



Posted: 01-19-2009

CMS Builds in One Week Delay To Review Rating

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is giving care center providers another preview of their 5-star quality rating data.

Although Nursing Home Compare is generally updated on the third Thursday of the month, CMS has built in a one-week delay to allow care centers time to review their ratings prior to the Web site's update. CMS has also reinstated the help desk at 1-800-839-9290 which will be open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. through Friday, Jan. 30, to address any concerns.

CMS has not promised to give providers an advance look at their data on a regular basis, but they are doing it again for the January update because the 5-star rating system is still new.

Member care centers will want to visit the Quality Improvement Evaluation System (QIES) mailbox now to review your results. The mailbox is available through your electronic connection to the MDH servers for submission of MDS data.

To access these reports, select the Certification and Survey Provider Enhanced Reporting (CASPER) link located at the bottom of the Home page. Once in the CASPER Reporting system, click on the 'Folders' button and access the Five Star Report in your "st LTC facid" folder, where "st" is the 2-digit postal code of the state in which your facility is located, and "facid" is the state assigned identifier of your facility.

In another development, CMS has changed the calculations for points related to inspections (surveys and complaints). We have made the corrections in the worksheet for members to use to calculate their points for inspections in the 5-star rating system.

The new worksheet is available by clicking here

<http://www.agingervicesmn.org/inc/data/InspectionworksheeTDec.2008.xls>. You may also download the worksheet from our website. On the home page, click on Regulations on the left side, then scroll down to nursing homes and then down to federal regulations. The first file listed should be "Inspections Worksheet".

CMS now uses two similar but not identical worksheets. The "Inspections Worksheet" assigns more points for severity/scope scores of D, E, F, G, H, and I than does the worksheet for Special Focus Facilities. The "inspections worksheet" assigns 4 points to a D, while the SFF worksheet assigns 2 points.

Members who calculated their points using the SFF worksheet will want to transfer their data to the inspections worksheet to get their correct number of points. We apologize for not having caught the change earlier.

For Further Information:

Contact Darrell Shreve at dshreve@agingervicesmn.org.

Governor Says Health and Human Services Growing at Unsustainable Rate

Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty delivered his State of the State speech last Thursday, focusing on cutting business taxes and cutting spending, along with an increase in K-12 education spending for specific proposals.

He spent very little time on health care and human services, other than to say this area is growing at an unsustainable rate and to promise that current eligibility for children will be protected. The governor failed to place older adult services on his priority list of areas to protect; he failed to address Minnesota's changing demographics; and he failed to address the need for long-term care reform.

In addition, Gov. Pawlenty neglected to specify which constituencies will bear the brunt of his cuts. Some reports speculate that, in order to fulfill his promises without raising taxes, he could take at least a 20 percent slice of the HHS budget, which includes aging services.

Other rumors claim cuts will stay within the single digits. Regardless, either would be devastating to all Minnesotans, including providers of long-term care services. We will not see details of the governor's budget plan until it is released Tuesday, Jan. 27.

For Further Information:

Contact Jen McNertney at jcnertney@agingervicesmn.org.

Aging Services Is Member of The Vulnerable Adult Justice Project

Aging Services of Minnesota has joined forces with a number of provider groups and consumer advocates to launch the Vulnerable Adult Justice Project.

On Friday, Darrell Shreve, Aging Services Vice President of Health Policy joined representatives from Minnesota Office of Ombudsman For Long-Term Care, AARP Minnesota, the Alzheimer's Association of Minnesota and North Dakota, Care Providers of Minnesota, William Mitchell College of Law's ElderCare Rights Alliance, the Elder Justice and Policy Center and the Minnesota HomeCare Association at a press briefing in the state Capitol to put a face to this cause.

The collaborating organizations are launching a campaign to increase public awareness about abuse of vulnerable adults. This effort will also include posters and pocket cards that list warning signs of possible abuse, identify the ombudsman offices as contacts on whether something is abuse, and provide information on how and where to report suspected abuse.

A key aspect of this campaign, according to project members is outreach to family members and friends of clergy, law enforcement, prosecutors and other key community members to recognize the potential signs of elder abuse.

The group will also be stressing to legislators the importance of passing the Vulnerable Adult Act Reform Bill. The bill is scheduled to be introduced in February. For the past 15 months, Aging Services and the other associations and organizations have worked through a vulnerable adult stakeholder group to craft the reforms that are contained in this legislation.

