



LONG TERM CARE FINANCING: LOUISIANA

The Issue

The financing of services to persons needing daily assistance over an extended period of time requires resources from the federal, state and private levels. Whether the need is for skilled nursing care, home health care, or daily support for personal care activities, there is no cohesive or uniform long-term care or long-term acute care system for addressing these needs at either the federal or state level. Like the rest of America, Louisiana will soon begin to experience all of the challenges posed by the "graying" of our population.

Recent sessions of the Louisiana Legislature sent two major pieces of long-term care legislation to Governor Bobby Jindal. One authorizes a pilot program that would allow the certification of medication attendants to work in licensed nursing homes until August 1, 2011. It further transfers the medication attendant program from the LA State Board of Nursing to the Department of State Health and Hospitals. Also, a measure passed that permits the licensure of a limited number of additional nursing beds in certain existing nursing facilities if they meet the criteria established and gain approval from DHH. Additionally, an amendment was included that allows for a Continuing Care Residential Community exemption from the moratorium on nursing homes. The bill allows DHH to license up to 30 additional beds for continuing care residential communities.

In addition, fiscal measures are also needed to assure continued appropriate funding for long-term care resources in our state. Federal and state payments have not kept pace with expanding costs of these services and inadequate financing for institutional and hospital care is leading to poor quality and increasingly severe staffing shortages.

The CHRISTUS Health Position: Support long-term care financing.

CHRISTUS Health supports initiatives to build a state-wide dialogue about transitioning long-term care financing. In addition, CHRISTUS Health specifically supports:

- Medicare and Medicaid reform that better defines both the federal and the federal/state roles as part of an overall comprehensive system of long-term care financing, especially related to post-acute skilled nursing and home health care services as well as long-term services for the frail and chronically ill.

- Adequate Medicaid financing in Louisiana for those services covered.
- Promotion of long-term care insurance, making it more affordable through tax credits, deduction, and/or subsidies.
- Consumer protections in purchasing long-term care insurance.
- Education of the Louisiana public on the potential need for long-term care; its costs, and the importance of responsible planning.
- Continued support of specialty facilities that primarily treat long-stay Medicare patients, particularly those patients with multiple and chronic disease processes, i.e. the “medically complex” patient.

As our population ages, the health care delivery system will begin to experience a tremendous drain on resources with regard to long-term care needs. This is a situation that is best continuously addressed on a pro-active basis.