

2008 NCSHA Awards Submission
Special Achievement
South Carolina State Housing Finance and Development Authority
Community Long Term Care Program: Improving the Quality of Home
Modifications for Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities in South Carolina

Executive Summary

Overview

With professionalism, quality and innovation being the hallmarks of the South Carolina State Housing Finance and Development Authority (the Authority), we strive to know our customers and understand their needs. We continually seek ways to improve our services with the vision that all South Carolinians have the opportunity to live in safe, decent and affordable housing. With this in mind, the Authority and the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) partnered to provide funding for the Community Long Term Care program (CLTC) that provides in-home services and home modifications to the elderly and persons with disabilities throughout the state. Program participants meet the medical criteria to be placed in nursing homes, but wish to remain in their own homes. Program participants must also meet Medicaid income guidelines. Until recently, the home modifications part of the CLTC program was very limited including only ramps, space heaters and air conditioners. New services have expanded to include installing handicap accessible showers, grab bars, widening doorways, roof repair or replacement, weatherizing, plumbing, electrical work, making rooms handicap accessible and leveling floors, among others. These home improvements are an essential part to keeping older adults in the homes that they cherish and maintaining their independence.

The Problem

Many older adults and people with physical disabilities live in inaccessible homes and face a risk of serious injury. Home modifications such as ramps and grab bars can improve a person's ability to live in their home and move around safely. While home modification services are often available through Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waivers, these desperately needed modifications are often difficult for qualified participants to obtain. Contractors familiar with accessibility standards can be difficult to locate. Work may be of poor quality and require revision. Older adults and people with physical disabilities often face a long wait for home modifications. In some instances, contractors agreed to a project and then refused to do the job after visiting the home.

The Program – How Does it Work?

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the state Medicaid agency, administers three HCBS waivers that serve:

- 1) Older adults and people with physical disabilities;
- 2) People with HIV/AIDS; and
- 3) People who require a ventilator.

Approximately 150 case managers work around the state with more than 12,000 program participants that receive these waivers. Case managers make home visits at least once a

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quarter and work with participants to identify needs for home repairs. A referral is made to the Environmental Modifications Specialist, hired by the state to visit the home. Priority is given to modifications involving safety issues or accessibility. Bid letters with specifications are sent to enrolled providers, who are all licensed builders. When bids are returned, they are reviewed for reasonableness and the job is awarded to the lowest bidder. Once the job is completed, if there is a complaint made by the resident, the Environmental Modifications Specialist will have the builder fix the work as needed. If necessary, payment will be withheld from the provider until the work is done properly. Common repairs are to plumbing and associated water damage, floor repairs and making rooms handicap accessible. Funding the Authority provides to the CLTC program is used as state match for these home modification services. These services are vital in allowing the elderly and persons with physical disabilities to remain in their own homes and avoid being placed in a long-term care facility. In addition, the Medicaid agency works with the Authority to use state funds earmarked for home modifications as the state component for Medicaid waiver home modifications.

Measurable Results - Impact

The state and service providers report that program selected home modification providers demonstrate a greater knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements and, as a result, the waiver provides higher quality home modifications. In addition, the South Carolina State Housing Finance and Development Authority partnership enables the state to provide more home modifications in a faster turn-around time – sometimes as short as one day! Currently, requests for home repairs are coming in faster than specifications and bids can be sent out to builders.

The \$250,000 provided by the Authority was used by DHHS to leverage federal matching funds, resulting in total available funds of \$884,398. The greater impact is the fact that Authority funds were used totally toward direct assistance to participants. With program administration already in place at DHHS, no additional administrative costs were incurred. This innovative program allowed 558 older and disabled persons to realize their wish to hold on to their independence in the homes in which they have grown comfortable and accustomed. This program was featured in the HCBS “Promising Practices” Clearinghouse for the Community Living Exchange Collaborative.