The collaboration began in late 2007 - before the alleged incidents in Albert Lea and Montevideo - with an initial focus on proposing legislation that would increase the protection of vulnerable adults. In particular, there was widespread agreement that the Vulnerable Adults Act needed to be revised in order to deal with the increasingly common problem of financial exploitation of vulnerable adults in the community, often by family members. The participating members also identified needs for improved training for county investigators, law enforcement, and direct care workers.

During 2008, the collaboration reached consensus on a number of improvements that would require legislative action, and the bill is in the process of being drafted. It includes our proposed fix for the dual reporting of abuse, neglect, and misappropriation of resident property by care centers, as well as a variety of other measures.

Aging Services staff will discuss the content of the bill as well as the public awareness campaign at the district meetings over the next two weeks.

To view the material, click <http://www.agingservicesmn.org/inc/data/ElderAbuseFlyer.pdf>

Albert Lea Update

The two teenagers charged as adults in the case of alleged abuse at Good Samaritan Society of Albert Lea will be arraigned in Freeborn County District Court this week on charges ranging from mandated failure to report suspected abuse to criminal abuse of a vulnerable adult and assault in the fifth degree.

Because this issue will once again be in the news, your local media may be contacting you for reaction. Please contact Bill Floyd at bfloyd@agingservicesmn.org if you have questions.

For Further Information:

Contact Darrell Shreve at dshreve@agingservicesmn.org Mary Youle at myoule@agingservicesmn.org or Kari Thurlow at kthurlow@agingservicesmn.org

Vulnerable Adult Reporting System is Topic of Hearing

On Thursday, the Health Care and Human Services Policy and Oversight Committee, chaired by Rep. Paul Thissen (D-Minneapolis), held a hearing on care center regulations pertaining to vulnerable adults.

Aging Services Vice President of Advocacy Kari Thurlow and Vice President of Health Policy Darrell Shreve both testified on behalf of Aging Services members and answered questions about how the vulnerable adult reporting system works.

Jerry Kerber of the Department of Human Services and Darcy Miner of the Minnesota Department of Health provided informative testimony about what happens to individuals who commit these crimes.

Melody Nordby, an employee at the **Luther Haven Care Center** in Montevideo testified that the most cost effective way to prevent elder abuse is to hire more staff, but that currently care centers are not given enough funding to meet this objective.

The hearing offered good information to committee members about how the system really works. Rep. Thissen stated that the committee may have additional hearings on vulnerable adult issues.

Difficult Questions Asked at Veteran's Committee Hearing

The Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee held a hearing on the Minneapolis Veterans Home's recent financial audit. Assistant Commissioner Gil Acevedo was asked difficult questions about the unfavorable report, which covered a period of time before his arrival and before the home changed governance.

The Ombudsman for Long Term Care testified that residents' quality of care has improved dramatically, a finding supported by resident surveys. In the end, committee members were supportive of Assistant Commissioner Acevedo's efforts in improving patient care and urged him to continue work on improving the home's financial practices.

For Further Information:

Contact Darrell Shreve at dshreve@agingservicesmn.org or Kari Thurlow at kthurlow@agingservicesmn.org.

Legislators Discuss Long-Term Care Reform at Aging Policy Summit

"Vision for the Future" was the theme of last Tuesday's Vital Aging Network (VAN) and the Minnesota Leadership Council on Aging (MNLCOA) Aging Policy Summit at the Wilder Foundation in St. Paul. Despite the cold Minnesota morning, the event was filled to capacity with 300 registrants.

Skip Humphrey (AARP), Paul Anton (Wilder's chief economist), and Jean Wood (Minnesota Board on Aging) set the stage with presentations on the current economic situation and possibilities for upcoming action by the MBA.

A legislative panel of Rep. Paul Thissen (D-Minneapolis) and Chair of the Health Care and Human Services Policy and Oversight Committee, Rep. Laura Brod (R-New Prague), and Sen. Julie Rosen (R-Fairmont) discussed the 2009 legislative session as well as long-term care reform.

All three legislators emphasized the challenges the state is facing with the budget deficit.

However, the legislators also expressed enthusiasm for reforming the long term care financing system, and starting sooner rather than later. See **HOT TOPICS** below for more information on financing reform bills.

Throughout the summit, audience members were prompted to vote in an interactive, real-time poll. The poll took the temperature of the room on things like support for revenue raisers for the state budget, legislative budget priorities, and "Communities for a Lifetime" legislation being pursued this session by the MNLCOA.

