



Posted:11-24-2008

### Community Consortium Grant Program Applications Open

The Community Consortiums grant program, which was initiated by legislation introduced by the Long-Term Care Imperative, is now open for applications.

DHS hosted an informational videoconference about the program last week, and another one will be held March 24, 2009. At that point, those interested in applying for a grant will likely be well along in their planning process.

Responses to the RFP are due by May 14, and it is anticipated that developing applications will take much of the next few months, as consortiums form and do the work of figuring out how they will address the needs in their area.

DHS has created a section of its web site at [www.dhs.state.mn.us/consortium](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/consortium) where they are posting information related to the grant program, including a link to the RFP. The site also features links to various required forms as well as budget spreadsheets that need to be submitted with the application. Another aspect is a "frequently asked questions" section which DHS will update as they receive questions about the RFP.

The RFP describes in detail the application process as well as how applications will be scored. The two most important parts of the application, in terms of points, are the description of the consortium activities and the budget. The description of activities addresses what the consortium will be doing to improve service offerings and coordination in its area, and the budget explains how the consortium proposes to use the grant money.

The RFP requires a 100 percent match from participants, which has to be indicated in the project budget and can include cash or various forms of in-kind contributions such as staff and volunteer time.

Those parties interested in applying for these grants should be concentrating on what problem they want to solve, in what area, and who the partners in the consortium will be. Those portions of the application will also be scored, and an effective description of the problem and identification of partners will be crucial to scoring well throughout the application. The application requires a specification of the joint decision making structure used by the consortium, so determining who the partners will be and how that decision making will work needs to be one of the first steps in the process.

Under this grant program, the state can make grants to up to three community consortiums. Assuming the funding sources for this program are not reduced in the next session, grants can be up to \$2.4 million for three years for three projects. In their proposed budgets, those applying for the grants will specify how much money they want for their project.

The applications also need to include a proposal for evaluating the effectiveness of the consortiums efforts, although DHS will have available \$50,000 per grant to collect data and complete a study of the project.

#### **For Further Information:**

Contact Jeff Bostic at [jbostic@agingservicesmn.org](mailto:jbostic@agingservicesmn.org)

or Kari Thurlow at [kthurlow@agingservicesmn.org](mailto:kthurlow@agingservicesmn.org).

### Members Invited to Dec. 2 Meeting on the DHS Customized Living Tool

Interested members are invited to a meeting at 2:30 on Tuesday, Dec. 2, at the Aging Services of Minnesota Offices, 2550 University Avenue West, St. Paul, Suite 350 South, to review and comment on the revised Elderly Waiver Customized Living tool.

The revised tool and instructions and other materials are found by going to [www.agingservicesmn.org](http://www.agingservicesmn.org), log in, click on Regulations and look for "Elderly Waiver and Customized Living" under Community-Based Services.

Space is limited for the meeting, so please contact Mary Youle at [myoule@agingservicesmn.org](mailto:myoule@agingservicesmn.org) if you plan to attend.

### Tool Will Assist In Calculating Part B Therapy Rates

AAHSA has prepared a tool for calculating the Medicare Part B Therapy Rates effective in calendar year 2009.

The Excel spreadsheet can be downloaded from the AAHSA web site by going to [http://www.aahsa.org/article\\_members.aspx?id=5794](http://www.aahsa.org/article_members.aspx?id=5794). The new rates include a fee schedule update of 1.1 percent, as well as updated geographic cost factors.

**For Further Information:**

Contact Jeff Bostic [jbostic@agingservicesmn.org](mailto:jbostic@agingservicesmn.org).

**Metro LTC Emergency Preparedness Set To Host Initial Meeting**

The LTC workgroup in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, formed earlier this year because long-term care is an area of special focus in emergency preparedness, will hold its initial meeting on Friday, Dec. 12, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

The meeting will be held in the Big Fork Room at the Snelling Office Park of the Minnesota Department of Health, located on Energy Park Drive just west of Snelling Avenue in St. Paul.

