

POLICY POSITION
PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF AREA AGENCIES
ON AGING, INC.

AAA's *on* Assisted Living

Problem/Situation:

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has failed to produce a comprehensive definition of Assisted Living. Because of this problem several types of entities across Pennsylvania, (assisted living facilities, personal care boarding homes, and independent living facilities), are using the terminology interchangeably. This has created confusion for consumers and families trying to determine which system is the most appropriate to meet the long term/short term needs for those requiring some level of service. This problem has also created much concern with advocacy groups, when regulatory requirements and standards are not legally enforced, or, non-existent.

The Goal:

To ensure that the Commonwealth creates appropriate legislation, which will clearly define, regulate, and fund Assisted Living, which will meet the needs of all consumers regardless of income levels, or socio-economic status.

The Position:

Lends legal definition to the term "Assisted Living":

- to not, in any way, make "Assisted Living" synonymous with personal care, and/or independent living, and clearly delineate levels of care and facility.
- that "Assisted Living" not be simply another level of facility-based care, but also include services for people living in their own homes or in their own community.
Further, that it does not establish another set of expensive facilities to withdraw dollars that might otherwise be applied to sustaining a person in his/her home. (New housing will serve fewer people and do so in a segregated setting).
- that the term "Assisted Living" be strictly defined and restricted in use so as not to further confuse consumers. Therefore, the definition must be distinct from any definition, which would define personal care.
- ensure that facilities are licensed and regulated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, with the Department of Health as the licensing agency.

Relative to Consumer Choice:

- a. Allow citizens to age in place in their homes if that is their choice and maximizes options, autonomy, and control.
- b. Supports a model of service delivery that is fashioned around the central premise of consumer choice and thereby recognizes an individual's right to age not only in place, but also in a place of his/her choosing whether this is a family home or a facility setting.
- c. That consumer choice in accommodations is honored as far as financial resources would allow and that the reality of limited resources is emphasized in this matter.
- d. Engenders an optimum level of independence, privacy, choice, and dignity to permit continuity in living, without artificially imposed disruption in residence or enforced patterns of daily living.
- e. Supports consumer protection, full disclosure of information relating to services, costs, admission, and discharge criteria.
- f. Ensure that Area Agency on Aging Programs retain responsibility as the "gatekeeper" for assessments in determining functional eligibility for all publicly funded long term care services in order to ensure consistent and appropriate assessment criteria, and consumer choice options of long term care.

Consumers will be provided with conflict free, unbiased assessments to ensure the most appropriate level of care for the correct service alternative, and providing for the least restrictive environment.

Financing the System:

- That any commitment by the legislature to expand services through any definition of "Assisted Living", must be supported with sufficient "new funding" infused into the system to pay for the expansion. It is agreed that no Penn Care, Lottery, or Tobacco Settlement funding should be allocated for "Assisted Living" expansion, but that other funding sources through the Department of Public Welfare system be explored.
- Assisted Living beds should be subsidized. Currently the system is focused on the "rich elderly", which does not allow the same level of care for consumers who cannot afford to pay privately. The service must be available to persons of all income levels.

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