

BREAST CANCER SCREENING PROJECT FOR WOMEN WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

“No one knows how many women with physical disabilities could have been saved if more mammography facilities were accessible to people who use wheelchairs or other mobility aides. Early detection is key to survival with this disease.”

Marilyn E. Saviola, Director, ICS Breast Cancer Screening Project

Women with physical disabilities face many barriers when they try to get a mammogram, barriers that are facility, equipment and attitude-related. In response to this urgent need, ICS, with generous support from the Greater NYC affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure®, launched its Breast Cancer Screening Project for Women with Physical Disabilities in April 2008.

ICS operates a nonprofit Medicaid managed long-term care program. ICS was specifically designed to assist adults with physical disabilities to live independently and participate fully in community life. Working in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Manhattan, ICS has over 1,600 members: all are low-income, nearly two-thirds are women, 72% are Hispanic/Latino or African-American, and approximately 60% use wheelchairs.

This pilot Project, unique in New York City and now in its third year, aims to reduce barriers to mammography screening for women with physical disabilities by:

- Partnering with selected facilities to enhance access to screening services by providing disability awareness and sensitivity training; technical assistance; and ongoing consultation to facility staff.
- Coordinating screenings for ICS members in need of mammograms at our partner facilities, including comprehensive, disability-competent, patient navigation services and a Clinical Assistant to accompany each woman to her exam.
- Providing information and education to the disability community—consumers, caregivers, health professionals, and policymakers—to increase awareness of the disparity in access to mammograms for women with physical disabilities, and to improve access to mammography screening and early detection services.
- Working on policy issues that impede access to health care for women with physical disabilities, in concert with the Project’s Advisory Committee and members of a multidisciplinary “think tank” initiative jointly created by ICS and the Hunter-Bellevue School of Nursing.

ICS is proud to have as its partners in this Project New York Presbyterian Hospital-Columbia University Medical Center, a provider site of the Columbia University Breast Cancer Screening Partnership Program; the Breast Examination Center of Harlem, a program of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center; and Morrisania Diagnostic and Treatment Center, a South Bronx community-based facility of the NYC municipal hospital system.

Staffing the Breast Cancer Screening Project for Women with Physical Disabilities are Clinical Director Susan C. Wolf, PhD, MD; Administrative Director Marilyn Saviola; Project Coordinator Marissa Kaplan; and Clinical Assistant Jane Dillera Nietes. The Project is an initiative of ICS’s Access to Women’s Health Care Program for Women with Physical Disabilities.

For more information, contact Marilyn Saviola at saviola@icsny.org or 212-584-2587, or Marissa Kaplan at mkaplan@icsny.org or 212-420-6661.

