



**Testimony of Danny Santiago  
Senior Service Case Manager, Community Renewal Team**

**Appropriations Committee, March 6, 2015  
Elimination of the DMHAS Gatekeeper Program**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Danny Santiago and I am the Senior Services Case Manager for the Community Renewal Team. This afternoon I want to introduce you to the important benefits of the Gatekeeper Program. As you will hear, this program which is funded by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, makes a tremendous impact on the lives and safety of Connecticut's seniors.

The purpose of the Gatekeeper Program is to connect seniors to appropriate services before a catastrophic event occurs, leading to an emergency room visit, hospitalization or premature nursing home placement. However, the unique element of the Gatekeeper Program is that it harnesses the power of the community. Gatekeepers create a link between the average person who encounters seniors with the professional services available in the community.

Connecticut is the first state in the country to have a state wide Gatekeeper program. There are four providers; Community Renewal Team is the agency designated for Hartford County. In the past four years, we have helped 197 seniors with referrals that increase their quality of life. This program is an extremely cost-effective, respectful and humane way to help stabilize seniors who are living in their community.

How does it work? Many people see seniors in the course of their day: mail carriers, beauticians, Meals on Wheels drivers, even neighbors. They see changes over time, but aren't sure what to do with the observation. If it's not an emergency, contacting 911 isn't appropriate. Often the senior continues to decline until there is a catastrophic event and they end up in the emergency room or nursing home. There may be a mix up in medication, a terrible fall or another incident that might have been prevented.

A Gatekeeper educates the community on how to identify when seniors are in need of medical, social or other services. First, we educate individuals on what to look for when a senior is struggling. Second, we give those individuals the tools to help the senior find services before there is an irreversible event. To date, the Hartford County Gatekeeper program has educated 2,076 people in these outreach efforts.

As a Senior Services Case Manager, I receive calls from people who have concerns about a senior. Often I will follow up with a home visit to assess the situation. I connect the senior or family members with a variety of services, based on their specific needs. The senior may need Meals on Wheels, homemaker or home health aide services. They may need help from a nurse to oversee their 12 medications or substance abuse counseling. Perhaps they may need grief counseling and help to work through depression.



I work closely with the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Elderly, local town Social Services and the Department of Social Services' Protective Services for the Elderly.

Within the last four years, CRT's Hartford County Gatekeeper Program has helped in the following ways:

- 2,076 people learned to notice seniors who might need help and contact the Gatekeeper program
- 197 at risk seniors received intensive case management services and were connected to services
- 65 seniors were connected to services through the Connecticut Homecare Program for Elders
- 64 seniors were assisted with eligibility paperwork for Department of Social Services programs
- 23 seniors were assisted in finding permanent housing
- 18 seniors were referred to Protective Services for the Elderly based on neglect and abuse

I would like to share a story of one of the many seniors who have been helped by the Gatekeeper program.

Recently I received a call from a manager at the Community Renewal Team's Meals on Wheels program. A driver was concerned about a senior he sees every day, when he delivers her meals. The driver noticed that the senior had a black eye, bruised arm and appeared to have refused medical attention.

I accepted the information from the manager and extended a call to the senior. She was open to having a home visit and was grateful that someone felt concern for her. When asked about the bruises, the senior remarked that she had been falling a lot because of the amount of clutter in her apartment. The senior shared that at 92 years old she just couldn't keep up with the daily chores but was afraid to ask for help.

A joint home visit was conducted with a case manager from the Connecticut Homecare Program for Elders. The senior was evaluated for the program and homemaker services were offered to help her maintain her apartment. This successful connection has allowed the 92 year old senior to live successfully in her home, and receive the necessary services to reduce her falls and possibly avoid a catastrophic event.

The Gatekeeper Program is making a difference. By connecting seniors with services early, we help them while their concerns are still small and avoid unnecessary emergency room visits and nursing home stays.

It is a small program with very minimal funding, but it makes a tremendous difference – to the seniors, to their families, and to the overall cost of elder care across the state. Please restore funding for the Gatekeeper Program, for the sake of the hundreds of seniors that it helps.

**Community Renewal Team, Inc.**

**555 Windsor Street, Hartford, CT 06120**

Testimony From:

Danny Santiago, Senior Service Case Manager  
Community Renewal Team, Inc.  
160 Coventry Street, Bloomfield CT  
(860) 243-3791 or [santiagod@crtct.org](mailto:santiagod@crtct.org)

For more information:

Nancy Pappas, Communication Officer  
860-560-5689 or [pappasn@crtct.org](mailto:pappasn@crtct.org)