We encourage members to send a staff person to this meeting to develop relationships and gather information that may be crucial in any number of emergency scenarios. The workgroup also has funding for projects that will meet the criteria they develop. Please RSVP to Donna Blomquist at [donna.blomquist@co.hennepin.mn.us](mailto:donna.blomquist@co.hennepin.mn.us).

**For Further Information:**

Contact Blomquist or Penny Mills, the regional healthcare preparedness coordinator at (612) 873-3360 or pager (612) 530-0185 or [penny.mills@hcmcd.org](mailto:penny.mills@hcmcd.org), or Darrell Shreve at [dshreve@agingservicesmn.org](mailto:dshreve@agingservicesmn.org).

**Nov. 26 Is Deadline For Dollars and Sense Program**

Members interested in improving their agency's financial health will want to register by Wednesday, Nov. 26, to attend the 'beyond the basics' workshop which is being co-sponsored with the Minnesota HomeCare Association on Dec. 3.

The price to attend is \$150 for the first registrant and \$140 for each additional registrant. Registration is being handled by the Minnesota HomeCare Association via their web site [www.mnhomocare.org](http://www.mnhomocare.org). The program will be held at the University of Minnesota Continuing Education and Conference Center in St. Paul.

This one-day program is designed to provide attendees with the tools for standardizing billing processes, cost analysis, investments, development of dashboards and budgets that make 'sense' while considering the legal issues related to reimbursement.

Featured faculty include Debbie Elsey, Heidi Hillman and Ron Clitherow from business partner member LarsonAllen, LLP, so you know that your staff will benefit from their expertise, experiences and written resources they'll be sharing with attendees.

**For Further Information:**

Contact Heidi Simpson [hsimpson@agingservicesmn.org](mailto:hsimpson@agingservicesmn.org).

**CMS Soliciting States for Medicare P4P**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services will select up to five host states, plus alternates, for its Medicare Nursing Home Value-Based Purchasing demonstration, a "pay for performance" initiative designed to make additional payments to care centers with relatively high quality performance or high improvement in quality.

CMS announced the demonstration project in a letter to state Medicaid directors. The project will begin in the summer of 2009 and run for three years.

Under the guidelines, CMS requires that the states have good survey and certification processes (as measured by their evaluations by CMS). They also will require that the states have at least 100 care centers that wish to participate in the demonstration (50 facilities for the experimental group and 50 for the control group).

The project would measure each facility's quality in four domains:

- Staffing (30 percent)--this information will come from payroll data
  - RN hours / resident day
  - Licensed nurse hours/resident day
  - Certified nurse aide hours/resident day
  - Nursing staff turnover rate
- Appropriate hospitalizations (30 percent)
- MDS outcomes (20 percent)
  - For chronic care residents, five of the current Quality Measures
  - For post-acute care residents, three of the PAC quality measures that were validated in 2004

- Survey deficiencies (20 percent)
  - Screening--facilities with a deficiency at the Substandard Quality of Care or Actual Harm levels would not be eligible
  - Performance measurement--facilities would be ranked within their state to minimize concerns about variations across states

During each demonstration year, CMS will collect data from the participating care centers. Then twelve months later, CMS will make payments to the care centers based on their **overall** score once CMS has aggregated the scores for each domain. The intent is to reward overall performance or improvement, not specialized performance or improvement in one domain.

The payments to care centers will come from the savings calculated for the reduction in Medicare hospitalizations. The Minnesota Department of Human Services is reviewing the CMS letter with interest. States have until Jan. 9, 2009, to indicate their interest.

**For Further Information:**

Contact Darrell Shreve at [dshreve@agingservicesmn.org](mailto:dshreve@agingservicesmn.org)

or Jeff Bostic at [jbostic@agingservicesmn.org](mailto:jbostic@agingservicesmn.org).

