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HHS Announces Initiatives in Support of the “Year of Community Living” *Goal is to create Aging and Disability Resource Centers in every State*

In support of President Obama’s proclamation of the “Year of Community Living,” HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius today announced a funding opportunity that will make it easier for older people, younger adults, and their families to learn about and access health and long-term care options through Aging and Disability Resource Center Programs (ADRCs). ADRCs provide “one-stop shop” sources of information, one-on-one counseling, and streamlined access to programs and services that can enable people to remain in their own homes and communities.

This funding opportunity will expand ADRCs across the country. ADRCs are a collaborative effort of the Administration on Aging (AoA) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Since 2003 AoA and CMS have jointly funded ADRC pilot programs in 45 states and territories. The new funding will build on and expand the existing pilots and ensure that every state can offer this program and its services to their citizens.

“Engaged and empowered consumers are an essential element of health and long-term care reform, and ADRCs are integral to making this happen,” Secretary Sebelius said. “This program will help consumers and their families, and it can save taxpayer dollars. If people have options, they will be able to find the most appropriate and often lower-cost health-related and social services that support individuals to allow them to lead meaningful lives in their homes and communities.”

The Administration’s “Year of Community Living” was launched today to mark the 10th year anniversary of the Supreme Court *Olmstead v. L.C.* decision. This landmark ruling supported community living options for people with disabilities to ensure there is no discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Secretary Sebelius also announced today the formation of a HHS Coordinating Council to coordinate the department’s “Year of Community Living” Initiative. The Coordinating Council, led by the Office on Disability, will be a working partnership among AoA, CMS, the Office of Civil Rights, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

“The Year of Community Living gives all of us at HHS an opportunity to better serve those individuals who need ongoing services and support programs like those provided by AoA, CMS and other HHS agencies,” said Henry Claypool, director of the HHS Office on Disability. “We look forward to working closely with everyone who will be helping us improve community living arrangements for Americans living with disabilities.”

ADRCs are designed to reduce the confusion and frustration consumers and their families often experience when trying to find needed information, services, and support. ADRCs serve as visible and trusted sources of information and assistance on the full range of public and private options that are available so people can make informed decisions about their long term support. ADRCs serve as convenient entry points for all publicly supported long term-care programs and support services.

States applying for ADRC grants must involve a variety of agencies, organizations and consumers representing seniors and people with physical, developmental and mental health disabilities in the design and implementation of their ADRC programs. ADRCs also partner with State Health Insurance Counseling Programs to help people with their Medicare benefits

“This opportunity promotes the shared vision of AoA and CMS on how ADRCs can help facilitate an integrated services delivery system to better support older adults, caregivers and those with disabilities who want to remain independent in their communities,” said Acting Assistant Secretary for Aging Edwin L. Walker.

The funding availability includes two opportunities:

- AoA-funding opportunity for ADRC development or expansion in up to 50 states over a three-year period. The maximum award for the ADRC opportunity will be \$600,000; total funds available are \$10 million.
- CMS-award opportunity to programs in California, Hawaii, Maryland and North Carolina to strengthen ADRC partnerships with hospitals so that more people who are being discharged and need post-acute care receive that care at home rather than in a nursing home facility. The award amount per state is \$1,167,000.

“These funding opportunities promote effective long-term service systems that make the right services available in appropriate settings when the individual needs them,” said Cindy Mann, director, Centers for Medicaid and State Operations. “CMS is also inviting comments on proposed changes to current regulations giving states greater flexibility to serve people based on their individual needs rather than on their diagnosis.”

As part of the “Year of Community Living,” CMS today issued an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANRPM) to solicit input about possible ways to improve current regulations by removing Federal barriers that stand in the way of states’ ability to design needs-based, person-centered home and community-based waiver programs. This notice also aims to solicit comments on providing additional clarity around the characteristics of home and community-based settings. The ANPRM can be found at <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-14559.pdf>.

The closing date for the ADRC applications to AoA is Monday, Aug. 3, 2009. The deadline for submission of a letter of intent is Wednesday, July 1, 2009. Letters should be submitted to Joseph Lugo by e-mail: joseph.lugo@aoa.hhs.gov.

For more information about AoA and CMS regarding these efforts, visit www.aoa.gov or http://www.cms.hhs.gov/RealChoice/01_Overview.asp#TopOfPage
ADRC information can also be found at www.adrc-tae.org.

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