The poll provided some interesting insight, and was also a valuable addition to the summit. Incidentally, nearly 50 percent supported a temporary supplemental income tax on the highest incomes, 41 percent supported limiting cuts to older adult services through a small tax increase, and 43 percent indicated HHS was the most important budget item.

More results and information from the summit will be available on the MNLCOA website (<http://www.mnlcoa.org>).

HOT TOPICS: Will Financing Reform Legislation Pass This Session?

At the Aging Policy Summit, Aging Services Board member Shirley Barnes asked the legislative panel about the chances of financing reform passing this session.

The response? Rep. Paul Thissen (D-Minneapolis) will be the chief author of the Long Term Care Imperative's long term care financing reform bill, which will be introduced in the next couple of weeks.

The proposal is based on the insurance model first developed by the American Association for the Homes and Services for the Aging (AAHSA) Sen. Rosen also discussed some interesting proposals she is looking at for care centers, including critical access nursing homes and modification of rate equalization. Finally, Rep. Brod announced that she and Rep. Thissen would be jointly sponsoring legislation that creates a savings count similar to a 529 college savings account, except the money would be used for long-term care.

The bill is modeled on a plan in Nebraska. The next day, Rep. Brod and Thissen held a press conference on the proposal the next day.

We do need to have a safety net but what's equally important is we need people to start thinking and planning ahead and saving for their own retirement," Rep. Thissen said, "Thinking long-term about that because that really ultimately is the solution."

Performing Assessment or Reassessment In Timely Manner Difficult For Counties

Last Thursday, the working group of the Health and Human Services (HHS) Budget Division heard from counties regarding streamlining health and human services administration.

One area discussed at this meeting was PCA assessments. Counties are currently required to assess a potential PCA client within 30 days of a request and also perform an annual reassessment, or face a financial penalty discussed this issue.

However, counties say they are not responsible for case management of the program, and therefore do not always have the correct information to perform an assessment or reassessment in a timely manner. Although the Department of Human Services, providers and consumers also have responsibilities in the program, counties are the only party held accountable through financial penalties.

The counties recommend repealing the timeline requiring the initial assessment within 30 days as well as the annual reassessment and have also suggested centralizing some of the more administrative human services county functions. They support legislation to examine this idea more fully.

Incidentally, the Senate has begun its own online budget discussion, similar to the website hosted by the House of Representatives. The HHS-specific page is <http://budgetforum.senate.mn/?cat=21>. Please visit the website and remind legislators of the following:

- Long term care providers are economic engines in their communities, directly and indirectly providing 141,000 jobs statewide.
- It is time to be creative and look at new funding options like:
 - repealing rate equalization;
 - using the Health Care Access Fund to pay for employee health insurance;
 - allowing local referendums to fund home and community-based infrastructure;
 - requesting additional Medicaid matching funds in the federal economic stimulus package and requiring that money to be used for health care purposes.

- Minnesota needs long-term care financing reform that rewards personal responsibility, embraces consumer choice and empowerment, and supports informal caregiving.

Upcoming report

The Office of the Legislative Auditor is scheduled to release a PCA program evaluation report on Friday morning. The report will be available online at www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/2009/pca.htm

For Further Information:

Contact Jen McNertney at jmcnertney@agingservicesmn.org.

Minnesota Budget Trends Study Commission Releases Report

Former Commissioners Kevin Goodno and Jay Kiedrowski testified before House and Senate committees last week on the findings and recommendations of the Minnesota Budget Trends Study Commission.

The Commission was created to "study the impact that Minnesota's changing demographic trends will have on the long-term stability of state budget conditions, including examining revenue volatility and trend growth rates, current spending pressures, long term revenue forecasts and projected expenditure obligations."

The impact of an aging population surfaces in a number of areas in the report, including more individuals eligible for government assistance programs and fewer individuals in the workforce generating state income tax revenue.

