

Long Term Care Coordinating Council

Regular Meeting

February 13, 2008

10:00 am

State House Room 313

Providence, RI

MINUTES

Attendance:

Lt. Governor Roberts

Senator June Gibbs

Representative Bruce Long

Deputy Secretary Adelita Orefice

Director Gary Alexander

Director Corinne Calise Russo

Donna Policastro

Gavin Ward

Sharon Brinkworth

Cindy Soccio

Jack McGehearty

Kathleen Heren

Sr. Marietta Walsh

Jim Flanagan

Roberta Merkle
Dottie Santagata
Mark Lescaut
Bonnie Larson
Akshay Talwar
Jill Anderson
Elaina Goldstein
Ken Pariseau
Maria Barros
Maria Laferriere
Bob Horton
Steve Jennings
Joan Kwaitkowski
Mary Ann Altrui
Susan Sweet
Jessica Buhler
Liz Morancy
Jay Burdick
Kathleen Kelly
Karen Amado
Christopher Novak
Susan Whipple
Ray Rusin
Mary Benway
Jennifer Wood
Paula Parker

Dan Meuse

The meeting is called to order at 10:11am by Chairwoman Lt. Governor Roberts.

The minutes of the meeting of January 9, 2008 were approved unanimously.

The chair introduced Ray Rusin from the Office of Facilities Regulation at the Department of Health. Mr. Rusin announced that in January 8 facilities that were surveyed were found to have deficiencies, but no deficiencies resulted in actual harm. Mr. Rusin stated that the department issued no new citations for substandard care.

The chair stated that the Governor's recent announcement of relying on more home and community based services as a way to provide more patient-centered and affordable services in an effort to cope with the state's budget deficit were important, and of great interest to the council. For a number of years, the council has been working on the very issues that are raised by the Governor's announcement, and the council represents the experts in the areas most affected by a shift to more reliance on home and community based care.

The chair introduced Adelita Orefice, Deputy Secretary of the Office of Health and Human Services, to discuss the status of of the Governor's Medicaid reform proposal. Deputy Secretary Orefice thanked the council for inviting her and the directors to discuss the reform proposal. She stated that while the general ideas that the administration has are well-articulated, the fine detail of the proposal are yet to be determined. She stated that the administration is working with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to develop a wavier proposal for the state but that the waiver is not complete. Deputy Secretary Orefice stated that the individual department directors will have a better idea of the effects of the proposal on the programs of each department, but that no one will be able to give full details because those details have not been worked out.

The chair introduced Gary Alexander, Director of Human Services. Director Alexander stated that the department has been attempting to allow for more patient choice over the years, but the department has not been as effective as it hopes it could be. He stated that 1% of the Medicaid population uses 25% of the Medicaid expenditures, leading to a need for better care management. He stated that Rhode Island's Medicaid spending on patients with developmental disabilities is the highest percapita in the country. He stated that goals that he has been working on as part of the Medicaid reform proposal within the Department of Human services include having 50% of Medicaid long term care dollars be spent on home and community based care by

2012, ensuring equal pay for equal services across providers, and redesigningRlte Care to the model of HealthPact, the state's wellness-focused, basic benefit health plan offered to small businesses.

Director Alexander stated that one of the changes within the department will be the creation of the Assessment Coordination Unit. The main function of this unit will be to determine the best course of care providers for a Medicaid recipient, including long term care options, appropriate case management, and community based services. The Assessment Coordination Unit will also work with discharge planners for care plans for persons dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid to encourage the maximum use of Medicare dollars with as little reliance of Medicaid dollars as possible. The Assessment Coordination Unit would place state workers in Hospitals to assist in discharge planning for Medicaid recipients.

Director Alexander stated that success of the proposal requires better coordination between the Department of Human Services and the Department of Elderly Affairs to slow down a person's need for more intensive long term care services by involving the programs offered by the Department of Elderly Affairs earlier. He also stated that other aspects of the reform proposal include shared living alternatives, increasing adult day and home care rates to encourage capacity building, and posting the rates of providers and quality indicators online to increase transparency. Director Alexander stated that he

was willing to spend more money on a patient to stay in their home than to be admitted to a nursing home.

