

Meeting summary for OHCA Assisted living member call (04/23/2025)

Quick recap

The meeting covered various aspects of assisted living, including budget discussions, regulatory changes, and implementation of new programs. Challenges faced by providers and potential solutions were addressed, along with updates on federal and state-level policies affecting the industry. The team also discussed upcoming events, scholarship opportunities, and the availability of COVID-19 tests for assisted living facilities.

Next steps

- Erin to continue monitoring and gathering feedback on Area Agency on Aging assessment timeframes for assisted living waiver providers.
- OHCA members to notify Erin of any issues experienced with Social Security Administration's new PIN process for resident fund account setup.
- OHCA members to consider submitting ideas to Debbie for potential federal regulatory rollbacks related to assisted living.
- OHCA members to register for the upcoming convention on May 5-8 if they haven't already.
- OHCA members to attend the docuseries premiere on May 7th at 7:30 PM, with reception starting at 6:30 PM.
- Assisted living providers to stock up on free COVID tests through the Care Center portal before April 30th.
- Assisted living providers to use the HHS form to request free COVID tests after April 30th if needed.

Summary

Assisted Living Program Budget Update

Pete led a meeting for the Assisted Living members, discussing recent developments and addressing any questions. He highlighted the state budget process, which had passed the House and was now in a waiting period. The Senate was gearing up for its budget process, with hearings scheduled in different committees. Pete noted that the Assisted Living program, funded by Medicaid but operated by the Department of Aging, would be discussed in the Health Committee. Director McElroy from Aging would testify next week, and Pete's organization would be present to track the discussions and potentially provide public testimony.

Residential Care Facility Budget Bill Discussion

Pete discussed the budget bill's lack of significant regulatory changes for residential care facilities. He mentioned a provision about initial licensure and an increase in the personal needs allowance for waiver beneficiaries. Pete also highlighted a potential issue with the personal needs allowance for assisted living facilities, which could lead to a reduction in room and board payments. He mentioned that the Department of Aging is working on a solution to this issue. Lastly, Pete discussed a joint proposal for modest rate increases over two years and the establishment of a rate review mechanism to regularly assess costs in assisted living facilities.

Uncertain Budget and Flat Tax Consideration

Pete discussed the budget situation, stating that the current budget does not include additional spending and that they were looking to cut spending. He mentioned that the Senate's viewpoint on spending is uncertain, and that they are concerned about the potential erosion of gains and services if rates are not increased. Pete also mentioned that the Senate is considering a flat tax, which would reduce revenue by over a billion dollars a year. He concluded by stating that they will continue to advocate for near-term rate relief, despite the challenging landscape.

MyCare Implementation and Plan Transition

Pete discussed a long-winded topic, leaving room for questions. Erin then addressed the implementation of MyCare across the state, particularly for assisted living waiver providers. She highlighted the need for providers to adapt to electronic billing, as many have not done so before. Erin also shared a map detailing the transition of plans, with the first transition happening on January 1st, 2026. She encouraged providers to review the map and contract with all four plans. Erin also mentioned reaching out to all four plans for educational opportunities and preparing residents for plan selection. She ended by asking if anyone had questions about the MyCare implementation.

Addressing Long Waiting Times

Erin discussed the challenges faced by members in the area agency on aging, particularly the long waiting times for assessments. She proposed some creative strategies to address the issue and encouraged members to share their experiences. Erin also mentioned a new requirement from the Social Security Administration for certain claimants to complete a PIN process for phone or in-person changes to their account information, which could affect resident fund management.

Federal Budget Reconciliation Process Update

Debbie discussed the ongoing federal budget reconciliation process, noting that the House and Senate have passed different versions of the budget resolution. The House version includes more savings targets, while the Senate version has less. The process is expected to continue into mid to late summer, with potential changes to current spending and tax cuts. A Congressional briefing is planned for early June to advocate against deep Medicaid cuts.

Court Ruling Affects Skilled Nursing

Debbie informed the team about a recent court ruling that invalidated the minimum staffing requirements for skilled nursing facilities. This ruling should alleviate concerns about staff being pulled from assisted living facilities to meet these requirements. Additionally, Debbie discussed a request for information from the Office of Management and Budget, which could lead to the rollback of certain regulations. She highlighted the challenges faced by assisted living facilities in the process of heightened scrutiny for co-located skilled nursing facilities, suggesting that this process may be inefficient and not aligned with the goal of the settings rule.

Federal Regulations and Association Updates

Debbie discussed potential rollbacks to federal regulations and minimum staffing requirements, encouraging members to submit items for consideration. Erin announced the upcoming convention and the premiere of a documentary series, and highlighted the association's scholarship program. Pete informed the group about the end of free COVID-19 tests from the Department of Aging and the availability of tests through the HHS portal. The team also discussed the care navigator issue and the need for a more personalized approach to referrals.

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