

Fast Facts

- Money Follows the Person has allowed 10,156 individuals from 2001-2005 to move from nursing facilities into the community.
- The program allows money allocated for Medicaid-based nursing facilities to apply to Medicaid-based community programming.
- Costs of community-based programs are about 20 percent less than institutional costs.

Texas Program Helps Medicaid Patients Stay Home

By Laura Coleman

Since Texas' **Money Follows the Person** program came into effect four and a half years ago, the state's residents housed in Medicaid-certified nursing facilities have more options.

"Money Follows the Person is an opportunity for nursing facility residents to access Medicaid-based community-based programming without having to go on a waiting list," said Marc S. Gold, manager of the Promoting Independence Initiative. "People can go home and the state will pay for services to be brought to their home or into assisted living or adult foster care."

Gold said the reason there are waiting lists is because by definition, nursing facility services are an entitlement under Medicaid. Community-based care, however, is not an entitlement. The program garnered Texas one of eight CSG Innovations Awards.

"States can limit the number of community placements if they choose. Then people go on waiting lists to get those types of services," said Gold. "This program allows money allocated for nursing facilities to go with them when they leave the institutional setting."

In 2001, Texas' legislature attached a rider to the Department of Human Services' appropriation. Then, in the following three years, state officials developed rules and policies for the program and received a grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to develop transition teams to identify obstacles to transition and develop solutions. In 2005, the 79th legislative session codified the bill and the concepts were reinforced by executive order.

From Sept. 1, 2001, through Dec. 31, 2005, 10,156 individuals have transferred from nursing facilities into the community. Of that number, 5,597 individuals remain in the community.

"This has had a tremendous impact on the aging population, with approximately two-thirds of the transferred population over age 65," Gold wrote in his application for the Innovations Award. "There are significant numbers of persons in their 80s and 90s and even 12 residents over 100 who have transferred. Of major import is the concept of system change. Texas is a leader in the rebalancing of its long-term care."

This program is cost-neutral for Texas, said Gold. Money Follows the Person is funded through current Medicaid appropriations and took just three months to implement. Providing supplemental services, such as relocation specialists to help identify nursing facility residents who want to transfer, costs \$1.3 million annually.

"I think we won the award because as I pointed out during our presentation, this was a new idea. It generated widespread support among advocates, consumers and government officials," said Gold. "It has had an immediate impact in quality of life for aging individuals or those with physical disabilities. It also helped promote other public policy-supported innovation and is one of the bases for the federal law of the same nature."

According to Gold, states seeking to implement policies like Money Follows the Person, must consider:

- The occupancy rate of Medicaid-certified nursing facilities.
- Having the appropriate 1915(c) waiver or other Medicaid community-based programs in place.
- The state's home health provider network.
- Identifying and collaborating with appropriate stakeholders.
- Financing concerns.
- Resistance by nursing facility providers.
- The development of supportive services, such as relocation specialists and community coordinating groups.

"We are very proud of the program. It's definitely kicking off strong," said Gold. "It's become part of our public consciousness in Texas; it's become old hat because we assume it. It helps get people back into the community because that is the future of long-term care."

For more information on the Money Follows the Person program, visit www.dads.state.tx.us/business/pi/index.html.