

Illinois cutting programs for older adults

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State plan adds layers of bureaucracy on top of cuts to services

SPRINGFIELD - The Illinois Department on Aging released draft rules for massive cuts to the Community Care Program and introduced a new program, the Community Reinvestment Program that cuts seniors out of the current Community Care Program and puts them into a new, untested program. The cuts will affect 40,000 seniors living in the community by reducing their services and simultaneously adding a layer of bureaucracy to the new program. The program further jeopardizes Illinois seniors by

eliminating regulations in the new program that previously kept seniors safe. Now local providers of services to seniors don't have to have education in providing care to seniors, they don't have to ensure that the meals they provide are nutritious and, most alarmingly, they no longer have to verify that locally-contracted service providers do not have criminal convictions or if someone providing service to seniors in their home is a registered sex offender.

The 40,000 older adults who are slated to be cut from the Community Care Program are hardworking taxpayers who had jobs all of their lives, paid into a pension program in addition to paying their taxes, and now they face one or more of life's storms in the form of a stroke or Alzheimer's disease, or one of the other unfortunate debilitating conditions that can affect people as we age, through no fault of our own. The 40,000 people who currently use the Community Care Program do not want to go to nursing homes, which the state is not proposing to cut. In order to qualify for the Community Care Program, the storm that they are facing must be so strong, that it debilitated them to the point that they do qualify for nursing home care. But they don't want or need nursing home care. They want the bare minimum of a framework to support their living in the community, where they will still pay their taxes, hold their grandchildren, and tell the stories to family and neighbors that are so important to our culture.

The current Community Care Program only provides the bare minimum of resources, mortar if you will, to shore up the cracks created by life's storms in the carefully laid foundation of lives older adults created to support themselves in their retirement. The program's assessment process carefully determines which tools, and only the bare minimum tools necessary, to patch the cracked foundation of an older adult's life so they can stay in the community. Illinois can't afford to waste money on anything untested right now and these proud older adults don't want any more. The tools the Community Care Program uses are small, such as someone to come into their home to do laundry once a week, an emergency home response unit so if they fall, a loved one at work can go to their parents' home to help, or a visit to an adult day services program where they can get a couple of nutritious meals, meet with a nurse who monitors their medical condition, and socialize with other older adults. But the current program uses proven standards to determine which supports someone needs and only those supports are offered.

Because Aging is a process we all experience, Illinoisans of all ages do better when we make sure everyone has what they need to age successfully. The new, untested Community Reinvestment Program (CRP) draws tools and protections away from our seniors.

CRP is bypassing the legislative process. Instead of taking a careful approach to implementing a new program that will use research and outcome data and input from the

public to develop a program to help seniors, CRP is being implemented via administrative rule, thereby eliminating any input from the public or our elected representatives and senators. Instead of trying this new idea on just a few people to determine whether it will work, CRP will immediately, upon implementation, affect 40,000 seniors living in their own communities statewide, all of whom, via the state's assessment tool, have been determined to be ill enough to qualify for nursing home care.

CRP is a financial mistake for Illinois. At a time when Illinois' finances are in trouble, CRP draws money away from seniors to fund more bureaucracy. The current Community Care Program contracts with Case Coordination Units to independently determine if clients need services and support to remain in the community, and exactly how many services they need, they then refer clients to state-vetted and contracted private companies to provide those services. CRP will add an additional layer by contracting with agencies that will then contract with private companies, and then the Case Coordination Units will determine eligibility. This added layer of bureaucracy will be paid 10% of the money that could have gone to provide services to seniors.

CRP has no structure suggested to determine how many services older adults will receive. Without the tested structure of the Community Care Program, it is uncertain that seniors will receive a consistent service based on need. Without this structure, the program is open to fraud and abuse. CRP is not financially solid. In Illinois, there is a history of faulted budgeting process. In fact, Illinois has been without a budget for going on two years. The program, as it should be, will not be implemented without a budget. However, the 40,000 older adults who worked hard to pay their taxes and contribute to their pensions, will immediately lose services upon implementation of the new rules, yanking the very foundations that anchor them to their homes and communities out from under them.

CRP is dangerous for Illinois. Currently, the Illinois Department on Aging contracts with private companies after a meticulous vetting process to insure that the company doesn't have a history of fraud, that all employees in contact with seniors do not have sexual or other criminal convictions, and an education program is in place that confirms that all persons in contact with seniors are well-versed in the issues associated with aging and can interact with and provide care to seniors in a safe and professional manner. CRP regulations do not apply these regulations to local companies such as restaurant delivery, transportation services, laundry services, and home repair services. These companies and their employees will have direct contact with seniors in their homes at the older adults' personal risk.

There are many, many serious flaws with this new program. The Illinois Association of Community Care Program Home Care Providers and the Illinois Adult Day Services Association want all Illinoisans to understand the jeopardy our seniors are being placed

into as a result of this untested, unsafe, flawed program. For more information, contact Sandra Price, IADSA Administrative Assistant, at iadsainfo@gmail.com or Robert Thieman, CAE, Executive Director at [217-529-6503](tel:217-529-6503) or info@idoahomecare.org.