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Commissioner

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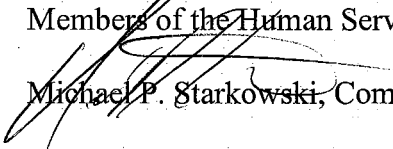
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TO: The Hon. Toni N. Harp, Senate Chair
The Hon. John C. Geragosian, House Chair
The Hon. Dan Debicella, Senate Ranking Member
The Hon. Craig A. Miner, House Ranking Member
Members of the Appropriations Committee

The Hon. Paul R. Doyle, Senate Chair
The Hon. Toni E. Walker, House Chair
The Hon. Rob Kane, Senate Ranking Member
The Hon. Lile R. Gibbons, House Ranking Member
Members of the Human Services Committee

FROM:  Michael P. Starkowski, Commissioner

DATE January 20, 2010

RE: Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders

In accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Section 17b-342(g), I am writing to advise you that the most recent Annual Report to the Legislature on the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders is posted on the Department of Social Services website at http://www.ct.gov/dss/lib/dss/pdfs/annual_report/chcpereport2008.pdf. This memo is also an opportunity to relate several update points about the program.

In the interest of cost savings, we are not distributing hardcopies of the report, and I hope this will not present an inconvenience to you and your staff. The report itself is extensive and voluminous, per the statutory requirements. It includes comprehensive financial data, including service claims that can take up to a year to complete before they can be compiled and analyzed (hence the timeframe for posting the SFY 2008 report).

As you know, the Connecticut Home Care Program exemplifies the State of Connecticut's long-standing commitment to comprehensive community-based options for elder persons in need of long-term care. The state, by providing for supportive services at home, has helped to preserve the dignity and autonomy of older persons and has assisted families struggling to maintain older relatives at home.

Development of home care options has helped to curb the spiraling costs of institutionalization. However, its most important impact has been on the quality of life for Connecticut's older citizens.

The program combines federal and state funds to efficiently and cost-effectively serve elders according to their needs. Care plans are developed for clients within the limits of 25%, 50% and 100% of the average nursing facility cost. The cost depends upon which Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders functional category corresponds to the individual's needs. The annual report describes the criteria for each category served by the program.

SFY 2008 was the third year of a five-year renewal for the Home and Community Based Services Waiver. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services renewed the waiver effective July 1, 2005. The renewal application is due to CMS no later than March 31, 2010. The Department will be submitting the application to the Committees of Cognizance.

DSS continues to work collaboratively with the Department of Community and Economic Development, the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, the Department of Public Health and the Office of Policy and Management to operate the Assisted Living Demonstration Pilot Project. By offering assisted living services in the demonstration programs, residents are offered a viable choice that allows them to maintain a degree of continued health, dignity and independence at significantly less cost than a nursing home. Four sites, The Retreat in Hartford, Herbert T. Clark in Glastonbury, Luther Ridge in Middletown and Smithfield Gardens in Seymour, are fully operational. Under the umbrella of the CT Home Care Program for Elders, 75 clients are receiving assisted living services in private assisted living facilities. More than 200 were provided with assisted living services in state-funded congregate and HUD communities.

Under Public Act No. 07-130, Section 9, the 250-person cap has been eliminated in the Personal Care Assistant Pilot Program. However, the program must operate within available appropriations; consequently, the number of participants remains at 250 in December 2009. Currently, there is a waiting list for this program

Under PA 07-2, Section 29, the Department and our Alternate Care Unit implemented a pilot program, the Connecticut Home Care Program for Adults with Disabilities, for up to 50 clients ages 18-64, funded with \$720,000 in state appropriations. The target population is individuals with degenerative, neurological conditions who are not Medicaid-eligible and who are in need of case management to develop, implement and monitor plans of care. In December 2009, 41 clients are being served under the program. There is a waiting list for this program that averages ten months.

Legislation passed in 2009 requires the Department to add Personal Care Assistance services to the Connecticut Home Care Program in 2010.

Public Act 09-3, June Special Session, and Public Act 09-5, September Special Session, requires the implementation of the 15% cost-sharing for all state-funded Connecticut Home Care Program participants (except for the clients residing in the assisted living demonstration projects).

Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders
January 20, 2010
Page 3

At the end of calendar 2009, the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders was serving 5,680 state-funded clients and 9,313 Medicaid waiver clients, for a total of 14,993 individuals.

As Commissioner of the Department of Social Services, I am proud of the proactive role we have taken over the years in developing innovative and effective policies and programs to accommodate the needs of our elderly and disabled citizens. The State of Connecticut can be proud of its status as a national leader in services to frail elders and adults with disabilities. We look forward to providing you with more about accessible and cost-effective services during the waiver approval process.

I am also proud of the dedicated staff and service partners who have made the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders the success that it is. The program has made a tremendous difference in the quality of the lives of many thousands of our Connecticut residents.

Thank you.

c: Claudette Beaulieu, Deputy Commissioner
Mark Schaefer, Acting Director – Medical Care Administration
Kathy Bruni, Manager – Alternate Care Unit