

Payer Initiatives Aim to Enhance the Role of Family Caregivers



Significance of Trend

Public policy measures have established a variety of caregiving initiatives designed to address the needs of the approximately 34 million Americans annually who provide unpaid care to an adult age 50 or older.¹ For example, many states are structuring their Medicaid programs to address caregiving.² Furthermore, with implementation of the Affordable Care Act and initiatives to reduce hospital admissions, caregivers have been seen as potential bridges to efforts that improve post-hospital transitional care.³ Notably, the Caregiver Advise, Record, Enable (CARE) Act, adopted in 34 states as of December 2016,⁴ helps family caregivers when their loved ones go into the hospital and as they transition home. Such developments have underscored the importance of offering better support to caregivers.

Trend in Healthcare

In the context of increased attention to caregivers as participants in the delivery of health care services, payers can play an important role in offering support to caregivers. Many types of payers have launched initiatives to address the needs of caregivers, including developing strategies to engage caregivers, offering financial support for caregivers, and providing tools and resources to help caregivers better perform their role. Several state Medicaid programs, particularly those administered by managed care plans, have strong financial incentives to support caregivers to improve the quality of life of enrollees and reduce the cost of care. As recommended by the AARP Public Policy Institute in a report describing promising practices in Medicaid, Medicare, and private

¹ National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP Public Policy Institute, www.caregiving.org/caregiving2015, pg 6.

² Paying for Senior Care, Receive Payment as a Caregiver: Cash and Counseling and Other Options, 2016. <https://www.payingforseniorcare.com/longtermcare/resources/cash-and-counseling-program.html>

³ Gary Epstein-Lubow et al., Caregiver presence and patient completion of a transitional care intervention, *American Journal of Managed Care* 20.10 (2014):e439-444

⁴ AARP, <http://www.aarp.org/politics-society/advocacy/caregiving-advocacy/info-2014/aarp-creates-model-state-bill.html> 2015. Accessed January 18, 2017.

Trends to Watch

managed care plans, “Health plans should recognize and involve family caregivers, especially when the care plan depends on them.”⁵ In addition, the Department of Veterans Affairs has concerted efforts that engage and support caregivers.

The following summary of promising programs and practices illustrates how payers have been responding to the growing need to help caregivers fulfill their responsibilities. The examples include two state Medicaid programs (California, Tennessee), a national health plan (UnitedHealthcare), and a federal agency (Department of Veterans Affairs). These represent notable efforts to address the overall trend, but many other payer initiatives also are addressing the challenge of supporting caregivers.

Trend Watch: California’s MediConnect Dementia Project

California’s Medi-Cal (Medicaid) program launched a 3-year demonstration program in 2014 in partnership with Medicare to promote coordination of services for people who are dually eligible for both health insurance programs. The Cal MediConnect Program⁶ was implemented as part of the state’s Coordinated Care Initiative⁷ to improve services for Medi-Cal beneficiaries. Cal MediConnect allows beneficiaries, their family members, and other caregivers to participate in care coordination teams. In five participating counties, a dementia project funded by a grant from the U.S. Administration on Aging aims to create sustainable home and community based services system that meets the unique needs of persons with dementia and their family caregivers. In collaboration with Alzheimer’s Greater Los Angeles and other Alzheimer’s groups, the project provides education, respite care, and support services to

⁵ Susan C. Reinhard, Wendy Fox-Grage, and Lynn Friss Feinberg, AARP Public Policy Institute, Family Caregivers & Managed Long-Term Services and Supports, 2016.

⁶ Cal MediConnect Program. <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Pages/DualsDemonstration.aspx>

⁷ <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/Pages/CoordinatedCareInitiative.aspx>

**Trend Watch:
Tennessee's
TennCare
CHOICES**

family caregivers of beneficiaries with Alzheimer's disease or related disorders.⁸ The dementia project offers a dementia care management toolkit⁹ that includes tools for addressing caregiver needs. The AARP Public Policy Institute recognized the project as "a promising practice that provides critical assessment, services, and supports to the family caregivers of people with dementia."¹⁰

Tennessee's Medicaid program, TennCare, launched CHOICES in 2010¹¹ to provide long-term services and supports to elderly and/or disabled Tennessee residents, including the option to receive care at home or in other community settings as an alternative to nursing home care. The managed care program allows the care recipient to employ friends, neighbors, and certain family members as caregivers through its site, PayingforSeniorCare.com and the TennCare CHOICES in Long-Term Care Program).¹² CHOICES offers a range of home care services, including in-home and inpatient respite care to provide relief for the primary caregiver.¹³ The program has defined the requirements for addressing the needs of the caregiver, including determining the caregiver's role, assessing the caregiver's health and well-being, and identifying the caregiver's needs for training and other support.¹⁴ The AARP Public Policy Institute recognized the CHOICES program as a promising practice in 2015.