The report outlines 14 key findings:

- Minnesota is currently experiencing a major, long-range demographic shift.
- Minnesota has become more diverse in recent years and this will continue to increase as economic growth depends on drawing new workers to the state.
- Public spending priorities will need to shift as Minnesota's economically dependent population grows larger and relies more heavily on fewer workers.
- Despite continuing to rank high among many key social and economic indicators, Minnesota's economy has underperformed recently relative to the nation.
- Demographic and economic factors will lead to lower growth of state tax revenues over the next 25 years.
- Minnesota has a long-term structural budget problem, with long term expenditure growth likely to outpace revenue growth.
- Health care growth will become the most important factor in controlling rising state expenditures.
- State revenue volatility makes long term budget instability more difficult to manage.
- Minnesota's general fund tax base has grown more volatile in the past decade.
- Replacing highly volatile tax base components with less volatile sources could reduce the volatility of the overall general fund tax system. However, such changes would also affect revenue growth rates and the distribution of the tax burden among taxpayers.
- Adjusting the mix of state taxes, while remaining tax base and revenue growth rate neutral, cannot significantly reduce revenue volatility without a radical change in tax rates and a dramatic reweighting of tax revenue sources to the system.
- Shifting consumption patterns have reduced Minnesota's sales tax base.
- Minnesota's statutory budget reserve ceiling has not grown to an appropriate level to adequately manage the underlying risks in Minnesota's tax system over time.
- Minnesota needs a cash flow reserve account of sufficient size so that the state can avoid short-term external borrowing during a biennium.

The Commission proposes 18 recommendations in the areas of: 1) Providing decision-makers and citizens with the necessary information to make informed budget and policy decisions; 2) Achieving a long-term balance of state revenues and expenditures; and 3) Managing state budget volatility. Some of the most relevant recommendations include:

- Create a long-term public-private group with the responsibility to annually recommend policy changes for controlling the total cost of public healthcare and medical assistance services. The group, to be selected by the Governor and Legislature, should be charged with sustaining progress in health care reform and integrating our basic and continuing care systems so that incentives are for better care, not higher costs.
- Release a demographic forecast at the start of each biennium in order to remind policy makers about the changing population and to clarify the impacts.
- Financial forecasts should be based on current law and inflation of both revenues and expenditures to provide an accurate planning perspective.

Commissioners Goodno and Kiedrowski will be presenting their findings and recommendations, and the impacts for aging services, as part of the CEO Intensive at the Aging Services Institute next month. For a copy of the complete report click here

<http://www.mmb.state.mn.us/doc/budget/trends/report-09.pdf>

For Further Information:

Contact Lori Meyer at lmeyer@agingservicesmn.org.

Peanut Butter Recall Growing in Scope

The Salmonella outbreak linked to peanut butter that began two weeks ago continues to grow and take on new dimensions with each passing day.

The widening scope of the investigation corresponded with the news that the two Minnesota seniors who died of salmonella-related effects resided in a Brainerd care center operated by the Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society of Sioux Falls, S.D. So far, 453 infections have been reported in 43 states. Twenty-two percent of patients have been hospitalized, and six have died.

On Sunday, federal health authorities asked consumers to avoid eating foods that contain peanut butter until they can learn more about a deadly salmonella outbreak. But the FDA says there's no indication of problems with peanut butter sold in jars at supermarkets. Officials say the major brands of peanut butter, sold in jars and plastic containers, are not a problem.

Late last week, the Kellogg Company, based in Michigan recalled 16 products, including peanut butter sandwich crackers and two varieties of peanut butter cookies. Involved in the recall were sales of its Austin and Keebler-branded toasted peanut butter sandwich crackers, peanut butter and jelly sandwich crackers, cheese and peanut butter sandwich crackers and peanut butter-chocolate sandwich crackers as a precautionary measure. The Midwest supermarket chain Hy-Vee is recalling products made in its bakery departments with peanut butter.

Federal food safety inspectors are focusing on a peanut-processing plant in Georgia that makes peanut butter for institutional use as the possible source of the outbreak.

Peanut Corp. of America recalled the peanut butter Tuesday after the Center for Disease Control and Prevention identified it as a likely source of the outbreak. The company sells bulk peanut butter under the King Nut and Parnell's Pride labels which are sold to care centers, schools and hospitals, but are not available at grocery stores.

Initially, Minnesota health officials issued a product alert for peanut butter after finding a jar that was contaminated with a strain of salmonella linked to an outbreak across the United States.

For Further Information:

Visit: <http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/salmonellatyph.html>.

Resident Population By Payor Source And Room Type Survey Due Wednesday

Last week, care center members should have received in the mail the Long-Term Care Imperative 2008 Financial Survey which provides important information about the financial condition of care centers for our advocacy activities.