Lt. Governor Roberts encouraged Director Alexander to call on the experts in the field on the council who can be partners and share their knowledge to assist the department as it designs the reformed system. Director Alexander stated that he would be looking to have a community forum to discuss the proposals and receive input from community members. Deputy Secretary Orefice stated that the administration has a responsibility to taxpayers and must engage stakeholders. She stated that the administration must set up the bureaucracy to implement the programs and that there is not enough time of unanimity and not everyone will be happy with the outcome. Director Alexander stated that he is very encouraged to be able to work with stakeholders.

Kathleen Heren stated that she was uncomfortable with administration statements that too many of nursing home patients are there because of medication management. She stated that most long term care patients are very complex and require intensive care. Director Alexander stated that he understand the differences among patients and that the reform proposals will take such differences into account. Director Corrine Calise Russo of the Department of Elderly Affairs stated that the departments of Human Services and Elderly Affairs will be working together to offer bundled services which will include medication management.

Ms. Heren then asked Director Alexander what types of state employees would be part of the Assessment Unit. Director Alexander stated that there is currently a talented and experienced team at the Department of Human Services and the department will be bringing in any new staff that may be needed. Ms. Heren stated that the department should not be going into nursing homes and looking for volunteers to enter home and community based services. Director Alexander stated that the plan for reaching the administration goal for lowering the number of nursing home residents is not yet developed.

Virginia Burke stated that nursing homes are paid on a rate that takes into account the composite acuity across the population. If the administration plan is successful, the patients who remain in nursing homes will be a sicker population than what the nursing homes care for now. She asked if the department would be increasing the rates paid to nursing homes to compensate for this change. Director Alexander stated that the department has been discussing rate increases in general, but that no specifics about nursing home rates have been discussed.

Maria Barros stated that Rhode Island elders that require long term care are a diverse population. The population requires sensitivity to language issues. Some providers have trouble finding appropriate interpreters and other staff due, in part, to lower rates for home health agencies. She stated that if the department is serious about

expanding home and community based services, the issues of appropriate language settings and of provider rates need to be addressed.

Elizabeth Morancy stated that there is a need for appropriate care givers in the home. She stated that while there may be a desire to encourage more home and community based care, if a patient does not have the supports in a home to be able to stay there, then home and community based services cannot work. Director Alexander stated that he understood that issue. He also stated that the department would be examining all levels of service to ensure that the state has the correct mix of services available.

Director Russo stated that the role of the Department of Elderly Affairs is to ensure availability of services to the elders in Rhode Island. She stated that many of the programs that should be working in concert have been siloed within the departments and the services are not working for people at an optimum level. She stated that her goal is to have the patient involved with the decisions about their care, rather than a bureaucracy telling them what they can and cannot have. She stated that one important aspect of the reform proposal is intervention care, to keep people at a lower need level for services for a longer period of time.

Lt. Governor Roberts asked how the ideology of the reform proposal fits with the services currently provided by the departments. Director

Russo stated that the administration is currently trying to make changes as necessary so the system works. Director Alexander stated that the department is looking at rule changes, such as income disregards for living expenses, to encourage more persons to stay at home.

Angelo Rotella stated that nursing homes are getting paid less than their costs and are finding it very difficult to recruit and retain staff. Director Alexander stated that nursing homes are an important part of the care continuum and will continue to be important in the new system. He stated that while the Department of Human Services does not have a role in the staffing issues, he understands the importance of a high-quality staff and offered that the department would do whatever it could to help nursing homes with their staffing issues.

Susan Sweet stated a concern that services to persons that are not yet eligible for Medicaid long-term care services are limited. Director Russo stated that the department would be looking into obtaining a nursing home diversion grant that would allow matching federal and state dollars to bolster persons not yet eligible for a nursing home level of care.

Patrick Quinn stated that the issues surrounding workforce in the nursing homes are major. The departments proposal to lower the reimbursement for the direct labor cost center will make problems worse. Director Alexander stated that because of the state's budget

crisis, the department needed to take measures to lower expenditures to meet budget targets.

Senator Gibbs asked how many staff the department will need to staff the Assessment Coordination Unit. Director Alexander stated that he was not yet sure, but he would get the information to the council when available.

The chair opened the floor for public comments and questions. Kathleen Kelly of the Rhode Island Assisted Living Association asked if the Medicaid reform proposal included an expansion of assisted living waiver slots. Director Alexander stated that the waiver proposal would include an expansion of assisted living waiver slots.

The chair thanked Directors Alexander and Russo for attending and stated that another meeting to include Directors Nelson and Martinez to discuss long-term care proposals for the non-elderly population.