

AMIDA CARE

MEMBER NEWSLETTER 2018 - VOL.3



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Check out our new blog, **Amida Care Now**, at www.amidacareny.org/blog, for health information and other useful topics.

www.AMIDACARENY.org

Follow us on social media!



Dear Amida Care Members,

The stakes for all Americans could not be higher in our midterm election on **Tuesday, November 6** – particularly for *you*, our members. That's why I ask each one of you to heed this urgent **CALL TO ACTION**:

- Please register or re-register to **VOTE**;
- Know the exact location of your **polling place** (or arrange to **VOTE** in advance by absentee ballot); and
- Go to your polling place and **VOTE on Election Day, Tuesday, November 6**.
For more details or information, call 3-1-1 or go to www.elections.ny.gov.

Everyone will be affected by the outcome of this election – *as important as any in our lifetimes*. At a time when our national agenda often feels like it's moving backward, we must stand strong and exercise our hard-won right to choose leaders and representatives who truly speak for us.

One of many hugely important policies now hanging in the balance is the fate of the Medicaid safety net. At Amida Care, New York State's largest not-for-profit Medicaid Special Needs Plan, we know that Medicaid can literally save lives — not just for our members and all those who are living with HIV/AIDS, but also for more than 74 million fellow Americans who rely on Medicaid for basic health coverage. In fact, 60% of Medicaid recipients are employed, one in 10 are veterans — and at some point in their lives, fully half of all Americans will need Medicaid.

Amida Care proudly joins with the **Medicaid Is US** campaign and all those who have mobilized repeatedly and succeeded in stopping Congress and the Trump administration from repealing the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and gutting Medicaid. Again and again, we have defended Medicaid, but the battle is far from over.

Casting your ballot in this midterm election empowers you to pick representatives who will protect our nation's health; give all Americans access to affordable, quality care that is right for them; and more generally, protect our rights under the Constitution. **VOTE on Tuesday, November 6, 2018!**



Abrazos,

Doug Wirth

Doug Wirth, President and CEO



Read Our Latest Special Publication

Innovators for Change

Amida Care has published a new community magazine called *Innovators for Change*. It showcases 24 New Yorkers who personify the creative dynamism of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual communities, as well as our allies. Read it at www.amidacareny.org or get a print copy at our offices or your next provider visit.

News Briefs for Amida Care Members



- Our internal member call center makes it easier than ever to get answers to your questions about plan-related issues. Just call Amida Care Member Services at **1-800-556-0689 (TTY: 711)**, or just stop by our Members Drop-In Center, located at 234 West 35th St. in Manhattan.

- Starting July 1, **HARM REDUCTION SERVICES** became part of your Amida Care benefits. They include – but are not limited to – overdose prevention and response, as well as preventing the transmission of HIV, Hepatitis B and C, and other illnesses in substance users. Harm reduction services represent a fully integrated client-oriented approach to your health and wellness.

To find out more, speak to your primary care provider or call Member Services at **1-800-556-0689 (TTY: 711)**.



- Please be aware that your **HEALTHY REWARDS VISA Card expires** every two years. For some of you, that means your card is expiring sometime in 2018. You don't have to do anything. Just watch your mailbox for your new card and activate it immediately to receive future rewards. Any rewards balance will automatically be transferred to your new card. If you have questions, please **call Member Services at 1-800-556-0689 (TTY: 711)**.



Breathe Easier!

Get 90-Day Supplies of Some Asthma and Cholesterol Meds

To help Amida Care members fill or refill prescriptions with ease, our Pharmacy Department has announced that those of you who use long-acting asthma inhalers or take cholesterol medication can now get a 90-day supply. The cholesterol medications include – but are not limited to – atorvastatin (Lipitor®) or rosuvastatin (Crestor®). While short-acting rescue asthma inhalers such as Ventolin are only available for a 30-day supply, long-acting inhalers that ARE eligible for a three-month supply include, but are not limited to, Advair®, Symbicort®, and Dulera®. To be most effective, these cholesterol medications and long-acting asthma inhalers must be taken daily.



Amida Care Marches for LGBTQ PRIDE



Amida Care's float in 2018 LGBTQ PRIDE March in Manhattan.

Heartfelt thanks to all of our members, staff, allies, deejays, and others in the community who came out to march proudly with Amida Care during LGBTQ PRIDE Month 2018. We deeply appreciate those who rode upon or walked beside our float in Manhattan's PRIDE March on June 24, as well as the entire rainbow of our supporters who took part in many other events throughout all five NYC boroughs. From the Youth PRIDEFEST and Brooklyn's NYC BLACK PRIDE event to HARLEM PRIDE and beyond, Amida Care is committed to going above and beyond for you during PRIDE Month and all year long. We celebrate you for who you are, so you can **Be Yourself... with PRIDE!**



GET SCREENED FOR CANCER

Cancer screenings can help you stay healthy by finding cancer early, before you have symptoms, when it's easier to treat. Your Primary Care Provider (PCP) has probably talked to you about this, but it's always helpful to have another conversation. Your age, gender, family history, and other risk factors may determine which cancer screening you need and how often. Your PCP can help you decide.