Care center members can enter their information online at <http://www.isgsurveys.com/ssiweb/MN2/MN2logn.htm>. The survey ID for your care center is in the letter that went out with the hard copy of the survey. Please be sure to complete this survey by Friday, Feb.20, because we need our data on this topic to include information from as many Minnesota care centers as possible.

We are also currently collecting some supplemental information from care centers on their resident population by payer source and room type. Care center members are asked to please fill out that brief survey by Wednesday, Jan. 21, so that we can begin using it to analyze the impact of various potential legislative proposals, including changes to rate equalization.

That information can be submitted at:

<http://survey.minnesotacca.com/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=92ML312>.

For Further Information:

Contact Jeff Bostic at jbostic@agingservicesmn.org.

Nutrition And Sanitary Food Conditions Revisions Topic of MDH Conference Call

The next Minnesota Department of Health one-hour statewide conference calls for care centers on Monday, Jan. 26, will discuss the implementation of recent survey guidance, particularly the nutrition and sanitary food conditions revisions.

Previous statewide calls have been well received by providers, who have been able to raise concerns and obtain answers for their questions.

Registration will be required. MDH will be using an online registration process, and the link for online registration will be posted on the webpage for information bulletins no later than the preceding Friday. The one-hour call is scheduled to begin at 11 a.m.

Members should mark these dates on their calendars for future conference calls and be sure to register online by the registration dates.

Call on Monday, March 30, registration by Friday, March 27

Call on Monday, June 15, registration by Friday, June 12

MDH requests that each care center use only one telephone line. There is no charge to participate in the call. The number for the conference call will be provided during the registration process.

Here is the link you will need to register separately for each of the three conference calls:

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fpc/profinfo/infobul.htm>.

MDH will post the agendas for the calls on this web site.

The information above is taken from Information Bulletin 08-11, which is also available at the link.

For Further Information:

Contact Darrell Shreve at dshreve@agingervicesmn.org.

Feb. 5 Videoconference Will Focus On Basic Policies For LTCC

On Thursday, Feb. 5, the Department of Human Services (DHS) will offer two videoconferences covering Long-Term Care Consultation (LTCC), Elderly Waiver and Family Caregiving Supports.

The LTCC program will be covered in the morning session at 9 a.m. and Elderly Waiver and Family Caregiving Supports will be covered in the 1 p.m. videoconference.

The training sessions cover the basic policies and procedures for the Long Term Care Consultation (LTCC), Elderly Waiver (EW), and Caregiver Support programs. Presenters will be the following DHS staff: Jolene Kohn, Strategic Planner, Aging and Adult Services Division; Libby Rossett-Brown, Administrator, Elderly Waiver Program, Aging and Adult Services Division; and Susan Wenberg, AC and Family CG Support Program Administrator, Aging and Adult Services, Division.

Learning objectives and lists of the program sites are found at

http://www.agingervicesmn.org/inc/data/Feb5VideoconferenceAnnouncement_4_.pdf. Pre-registration is required by going to

<http://agingtraining.dhs.state.mn.us>. Registration closes at 5 p.m. on the Monday prior to the session.

Minnesota Elder Economic Security Initiative Video Conference Announced

On Tuesday, Feb. 10, the Minnesota Elder Economic Security Initiative (MinnEESI) will host a video conference to release two reports: the Minnesota Elder Economic Security Standard Index Report, and the policy brief that examines the issue of income adequacy for Minnesota elders.

This video conference will review these reports, discuss the potential uses of the data, and explore next steps. All program participants will have an opportunity to discuss the findings, data uses, and action steps specific to income adequacy and Minnesota elders.

The MinnEESI promotes the well-being and autonomy goals of elders and their families through tangible tools that shape public policy and programs and seeks to assure the economic security and financial self-sufficiency for our elders, particularly elderly women.

The Minnesota Elder Economic Security Initiative Leadership Team consists of: The Minnesota Women's Consortium, Minnesota Legislative Office on the Economic Status of Women, Transform 2010 & Office of Economic Opportunity, Minnesota Dept of Human Services, Minnesota Community Action Partnership and the Center on Aging, University of Minnesota. Click here for information on MinnEESI, and the national EESI partnership.

The video conference will be held Tuesday, Feb. 10, from 1:30 to 3:30 pm at 18 video conference site, including: Alexandria, Bemidji, Crookston, Detroit Lakes, Duluth, International Falls, Mankato, Marshall, Minneapolis, Mora, Redwing, Rochester, St. Cloud, Virginia, Wheaton, Willmar, Worthington, and St. Paul (broadcast location).

