



Southwest Regional Development Commission

Legislative Priority Issue #2 2010 Legislative Session

Continued Funding for Priority Programs for the Elderly

Background

The Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) is a nine-county Regional Development Commission as established under Minnesota Statute §462.381-462.398 the “Regional Development Act.” As a representative of local units of government in Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood and Rock counties the SRDC represents an area with a large and increasing population of elderly. As the population ages it becomes incumbent upon our elected leaders in the Legislature to recognize the difficulties presented when providing services to the elderly in rural areas where population densities and travel distances reduce the ability to provide economies of scale.

Priority Programs for the Elderly

1. Increase Funding for Senior Nutrition

Explanation: Due to budget cuts in Nutrition Programs for the Elderly, nutrition providers are being reimbursed at less than the actual costs of providing high quality meals for seniors. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds have been used to backfill budget cuts. In the current economic downturn it remains vitally important that our seniors have access to quality meals.

Policy Position: The SRDC supports an increase in funding to cover actual meal costs in order to maintain the quality of meals provided to seniors in the nutrition program. In order to keep frail elderly in their homes and in their local communities, there is a need for increased funding as well as volunteer expense reimbursement for transportation costs.

2. Community Long-Term Care Needs

Explanation: In 2001 the State of Minnesota passed Long Term Care legislation to re-balance the care for the elderly in the State of Minnesota. Nursing Homes were encouraged to downsize the number of long term care beds and become involved in the continuum of care. The cost savings of the downsizing of the nursing home industry Long Term Care beds was to have state dollars put into home and community based services and system changes. Many Nursing Homes took the opportunity to turn their beds into other options such as Assisted Living or into single occupancy units and developed services to the home bound seniors. At the same time other agencies also developed Home and Community Based Services. Because of the development of community based services, the elderly in the nursing homes are ones that need

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more personal care. The issue is the reimbursement for options and for the Nursing Home Care industry which has not kept up with inflation and reimbursement of state dollars for the beds taking care of the most vulnerable elderly 24 hours a day. Currently 20% of the nursing homes in the Southwest region are in threat of closure due to weak revenues and poor cash flow. Immediate financial relief is necessary to prevent erosion of the quality of care.

Policy Position: Continue to support redesigning long-term care and funding the Area Agencies on Aging to help older persons remain in the community, but at the same time come up with solutions to the nursing homes who take care of our most vulnerable elderly. We must have a reimbursement system that reflects the changing needs of the residents that nursing facilities serve. Continue to support and fund rebasing to make up for payment shortfalls since 2003 and extend the 20% rate enhancement from the first thirty days to the first sixty days to recognize added costs to short stay residents.

3. Support Evidence Based Interventions

Explanation: Evidence-based health promotion interventions have been proven to produce a desired health outcome in participants. There are several programs that have a strong science base and a successful track record of implementation in community organizations serving adults. The following are the evidenced-based programs that are in infancy stages in southwest Minnesota: Matter of Balance (Falls Prevention), Chronic Disease Self- Management Program, Healthy Eating for Successful Living and Powerful Tools for Caregivers.

Policy Position: Support implementation efforts that are proven to be successful with older adults.

For Further Information Contact:

David Benson, Legislative Chair	(507) 683-2853	dbenson@co.nobles.mn.us
Gary Sorenson, SRDC Chair	(507) 445-3224	gjsorenson@centurytel.net
Jay Trusty, Executive Director	(507) 836-1636	execdir@swrdc.org
Robin Weis, Aging Program Director	(507) 836-1642	srlinkage@swrdc.org

