

## February 1, 2010 – New Haven Register - VEMS to refer needy to TEAM for aid

By Michelle Tuccitto Sullo, Naugatuck Valley Bureau Chief

When Valley emergency personnel respond to homes, they sometimes encounter residents struggling to pay heating bills, feed themselves and keep their homes in order.

To try to help them, Valley Emergency Medical Service is joining with the Derby-based Training Education and Manpower Inc., or TEAM, for a new referral program.

Jason Perillo, executive director of VEMS, said the program puts people in need in touch with staff at TEAM.

"Our paramedics encounter individuals in need every day, many of whom could be helped by TEAM," Perillo said. "If we can connect them with the help they need, those families will be better off."

In many cases, VEMS sees elderly people who are living alone, and having a hard time doing so, Perillo added.

"They are people who don't need to be in a nursing home, but they are struggling and need help," Perillo said. "Not every senior citizen has family close by to ask for help."

TEAM, a private, nonprofit organization, provides a variety of services, such as homemaking for the elderly, home heating assistance, Meals on Wheels, housing assistance such as foreclosure prevention and early education.

TEAM President Richard Knoll said the program was Perillo's idea.

Under the program, VEMS will offer clients or their families a referral to TEAM when appropriate.

"I think the average person doesn't think about where to turn to for help until they are in need," Knoll said. "When they question where they can go, I think this idea for collaboration is great."

TEAM was formed in 1965 to fight poverty and help low-income families become more self-sufficient. It provides financial help, training and other services to more than 4,000 families annually in Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Bethany, Derby, Milford, Orange, Oxford, Shelton, Seymour and Woodbridge.

VEMS, also a private, nonprofit corporation, responds to about 7,000 calls for medical assistance each year, and it serves the communities of Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour and Shelton.

*Michelle Tuccitto Sullo can be reached at [mtuccitto@nhregister.com](mailto:mtuccitto@nhregister.com) or 203-789-5707.*

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