

AL Medicaid Coverage Grows

New Report Finds ‘Notable’ Growth In Six States

Nationwide, about 131,000 low-income elderly Americans are receiving Medicaid coverage for services in assisted living communities this year—a 9.2 percent increase since 2007, according to a new comprehensive report recently released by the National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL).

In 2007, there were 120,159 Medicaid recipients receiving services in licensed assisted living communities. The number of communities par-

ticipating in a state Medicaid program increased from 9,878 in 2007 to 11,456 this year, according to “State Medicaid Reimbursement Policies and Practices in Assisted Living,” authored by health policy researcher Robert Mollica.

“Notable growth in the number of

participants occurred in HCBS [home- and community-based services] waiver programs in Arizona, California, Idaho, Illinois, and Minnesota,” the report says.

Medicaid waivers provide a mechanism for states to use federal funds in

ways that do not conform to federal standards. States typically use one of three approaches to pay for services in residential care settings under Medicaid: HCBS waivers under Section 1915, Section 1115 demonstration programs, or personal care provided directly

under a state Medicaid plan. NCAL’s study updates 2007 national data on state Medicaid payment methods and related policies, including how states respond to Medicaid not paying for the room-and-board portion of assisted living.

“The report indicates that assisted living communities are an important and growing residential option under the Medicaid program,” says Karl Polzer, NCAL’s senior policy director.

“Information on Medicaid payment for assisted living and related policies is of critical importance as states continue struggling to maintain programs during the economic recession.”

The report reveals that 24 states have supplemented the participant’s federal SSI payment of \$674 in 2009, which states use as the basis for the room-and-board payment. SSI plus state supplements range from \$722 to \$1,350 a month. Some states provide no supplement, and 23 states cap the amount that may be charged for room and board. Twenty-five states permit family members or third parties to supplement room-and-board charges.

In addition, states have rules about whether or not residents may share apartments. Forty states allow units to be shared, and 24 states allow sharing as long as the resident initiates the request for a roommate.

Mollica, formerly at the National Academy for State Health Policy, co-authored the last national survey of state Medicaid reimbursement policies and practices in assisted living for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which was published in 2007, 2005, and 2002.

MEDICAID ASSISTED LIVING PARTICIPATION

	2009	2007	2004	2002
No. of beneficiaries	131,208	120,159	119,290	91,271
No. of communities	11,456	9,878	10,374	9,048

By The Numbers

Profile of a nursing assistant

Female **9 in 10**

40+ years old . . . **2 in 5**

Does not speak English as first language **1 in 10**

Works only in current facility **3 in 5**

Works 40+ hours a week in this facility **1 in 5**

Has worked in current facility for 2+ years **1 in 2**

Based on responses to demographic and background questions by 63,517 nursing assistants (CNAs/NAs) in 2,916 skilled nursing facilities across the nation.

Source: Skilled Nursing Employee Satisfaction Surveys conducted in 2008 by My InnerView

—Lisa Gelhaus