
NEWS

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June 21, 2004

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PHCA Lauds Intent and Goal of Administration's Community Choice Effort, Yet Questions Remain Regarding Costs, Care Quality

Community Choice Pilots Show No Evidence Nursing Facility Usage Dissipating;

**New Poll Shows PA Voters Voice Overwhelming Support for More Uniform Training,
Education, Background Check Standards for Health Workers**

Harrisburg, PA – While praising the intent and goals of the Rendell Administration's effort to provide Pennsylvanians more options for receiving publicly funded long term care and services in their home, the Pennsylvania Health Care Association (PHCA) said Community Choice pilot programs being used to test the initiative have thus far offered no evidence of reduced costs over facility care, and that questions remain regarding care quality standards.

"PHCA will continue to support the Administration's Community Choice effort because providing increased consumer options for long term care is solid, responsible public policy," stated Alan G. Rosenbloom, President of the PHCA. "We are concerned, however, that the Community Choice pilots have demonstrated no evidence use of nursing facilities is dissipating, and that savings are being realized."

Rosenbloom said that despite hopes community choice efforts nationally will be less costly than facility-based care in the long term, this has yet to be established as fact. In a study conducted by the Urban Institute, Joshua Weiner, a respected health care researcher, states "there is substantial, rigorous research to suggest that expanding home care is more likely to increase rather than decrease total long-term care costs."

In addition, while Canadian research finds home care costs more, and that health outcomes are better overall in facility-based care, the state of Oregon, a national leader in community choice experimentation, is experiencing the negative aspects associated with the so-called "woodwork effect," whereby higher demand for in-home services is resulting in progressively higher government health care costs.

The PHCA President and CEO said another key aspect of the debate involves ensuring equal, uniform consumer protections are provided across the care continuum, and the need to mandate that education and training requirements are universal, regardless of care setting.

"As new and effective quality improvement and consumer protection initiatives are now integral to facility-based care, accountability for quality standards must also be an inherent, logical part of the Community Choice expansion," Rosenbloom continued. "It is vital for the public and policymakers to evaluate the program in an objective manner."

He noted a new poll of 650 likely Pennsylvania voters conducted by Susquehanna Polling Research finds:

- 89% say the state should require the same training and education requirements for home care workers as it does for nursing home employees.
- 94% support legislation ensuring home health workers undergo the same criminal background check now applied to nursing home employees.

"Consumers clearly demand and deserve a more uniform, level playing field when it comes to ensuring the caregivers they depend upon are trained, educated and checked in a manner that maximizes care quality and safety," stated Rosenbloom. "A key public policy objective in the Commonwealth must be to establish a more integrated long term care continuum -- from home and community-based care to assisted living to nursing facilities."

PHCA is a statewide membership services organization representing more than 325 long-term care and senior service providers throughout the Commonwealth. Additional information about PHCA is available by calling 717-221-1800 or visiting www.phca.org.

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