



Long term care (LTC) includes a wide array of medical and non-medical care to people who have a chronic illness or disability over an extended period of time. A growing number of Baby Boomers will soon be seeking long term care services, and almost every American family will have to decide what services they need and can afford. Financing and coordinating LTC is a major issue today for two main reasons: first, growing numbers of Baby Boomers will soon be seeking these services. Secondly, people used to receive most of their care in hospitals that treat episodes of illness. However, now more people need extended treatment for chronic illnesses. These circumstances have had a major effect on our current public program funding systems. In light of the increased demand and need for LTC, and the inadequate financing systems for this type of care, it should be a major piece of the health care reform discussion.

Who Uses Long Term Care?

Any person with limited functional capacity or a chronic illness, regardless of age, uses long term care (LTC). Of all people turning 65 in the United States, 69% will need long term services or support and 40% will require these services for 2 or more years. Seventy-five percent of nursing home residents, and about 65% home health care recipients are women.

How is Long Term Care Paid For?

Medicaid is the country's largest public payer for LTC accounting for 40% of all services delivered. It pays almost 50% of formal care, which is in nursing home. Not everyone qualifies for Medicaid, however. You must have less than \$2000 in savings and an allowance of about \$30 a month from Social Security. Medicare only covers a part of LTC costs. It covers some home health, skilled nursing, and hospice care. However, Medicare is meant for short-term treatment, and is not intended to be a LTC program. Medicare will cover a limited stay in a nursing home if an individual has been in the hospital for at least three of the last 30 days.

Long term care (LTC) can be extremely expensive, and in many cases unexpected. If you are not Medicaid-eligible, you are responsible for covering most of the cost of LTC. When faced with this situation, many individuals turn to their families for help or tap into the retirement savings. The average caregiver will spend approximately \$5,500 a year to care for a loved one.

Who Provides Long Term Care?

Many people think long term care (LTC) means going to a nursing home. However, LTC be provided in a variety of settings, including: nursing homes, assisted living facilities, supportive residential communities, or in private individuals' homes. Paid caretakers and personal home health workers provide the vast majority of community and nursing home care (90% of direct nursing home care.) One in five adults (approximately 44.4 million individuals) is a family caregiver for their ailing family members and friends. While women are more likely to need long term care services, they are also more likely to provide them; women represent 7 of 10 unpaid caregivers.



Talking Points on Long Term Care and Supportive Services

- It is important not to ignore long term care issues in the health care reform discussions. Ultimately these types of services will cost the government and families a great deal, and it is prudent to include ideas on financing long term care options in health care reform.
- The Alliance for Retired Americans supports a social insurance model for a long term care system that provides a range of quality care services for all who need it, regardless of age.
- Federal and state governments and LTC providers should recognize the essential role of front-line LTC workers in ensuring quality care. Guarantee them the right to organize and bargain collectively.

Sample Questions to Ask Your Members of Congress

- Do you plan to address long term services & support reform in health care legislation?
- Would you support a federal financing system for LTC services, such as the CLASS Act?
- Will you support expanded funding for the Family Caregiver Support Program as well as financial and other support for family caregivers?
- Will you support legislation that will increase nursing home company ownership transparency, and prohibit long term care facilities from making families and residents sign mandatory arbitration agreements?
- Would you support legislation that provides health care coverage for caregivers?



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