



Care for Elderly and Disabled

ISSUE

Ensure appropriate long-term institutional care and home- and community-based services for the frail elderly and people with disabilities

BACKGROUND

Budget cuts enacted over the past two years have reduced health provider revenues by \$4 billion statewide, and this year's budget proposals will result in additional revenue losses to providers of about \$1 billion. Steep reductions in revenue and assessments on providers hurt the poor, the sick and people with disabilities as providers reduce services, stop hiring and/or lay off staff, and delay necessary service improvements. Taxes on health services make insurance coverage more expensive for employers and employees alike, adding to the current number of uninsured individuals. In addition, "safety net" services in our poorest communities are stretched to their limit, and access to health care services to all in the community—rich and poor alike—ultimately suffers.

Continued budget reductions—particularly reductions in nursing home care and in home- and community-based services—make coordination of care all the more urgent, as fewer resources are available to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. Current procedures to assess an individual's long-term care needs are uncoordinated, and the frail elderly or people with disabilities, as well as their caregivers, are left to piece together a patchwork of available services. Needs are not met, health care is compromised, and wasteful spending of scarce health care resources occurs.

As the state continues to reduce resources for institutional care, it is essential to develop comprehensive care plans to ensure that the medical, social and spiritual needs of individuals are met. A comprehensive care plan for every nursing home-eligible Medicaid applicant will ensure the dignity and care that our most vulnerable members of society need and deserve. Such plans, developed with the participation of the affected individuals and their families, would reflect the full range of human needs, including spiritual fulfillment, and would take into consideration the availability of institutional and home- and community-based services appropriate to the needs of each such individual.

MESSAGE POINTS

- Budget cuts don't hurt providers—they hurt the poor, the sick and the disabled through reduced access to services.
- The state has an obligation to provide adequate and appropriate services to our most vulnerable neighbors, especially the frail elderly and people with disabilities. Restore adequate payments to health care providers.
- Comprehensive plans would ensure that the services provided would promote independence consistent with the recipients' safety, security, quality of life and their human dignity.

Church Teaching

[G]overnment, working for the common good, has an essential role to play in ensuring that the right of all people to adequate health care is protected... Special attention should be given to meeting the basic health needs of the poor.—USCCB, Health and Health Care, 1981