey (SMPNJ). SMPNJ works and partners with agencies across the state as part of its mission to empower and assist Medicare beneficiaries, their families and caregivers through outreach, counseling and education. SMPNJ at JFS is part of the national SMP network, funded by the U.S. Administration for Community Living. Contact SMPNJ at 1-877-SMP[767]-4359 or visit <http://seniormedicarepatrolnj.org/>.

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About NJAAW

*NJ Advocates for Aging Well (NJAAW, njaaw.org), formerly NJ Foundation for Aging, has been at the forefront of revolutionizing the aging experience since 1998. It is the only statewide nonprofit focused solely on providing leadership in public policy and education to enable older adults to live with independence and dignity in their communities. NJAAW's social action issues include senior housing and hunger, elder economic security, older workers and transportation. The award-winning *Aging Insights*, a monthly topical TV program produced by NJAAW, connects caregivers, seniors and their families to community-based services and resources. The show is available on NJAAW's YouTube channel at youtube.com/c/njadvocatesforagingwell, at njaaw.org and more than 70 public-access stations across NJ (check local listings for channels and times). NJAAW also presents educational forums and an Annual Conference (June 3–4, 2021) offering development opportunities and best practices for professionals entrusted with caring for seniors.*