

2018 Legislative Agenda

Protect Medicaid Funding

Nursing facilities and HCBS providers are struggling. Between Medicaid reimbursements below the cost of care in nursing facilities, an increasingly burdensome and costly regulatory environment, and a workforce shortage, aging services are struggling to maintain the high quality of care Iowans have grown to expect.

With Iowa's budget issues, LAI's top priority is protecting the care of residents served by Long Term Supports and Services (LTSS). The populations utilizing LTSS are some of the most fragile Iowans. These people often have no viable options for paying for the intensive level of care.

Additionally, LAI supports the roll back the administrative rule eliminating Medicaid Retroactive Eligibility that became effective November 1, 2017 after CMS approved the state plan amendment on October 26, 2017. LeadingAge Iowa also supports continued RIIF appropriations to this program and the adoption of the technical modifications necessary to ensure that the funds are matched and distributed as the legislature has intended in the new Medicaid managed care system.

Iowa's Aging Services Workforce Crisis

Iowa is in the midst of a workforce crisis for aging services. The number one issue for nearly every nursing facility and HCBS provider is finding quality staff to care for the Iowans they serve. With Iowa's low unemployment rate, it is becoming more and more difficult to hire staff to care for aging Iowans. Here in Iowa, there are an average 9,000 job postings a month for RNs, LPNs, and CNAs, with only 2,500 of those positions being filled. With the impending "grey tsunami" of baby boomers needing aging services, finding enough caretakers will be a critical issue for years to come. Iowa must act now to prepare its workforce to care for Iowa's aging adults.

Below are four policy recommendations that Iowa can pursue to tackle the workforce crisis:

- Invest in Iowa's workforce. We need to make aging service careers a top priority to ensure quality care and experienced caregivers. Training for careers in aging services must be accessible and affordable to effectively grow the workforce and meet the demand.
- Fight the aging stigma. Iowa must take steps to raise awareness of issues related to aging and promote careers working with older adults.
- Aging service providers and managed care organizations must work together to provide value, high quality care, and ensure access for Iowa's seniors.
- The state of Iowa should develop a strategic plan to prepare for Iowa's aging future.

Iowa's Aging Services System

The percentage of Iowans age 65 and older is expected to grow from 15 percent in 2010 to 22.5 percent in 2030. Between 2013 and 2030, the percentage of Iowans age 85 and older is expected to grow by 52 percent. These demographic changes will place unprecedented demands on the Long-Term Supports and Services (LTSS) system, and Iowa needs to begin planning now for a system that is more efficient and ensures availability of services for older adults.

A 2017 task force created by the legislature to examine access to LTSS, including dementia prioritized several issues needing attention the LAI supports including:

- Development of a more comprehensive, simplified and effective Medicaid reimbursement rate and system for assisted living programs and adult day programs to build increased capacity, particularly for adult day.
- Develop effective and affordable LTSS financing options beyond Medicaid through potential partnerships between the state and private, long-term care insurance plans.
- Re-evaluate regulatory environment to allow for a full continuum of services and increased flexibility in service provision and the availability of care, particularly related to dementia.
- Align system to ensure that individuals seeking LTSS, particularly in a crisis, can navigate the system and easily connect with services.

Iowa needs to start working now to resolve fractures, holes and inefficiencies in the LTSS delivery and financing system. With the wave of baby boomers entering the system, time is of the essence

About LeadingAge Iowa

LeadingAge Iowa (LAI) is the strong and distinct voice for not-for-profit aging services providers in Iowa as we strive to expand the world of possibilities for aging through advocacy, education and collaboration. Our members represent a spectrum of non-profit providers including skilled nursing, assisted and independent living, home health, adult day care, respite, hospice, Programs for All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) and home-delivered meals.