

Health Commissioner Endorses New Federal Model to Help Elderly, Disabled New Yorkers to Remain in Their Homes

ALBANY, N.Y. (March 18, 2011) – State Health Commissioner Nirav R. Shah, M.D., M.P.H., today endorsed the Community First Choice Option offered to states as part of federal health reform. This option will allow states to offer enhanced personal care services to help disabled and elderly New Yorkers stay in their homes.

“Allowing disabled and elderly New Yorkers additional options to stay in their homes is consistent with Governor Cuomo’s goals,” Commissioner Shah said. “This new federal opportunity will help New York reform its Medicaid program while at the same time empower elderly and disabled individuals to stay in their own homes.”

The Community First Choice Option would provide a 6 percent enhanced federal payment under Medicaid for certain types of home and community-based attendant services and supports. The program must be offered throughout the state in the most integrated setting appropriate to individuals’ needs.

Dr. Shah said Governor Andrew M. Cuomo has asked him to take all necessary steps to prepare New York to make use of the new care option. Action will include establishing a development and implementation council, whose membership must consist primarily of elderly and disabled individuals and their representatives.

“Patient-centered and patient-directed care needs flexibility to work, which Community First Choice will help provide,” Dr. Shah said. “This is an opportunity to rethink the way New York supports its elderly and disabled populations. We look forward to implementing this new concept.”

The Community First Choice option expands on New York’s current consumer directed personal assistance program (CDPAP), in which Medicaid patients are supported in their desire to live in their community by specifying the types of care and support they require.

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The Community First Choice Option is an important part of the Affordable Care Act. The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) recently published in the Federal Register proposed regulations that would implement this part of the federal health reform.

Public comment on the proposed regulations is due to CMS by April 26. This new guidance provides additional clarity on the federal option, which will help patients make the transition from institutional to home or community-based living. Enhanced federal Medicaid payments will be made for certain supports, including the set-up costs for independent living, such as rent and utility deposits, first month's rent and utilities, bedding and basic kitchen supplies. States looking to implement the program will have to establish a quality assurance system that includes consumer feedback.

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Dr. Shah will coordinate New York State's comments on the draft federal regulations and accept nominations to serve on the development and implementation council.

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