Click here to register online. Participants are asked to register online no later than Wednesday, Feb. 4. Please note. Registration is free, but space is limited at some locations.

For Further Information:

Contact Marie Nelson, MinnEESI Project Coordinator, at eesi@mnwomen.org.

Long-Term Care Imperative Hosts Webinar on Property Section of Cost Report

Last Tuesday, the Long-Term Care Imperative hosted a free webinar for all care centers on the new "Capital Asset History" section of the 2008 cost report.

The questions in that portion of the report are intended to collect information necessary to model a new property payment system based on fair rental value. Although that system will not even be proposed by the Long-Term Care Imperative until at least next legislative session, the information being collected on the cost report will allow us to determine the financial impact of the new system on members.

With cost reports due to DHS in February, care centers need to act quickly to be sure that they are submitting the appropriate data so that the modeling will provide an accurate picture.

Materials from the free webinar, including a PDF version of the materials and a recording of the entire webinar are available on our web site. Care centers who did not participate are encouraged to review the materials, and we recommend that they watch the full hour program, if possible, because it includes useful questions and clarifications. To access the materials, go www.agingervicesmn.org and log-in. After that, click "Regulations" then "Nursing Homes" then "Medicaid Reimbursement and Issues."

For Further Information:

Contact Jeff Bostic at jbostic@agingervicesmn.org.

Action Expected on Union Card-Check Legislation

Congress could take up the Employee Freedom of Choice Act within the next few weeks which would allow workplaces to be organized if a majority of workers indicate support by signing a petition or a postcard, without the protection of a federally supervised secret ballot election.

The American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging and other provider groups oppose this measure because we believe that decades of experience have shown that current law equitably balances employer and employee interests. Please Contact Congress and urge your legislators to vote against this bill.

For Further Information:

Contact: Marsha Greenfield, (202) 508-9488.

AAHSA's Health Policy Recommendations for Obama Administration, Congress

This month, our national affiliate, AAHSA, was asked to present recommendations to the Obama transition health policy team covering both short term and long term objectives. Their recommendations have also been shared with members of Congress.

Aging Services of Minnesota members are encouraged to contact your U.S. Representative and Senator to urge them to include the following suggestions in their stimulus and health care reform packages -- their major agenda items for the 111th Congress. Since the stimulus package is being worked on now, it is important to Contact Congress immediately.

If you prefer to write your legislator, AAHSA has prepared a sample letter that you can send.

Health Policy Priorities: LONG TERM

- Include long-term care services and supports in health reform: it is false economy not to do so. If done through our national insurance model for all Americans, it can insure families against their biggest financial exposure and cut Medicaid long-term care expenditures. Senator Kennedy's CLASS ACT, which President-elect Obama supported, accomplishes this objective. It should be included in the president's plan. This plan is actuarially sound, available to all, and helps people stay at home.
- Make \$5.5 billion available immediately for 3,000 affordable housing projects for the elderly, retirement communities, nursing homes and for new technologies. This would immediately jump start construction and service jobs. Senior housing with services can serve as the infrastructure for chronic care management, and keep seniors out of hospitals and nursing homes. Technology applications for health records, independence and safety, and better utilization of caregiver time in care delivery settings are proven quality improvement and cost reduction mechanisms.
- Make \$4 billion available to stabilize America's 16,000 nursing homes, many of which are under-funded. If done through the Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) mechanism, \$3 billion should go to nursing homes with a direct flow-through to direct care workers, and \$1 billion to expand home and community services to help family caregivers keep seniors and others facing frailties at home.
- Direct the secretaries of HHS, HUD and Labor to create a coordinated and integrated approach to the orchestration of hundreds of government-defined services for the elderly. The objective is to help older and younger people receive the services they need, when they need them, in a place they call home. Current programs are fragmented and duplicative in funding and policy.
- Recognize that post-acute care is separate from long-term care and has different implications for reimbursement, training of staff and care planning. As more people are served by in the community, post-acute care is serving those with even higher levels of acuity.

Health Policy Priorities: SHORT TERM

In addition to the stimulus recommendations above related to immediate construction and employment, here are additional short term priorities - all designed to improve quality and manage resources.