⁸ Connelly, Lora. California Department on Aging. MediConnect Dementia Project Update. <http://www.chhs.ca.gov/Alzheimer/Agenda%20Item%204-%20Dementia%20Cal%20MediConnect%20Project%20Update.pdf>

⁹ www.alzgl.org/professionals/dementia-care-management-toolkit

¹⁰ AARP. Family Caregivers and Managed Long-term Services and Supports, pp 16-18. www.aarp.org/ppi/info-2016/family-caregivers-and-managed-ltss.html Accessed January 18, 2017.

¹¹ <https://tn.gov/tenncare/topic/choices>

¹² <https://www.payingforseniorcare.com/cash-and-counseling/tn-choices.html>

¹³ <https://tn.gov/tenncare/article/what-home-care-services-are-covered-in-choices>

¹⁴ Paul Saucier and Brian Burwell, Truven Health Analytics, AARP Public Policy Institute, [Care Coordination in Managed Long-Term Services and Supports](#), 2015, p. 12

**Trend Watch:
UnitedHealthcare
Solutions for
Caregivers**

UnitedHealthcare offers caregivers information, products, and services through its Solutions for Caregivers program.¹⁵ The program helps employers support the needs of caregivers, while providing a way for caregivers save time and money. At an additional cost, caregiver case managers can offer suggestions and recommend appropriate care. The program “addresses the needs of family caregivers through case management services and online resources that helps more effectively care for their loved ones,” offered Vidya Raman-Tangella, M.D., Head of UnitedHealthcare’s Innovation Center of Excellence.¹⁶ Eligible members register and create a personalized spot on the Solutions for Caregivers website¹⁷ obtaining access to all of the features, including in-person, telephone, and online resources. The service is available to UnitedHealthcare members who work for large employers with self-funded health plans, as well as some Medicare members. Covered Medicare benefits include¹⁸ access to a telephone resource center, case manager services, and, for some members, respite care.¹⁹ UnitedHealthcare’s website also offers general caregiver support resources.²⁰ The AARP Public Policy Institute recognized Solutions for Caregivers as a promising program, and commended UnitedHealthcare for offering family caregiver supports to Medicaid populations²¹

¹⁵ <https://www.uhc.com/individual-and-family/member-resources/health-care-tools/caregiver-solutions>

¹⁶ <https://www.uhc.com/news-room/2016-news-release-archive/solutions-for-caregivers>

¹⁷ <https://www.uhcforcaregivers.com/demo/resources>

¹⁸ https://www.unitedhealthcareonline.com/ccmcontent/ProviderII/UHC/en-US/Assets/ProviderStaticFiles/ProviderStaticFilesPdf/Tools%20and%20Resources/Policies%20and%20Protocols/UnitedHealthcare%20Medicare%20Coverage/Solutions_Caregivers_UHCMA_CS.pdf

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ <https://www.uhc.com/health-and-wellness/family-health/caregiver-support>

²¹ AARP. Family Caregivers and Managed Long-term Services and Supports, pp 15-16. www.aarp.org/ppi/info-2016/family-caregivers-and-managed-ltss.html Accessed January 18, 2017.

**Trend Watch:
Department of
Veterans Affairs
Caregiver
Support
Services**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers extensive Caregiver Support Services²² to assist the estimated 5.5 million people serving as caregivers for veteran family members.²³

Launched in 2007, the VA's Caregiver Support Services include a caregiver support line, a support coordinator, peer support for caregivers, adult day health care centers, skilled home care, a homemaker and home health aide program, a home telehealth program, respite care, and home hospice care. The Caregiver Toolbox offers resources and information about the role of the family caregiver, diagnosis care sheets, tips and checklists, tools for staying organized, and links to websites about caring for veterans after a stroke or with dementia. In addition, under the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010, the VA offers services for family caregivers of post-9/11 veterans who sustained a serious injury.²⁴ These services can include a monthly stipend, travel expenses, health insurance, mental health services, caregiver training, and respite care.²⁵ Eligible post-9/11 veterans can designate one primary family caregiver and up to two secondary family caregivers. Lastly, caregiver support coordinators are available at every VA medical center.

²² http://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/support_services.asp

²³ Sara Sicard, [The VA Program For Veteran Caregivers You May Not Know About](#), Task & Purpose, March 22, 2016

²⁴ http://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/support_benefits.asp#sthash.HL3Mkw5s.dpuf

²⁵ https://www.va.gov/purchasedcare/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/factsheet_11-02.pdf