Below are four cancer screenings that could help keep you healthy:

- **Lung cancer:** Screening is recommended for people 55 to 80 years of age with a history of heavy smoking, either currently or in the past 15 years. If appropriate, a low-dose CT scan should be done each year.
- **Cervical cancer:** Cervical cancer has decreased dramatically thanks to the Pap test. During a pelvic exam, your provider takes a Pap test to look for abnormal cells in the cervix. Pap tests can find cervical cancer early, when the chance of being cured is very high.
- **Breast cancer:** Mammograms, a low-dose X-ray of the breast, can find changes in your breasts even before you feel them. This test is the best starting point when screening for breast cancer.
- **Colon cancer:** Colon cancer usually develops from abnormal (precancerous) polyps in the colon or rectum. Screening tests can find polyps and remove them before they turn into cancer. Screening can also detect colon cancer early, when treatment is more effective. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you start colon cancer screening no later than age 50; the CDC notes that some guidelines recommend starting at age 45. There are several different tests available, so talk to your PCP about which one is right for you.

You may benefit from other cancer screenings. Talk to your PCP to decide when to begin and how often to get screened. Reminder: certain cancer screenings will also earn you Healthy Rewards!



Autumn is the perfect time for you and your Primary Care Provider (PCP) or any participating pharmacist to talk about your annual flu vaccination.

Getting this shot each year is your best protection from flu – a serious illness that affects millions of people. Here are some reasons to get a flu shot every year:

- The flu vaccine is the best way to reduce your risk of getting sick with seasonal flu and spreading it to others.
- If you do get sick, it can make your illness milder. Those who get a vaccination and still get the flu are less likely to get very sick or even hospitalized.
- It can protect people who are at greater risk of getting more seriously ill with the flu – including older people and those with chronic health conditions, such as HIV, diabetes, heart disease, or asthma.

- It can protect women during and after their pregnancy. Getting a flu shot also protects a newborn baby, even several months after birth.
- It can prevent people around you from getting sick, including those who are more vulnerable to a serious case of the flu, including babies and people with chronic health conditions.

Some people ask about possible side effects of a flu shot. The good news is that the viruses in this vaccination are de-activated (killed), so the shot can't give you the flu. Side effects that might occur include soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site; low-grade fever; or general aches. These effects are mild and short-lived, however.

So fight the flu this season by talking to your PCP or any participating pharmacist about the flu vaccine. If you are age 65 or older, ask about a special flu vaccine to give you extra protection.

50+? Talk to Your Provider about the New *Shingrix* Vaccine!

A new vaccination called *Shingrix* is very effective in preventing a painful rash called "shingles." If you're age 50 or older, you are at greater risk of getting shingles, so ask your PCP about *Shingrix*.

Shingles, also known as zoster, is caused by the chickenpox virus (varicella), which we think of as a childhood disease. After recovery from chickenpox, however, the virus remains sleeping (dormant) inside a nerve root. As we age, this virus

can wake up (re-activate) and cause shingles if we are stressed or our immune system weakens. Even a mild case of shingles can cause severe pain that could last for months or years.

Even if you already received the Zostavax shingles vaccine, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends getting this new *Shingrix* vaccine, since it's more effective. To get the full benefit of *Shingrix*, the two doses are given at least two months apart.

Protect yourself! If you are 50 or older, ask your PCP about the *Shingrix* vaccine or just go to a participating Walgreens pharmacy.



VOTE in the Midterm Election on Tuesday, November 6!

For so many reasons – from saving Medicaid to preserving the rights of all of us, from women, LGBTQ and transgender people to immigrants – it's more important than ever that each one of us makes a special effort to **VOTE** in the midterm election this fall. When we go to the polls on **Tuesday, November 6**, we'll choose a U.S. Senator and some Members of Congress, as well as New York State's next Governor, Attorney General, and

Assembly representatives. This election is a crossroads moment for our state and the nation. Your VOTE is your voice, so no later than mid-October, be sure that you're registered with your current name and address. Doublecheck the location of your polling place. Finally, exercise your ultimate right as a U.S. citizen by voting on Election Day, November 6. Need more information? Call **311** in New York City, or **866-VOTE-NYC**, or go online to **www.elections.ny.gov**.

Amida Care CEO Doug Wirth Receives 2018 ACAP Advantage Award



Amida Care President and CEO **Doug Wirth** received the 2018 Advantage Award presented by **Association for Community Affiliated Plans (ACAP)** on June 29 in Washington, D.C. This national organization, which represents 62 Safety Net Health Plans serving nearly 21 million Americans, recognized Doug for advocacy on behalf of Medicaid recipients. ACAP Board Chair John Lovelace called Doug a "tireless advocate for people who are underserved and at high risk for poor health care outcomes."

ACAP also saluted Amida Care nurse **Maria Axiotis, RN**, with an Honorable Mention for the organization's 2018 "Making a Difference" Award. An Integrated Care Team leader, Maria was celebrated for "going above and beyond" in advocacy, care, access, and the public good. Congratulations to Doug – and Maria!