- Preserve the inflation adjustments in Medicare for nursing homes, home health, PACE and hospice.
- Provide a two year FMAP increase that assures that the funds flow to direct care workers first.
- Expand home and community services to address demand.
- Implement a personal electronic health record plan, to include long-term care with comprehensive interoperability standards.
- Direct the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to complete the Minimum Data Sets (MDS) upgrade, coupled with medical record interoperability.
- Direct the Institute of Medicine to look at updated consumer protections under the nursing home enforcement process and address components that have no quality measures or appropriate oversight at present.
- Create a long-term care set-aside in federal nurse training and recruitment programs to address the serious shortage in our field.
- Fund research into the effective treatment and prevention of Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and other diseases that now bring about large long-term care costs.

For Further Information:

Contact Kari Thurlow at kthurlow@agingservicesmn.org.

Episcopal Homes and Accessible Space, Inc. Receive 202/811 HUD Funding

Episcopal Homes and Accessible Space, Inc. will receive Capital Advance grants and three-year subsidy contracts for Minnesota low-income housing projects under HUD's Section 202 and Section 811 programs.

Episcopal Homes' \$6.4 million HUD Section 202 grant will go toward the development of Frogtown Square, the centerpiece of neighborhood revitalization efforts on the blighted Northeast corner of University and Dale in Saint Paul. Construction will begin in early fall, 2009. When completed in late summer, 2010, Frogtown Square will be a mixed use complex with 50 units of housing for low-income seniors above shops and restaurants.

Episcopal Homes will manage the senior housing portion of the project. NEDU LLC, a coalition of local community organizations, will manage the retail space. The City of Saint Paul is providing approximately \$3 million in land and grants. Additional funds are anticipated from other agencies and

foundations.

Excel Energy and energy-efficiency engineers will work on the project to ensure that the design of Frogtown Square employs the highest level of green technology consistent with fiscal responsibility.

"The building of Frogtown Square represents nothing less than the rebirth of the neighborhood," says Dr. Beverly Hawkins, chair of the NEDU board. "We have been working on this project with the City of Saint Paul for more than five years. We asked Episcopal Homes to partner with us in mid-2007, and their success with securing funding for HUD-202 projects has been instrumental in making our vision a reality."

Episcopal Homes president and CEO Marvin Plakut said, "We are honored that HUD awarded us the grant, appreciative of the ardent support that our partnership with NEDU has received from the mayor and city officials, and grateful for this opportunity to advance our mission of providing high quality housing for low-income seniors in our city."

Accessible Space, Inc. was awarded funding for seven Section 202 and 811 projects nationwide in this funding round. Accessible Space, Inc. will receive a capital advance of \$1,792,700 and a three-year rental subsidy of \$165,300, for an 811 project in Alexandria, Minnesota. The project will have 14 one-bedroom units for very low-income disabled persons and one two-bedroom unit for a resident manager and is designed to serve both physically and developmentally disabled persons. It will include a community dining room, lounges, a patio, a raised garden area, a walking path and a multipurpose service area. The project is conveniently located near a shopping center.

Joann Hanson reports that the community of Alexandria was very supportive of the project, especially families with developmentally disabled children.

In addition to the 811 project in Alexandria, Accessible Space will develop a 202 and an 811 building in Hudson, WI, as well as projects in Nevada, Oklahoma, South Dakota and Montana.

The other projects receiving HUD funding in Minnesota are:

- Common Bond Communities has been awarded a capital advance of \$5,081,800, and a three-year rental subsidy of \$471,600 for 40 one-bedroom units in Maplewood. This Section 202 project will be part of a larger development including other types of housing.
- Fraser has been awarded an 811 capital advance of \$1,931,800 and a three-year rental subsidy of \$165,300 to rehab an existing building in Hopkins for 14 one-bedroom units for very low-income disabled persons and a two bedroom for a resident manager. The project is for the Developmentally Disabled and will include a community room with space for computers and a small community kitchen.

For Further Information:

Contact Mary Youle at myoule@agingservicesmn.org.

January District Meeting Educational Programs Approved for Clock Hours

Get a jump start on your CEUs this week - even before the "Changing Lives" Institute in February - by attending the member-only January district meeting educational programs at no charge.

The Minnesota Board of Examiners for Nursing Home Administrators has approved our programs for one clock hour.

The first program option is "Protecting Your Reputation and Your Residents" featuring Susan Voigt, Attorney with business partner firm Voigt, Klegon & Rode, LLC and Liz Sether, Nurse Consultant for Aging Services of Minnesota.

