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For More Information
Roger Munns 515 281 4848

Grant to Help Vulnerable Iowans Stay at Home

DES MOINES, Iowa – Iowa Medicaid will use a major grant to help older and disabled Iowans stay in their own homes and avoid unnecessary nursing home placements.

“We know that most vulnerable Iowans prefer to get help in their own homes if it’s safe to do so, and we’ve been expanding home service for years,” said Medicaid Director Jennifer Vermeer.

“With this major grant, we’ll be able to make this option available to more and more people,” she said.

Iowa is one of six states to receive funding through a federal provision called “balancing incentive payments,” with the idea being to balance Medicaid long-term care programs between facility care and in-home supports.

The grant is available to states in which more than half of Medicaid long-term care spending is for nursing homes and other facilities. Iowa’s award is \$61.8 million through 2015.

“Over the next 20 years, the number of Iowans who will need long term care will increase dramatically and many will turn to Medicaid for help. Facility care will continue to play an essential role but we know that we often can deliver high levels of care in the place most people would prefer – in their own homes,” Vermeer said.

Vermeer said there will be three main strategies to expand in-home services:

- Establish a “no wrong door” and a single point of entry system for seniors who need care. Medicaid will work with existing aging and disability resource centers to establish a network of access points, web sites, toll-free telephone numbers, and other resources to provide quick information and service for seniors and the disabled who need long term supports and services.
- Establish a standardized assessment tool to help determine eligibility for non-institutional services. The tool will be used as a guide to develop individualized service plans.
- Establish an efficient case management system in which experts help individuals and families to develop and arrange for a long-term service plan. Managers must have no financial connection to the services they recommend.

The Iowa award was announced last week by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the federal oversight agency. The states of New Hampshire, Missouri, Georgia, Mississippi, and Maryland also received grants.

Vermeer said the “balancing” grant is the second major recent decision to benefit Iowa Medicaid. Earlier this month, CMS approved a plan to implement “health home” services for members with chronic conditions.

Effective July 1, qualified providers will begin to offer advanced services to Medicaid members with chronic conditions in order to better coordinate care. This will allow Medicaid

members with multiple or chronic conditions to receive help that integrates all their needs into a single plan of care.

The new service is projected to save \$7 million to \$15 million in state dollars over a three-year period due to reduced emergency room visits and increased avoidance of hospital admissions. About 5,000 Medicaid members may be offered health home services over the coming months.