### Care Center Residents Can Apply for TV Converter Coupons

A new rule allowing care center residents to obtain coupons to buy converter boxes for analog television sets is now in effect.

According to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce's office, residents of licensed care centers, intermediate care facilities, assisted living facilities and households that use a post office box for mail delivery will be eligible to request coupons from the TV Converter Box Coupon Program.

Coupon applications can take several weeks to process and mail so consumers opting to purchase a converter box should act now, and call stores before shopping to ensure the desired converter box is available. Converter boxes generally cost between \$45 and \$80 and coupons expire 90 days from the date they are mailed.

Applicants will be required to provide their name, address of the facility and whether they receive television exclusively with an antenna, or through cable, satellite or other pay television service.

A family member or a representative from the licensed facility may apply for one coupon for a nursing home resident, but the coupon will be mailed directly to the nursing home resident. A special application will be made available for care center residents to fill out once the rule becomes effective.

Also, applicants who utilize a post office box for mail delivery will be able to request two coupons through the normal application process. Applicants will be required to provide their physical residence in addition to their post office box number.

The Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005 requires full-power television stations to cease analog broadcasts and switch to digital after Feb. 17, 2009. The Act authorizes Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to create the TV Converter Box Coupon Program, which is funded by the \$19 billion airwaves auction and not tax dollars.

For consumers choosing the converter box option, the TV Converter Box Coupon Program permits all households to request up to two coupons - each worth \$40 - toward the purchase of certified converter boxes. Coupons may be requested until March 31, 2009, or while supplies last. Consumers can purchase a converter box at one of the more than 29,000 participating local, phone or online retailers.

**For Further Information:**

Visit [www.DTV2009.gov](http://www.DTV2009.gov) or call 1-888-CALL-FCC.

### UL Warns of Counterfeit Electric Signs

Underwriters Laboratories (UL) has announced that electric signs manufactured by Clover Signs bear a counterfeit UL Mark and the company is not authorized to use the Mark on its signs or represent that its products are UL listed because these signs have not evaluated for safety.

UL recommends that these signs not be put in use or, if already in use, contacting qualified personnel to take the signs out of service. UL recommends that these signs not be put in use or, if already in use, contacting qualified personnel to take the signs out of service. The Clover Signs with the counterfeit UL Mark were manufactured April 2005 to the present. In addition to the counterfeit UL Mark, the label includes an issue number within these ranges:

- BF-565351 to BF-565362
- BR-774301 to BR-774800
- CX-285601 to CX-286100

The company name CLOVER SIGNS and/or E215710 may also be on the label or on a separate label.

Many regulatory and quasi-regulatory bodies require UL approval on various types of equipment. A legitimate label with the UL Mark indicates that Underwriters' Laboratories has tested the product and determined it to meet UL's standards for safety.

**For Further Information:**

Contact Darrell Shreve at [dshreve@agingservicesmn.org](mailto:dshreve@agingservicesmn.org).

### Survey Looks At Needs of Aging Population

Seventy-three communities (84 percent) have initiated some action to prepare for the aging of the population, according to a survey conducted by the Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging (MAAA) in the fall of 2007.

To learn about specific examples of action, you can read the recently released survey at <http://www.tcaging.org/>. The report breaks out the results by county, and MAAA and SE Metro SAIL (through its Community Connections Initiative) have identified selected cities for more outreach related to Communities for a Lifetime (CFL).

These selected cities will be offered additional demographic and other information as well as resources related to CFL. Providers are encouraged to contact their own municipalities and counties about getting involved in local efforts to plan for an aging population.

For more background on the subject, review the Department of Human Services' report, *A Blueprint for 2010--Preparing Minnesota for the Age Wave*, available at [http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/aging/documents/pub/dhs16\\_139305.pdf](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/aging/documents/pub/dhs16_139305.pdf).

***For Further Information:***

Contact Mary Youle at [myoule@agingervicesmn.org](mailto:myoule@agingervicesmn.org).

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