You've got your policies in place and you've done your staff training, yet somehow events can still occur. How? The recent media frenzy around vulnerable adult abuse in Minnesota settings could have any provider on edge. As a concerned community of leaders we have an opportunity to gather, share, and become better through this important program.

A second option for members is "Are You Ready to Work with the Customized Living Tool?" which will now also include a leadership dialogue on dealing with challenging families and a special invitation to the Area Agency on Aging Director to discuss issues related to transitional consultation. Providers offering assisted living services are required to tell prospective residents about the availability of transitional consultation and how to access it.

This program features Mary Youle, Vice President of Housing & Community Services for Aging Services of Minnesota.

So mark your calendar now and be sure not to miss these complimentary education programs.

Tuesday, Jan. 20

District G Meeting
9 a.m. - 12 noon
James J. Hill House
240 Summit Avenue
St. Paul

Wednesday, Jan. 21

District E Meeting
12 noon - 3 p.m.
The Landmark Bistro
100 W. College Drive
Marshall

Thursday, Jan. 22

District F Meeting

9 a.m. - 12 noon
Holiday Inn
1701 4th Street NW
Austin

Tuesday, Jan. 27

District D Meeting
9 a.m. - 12 noon
St. Benedict's Senior Community
1810 Minnesota Boulevard SE
Saint Cloud

Wednesday, Jan. 28

District C Meeting
1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
Emmanuel Community
Conference Center
1415 Madison Avenue
Detroit Lakes

Thursday, Jan. 29

District A Webinar from 9 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. Contact Aging Services for the webinar and conference call details.

Friday, Jan. 30

District B Webinar from 9 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. Contact Aging Services for the webinar and conference call details.

Staff will provide CEU sign up sheets at each of the programs offered at the in-person meetings and webinar participants in Districts A and B will receive their electronically. All sign up sheets require member signatures and will be kept on file in the Association offices.

Programs have been designed for leaders at all member sites, including CEOs, Housing Managers, Care Center Administrators, corporate office staff, etc. Directors of Nursing and Social Work staff may also be interested in attending the Protecting Your Reputation and Your Residents breakout program.

For further information on BENHA program approval for these two educational offerings:

Contact Heidi Simpson at hsimpson@agingservicesmn.org.

For further information about details at your local district meeting:

Contact Adam Suomala at asuomala@agingservicesmn.org.

Latest Version of Customized Living Tool is Posted; Bulletin Expected Soon

The Jan. 13 version of the Elderly Waiver Customized Living tool has been posted on the Aging Services web site.

You will find the tool that can be filled in with data at

<http://www.agingservicesmn.org/inc/data/CLWorkbook1-15-09.xls>

and the version that shows the formulas is found at

<http://www.agingservicesmn.org/inc/data/CLWorkbook1-15-09 Formulas.xls>

Aging Services has requested an electronic copy of the instructions for the tool from Department of Human Services (DHS) staff and hopes to post them soon.

At a Jan. 15 training session, DHS staff said that the bulletin explaining the Customized Living tool is undergoing final review and will be issued very soon, perhaps next week.

More information will be available at the upcoming District meetings. (see article above)

Three Weeks Until Institute

Time's getting short. In just three weeks, we will gather at the Institute.

No matter what your role in your organization, this event has abundant sessions designed just for you.

Click <http://www.agingservicesmn.org/inc/data/InstituteTracks.pdf> to see all the sessions available to you whether you work in administration, nursing, dietary, environmental services, pastoral care, human resources, marketing, or virtually anywhere in aging services!

The Institute has more than 100 concurrent sessions over three days, plus bonus learning opportunities including pre-conference sessions, intensives for CFOs and Leadership, and a half-day workshop with keynote speaker Dr. Chip Bell to help you create a culture of knock-your-socks-off customer service. There is truly something for everyone. If you're not registered yet, there is still time. Visit our Institute page on www.agingservicesinstitute.org today.

Stay Connected and Visit Our New Blog

The rumors are true! Aging Services now has a blog.

Advocacy team members Kari Thurlow and Jen McNertney will be blogging from the Capitol on the doings around the Legislature. We look forward to your feedback. Check us out at <http://agingexchange.wordpress.com/>.

Aging Services thanks 2008 Annual Sponsor **Kraus-Anderson Construction Company** and our other sponsors for their support and partnership.

Aging Services of Minnesota

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