

HHS strengthens community living options for older Americans and people with disabilities

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The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a final rule today to ensure that Medicaid's home and community-based services programs provide full access to the benefits of community living and offer services in the most integrated settings. The rule, as part of the Affordable Care Act, supports the Department of Health and Human Services' Community Living Initiative. The initiative was launched in 2009 to develop and implement innovative strategies to increase opportunities for Americans with disabilities and older adults to enjoy meaningful community living.

Under the final rule, Medicaid programs will support home and community-based settings that serve as an alternative to institutional care and that take into account the quality of individuals' experiences. The final rule includes a transitional period for states to ensure that their programs meet the home and community-based services settings requirements. Technical assistance will also be available for states.

"People with disabilities and older adults have a right to live, work, and participate in the greater community. HHS, through its Community Living Initiative, has been expanding and improving the community services necessary to make this a reality," said HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. "Today's announcement will help ensure that all people participating in Medicaid home and community-based services programs have full access to the benefits of community living."

In addition to defining home and community-based settings, the final rule implements the Section 1915(i) home and community-based services State Plan option. This includes new flexibility provided by the Affordable Care Act that gives states additional options for expanding home and community-based services and to target services to specific populations. It also amends the 1915(c) home and community-based services waiver program to add new person-centered planning requirements, allow states to combine multiple target populations in one waiver, and streamlines waiver administration.

For more information about the final rule, please

visit: <http://www.cms.gov/Newsroom/MediaReleaseDatabase/Fact-Sheets/2014-Fact-sheets-items/2014-01-10-2.html>

For more information regarding the Home and Community-Based Services available under Medicaid, please visit: <http://www.medicaid.gov/HCBS/>

For more information regarding the Community Living Initiative, please visit: <http://www.hhs.gov/od/community/index.html>

The final rule can be found here: http://ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2014-00487_PI.pdf