Long-Term Care in Iowa

The number of Iowa residents age 85 and older is projected to grow by 36 percent by 2030.

Iowa’s older population can be at greater risk for chronic illnesses and in need of long-term care. Fifteen percent of Iowa’s population is age 65+ with over 78,000 residents age 85+. 

Iowa’s age 85+ population – the age group that is most likely to need long-term care services – will grow 36% from 2007 to 2030. This makes Iowa the 49th ranked state in the projected growth rate of the 85+ population.

Most prefer to receive long-term care at home; however, Iowa spends the majority of the state’s Medicaid funds on institutional care.

The majority of Americans age 50+ (89%) want to stay in their homes for as long as they can. Nearly 455,000 Iowans rely on Medicaid, and nine percent are age 65+. Home and community-based service (HCBS) waivers allow Medicaid recipients to receive Medicaid funding for in-home care. In Iowa, Medicaid allows some to choose in-home care instead of nursing home care. In 2006, 9,732 Iowans 65+ and 686 adults (18-64) with disabilities received a waiver. In 2008, there were no people 65+ who waited to receive a waiver. On average, the Medicaid program can provide HCBS to three people for the cost of serving one person in a nursing home.

Iowa spends 14% of its Medicaid long-term care dollars for older people and adults with physical disabilities on home and community-based care – ranking it 35th in spending on home care services for this population.

Iowa has one of the lowest average nursing home private pay rates in the nation at $137 per day.

In 2007, Iowa’s nursing homes had an occupancy rate of 80%. In 2008, Iowa had some of the least expensive nursing homes in the country, with an average private pay daily rate of $137. Iowa’s average rates for home health aides ($20/hr private pay and $36/hr Medicare-certified) were close to the national average, but its rate for adult day care ($66/day) was higher than the national average.

One-third of Iowa’s nursing homes rated above average in health inspections.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) created a five-star quality rating to help consumers compare nursing homes. CMS rates nursing homes on health inspections, staffing, and quality measures.

The health inspection process is comprehensive and conducted by a trained team of objective surveyors.

Recent studies have found that non-profit nursing homes generally deliver higher quality of care. In 2007, 51% of Iowa’s nursing homes were for profit (44%, non-profit; 5%, government-owned).

Few Americans have long-term care insurance.

Nationally, about 7 million long-term care insurance policies were in effect in 2005, and the typical purchaser was age 61 with assets over $100,000. Cost is a major factor in the decision to purchase long-term care insurance. In 2008, premiums for a married couple in their sixties were about $3,000 a year. Iowa has adopted the most recent long-term care insurance recommendations from the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC).
End Notes

The data utilized in this report is the most recent publicly available data collected for all states.


3Providing More Long-term Support and Services at Home: Why It’s Critical for Health Reform. AARP Public Policy Institute, June 2009. URL: http://www.aarp.org/research/ppi/ltc/hcbs/articles/fs_hcbs_hcr.html


5Ibid. Medicaid 1915(c) Home and Community-Based Service Waiver Participants, by Type of Waiver, 2006. Data Source: The Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured (KCMU) and The University of California at San Francisco's (UCSF) analysis based on The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Form 372, December 2009, Table 5. "Medicaid 1915(c) Home and Community-Based Service Programs: Data Update" available at http://www.kff.org/medicaid/7720.cfm. URL: http://www.statehealthfacts.org/comparetable.jsp?ind=241&cat=4


7Providing More Long-term Support and Services at Home: Why It’s Critical for Health Reform. AARP Public Policy Institute, June 2009. URL: http://www.aarp.org/research/ppi/ltc/hcbs/articles/fs_hcbs_hcr.html


9Ibid. Page 44.

10Ibid. Page 66.

11Ibid. Page 59.

12Ibid. Page 60.

13Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Note: These data are updated monthly. Data for this brief was pulled on November 3, 2009. URL: http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/Include/DataSection/Questions/ProximitySearch.asp.

14BMJ 2009 (British Medical Journal); 339:b2732. URL: www.pnhp.org/nursing_home


