

Assisted Living and Extended Congregate Care: The Florida Experience

by

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Introduction

The long-term care needs of a rapidly increasing elderly population have become increasingly apparent to the general public and policy makers alike. Long-term care services are the array of social, health, and housing services which are available to physically or cognitively impaired frail persons. Public funding of long-term care is dominated by nursing homes which consume over 80 percent of all public expenditures for long-term care. The remainder is spent to support in-home and community-based long-term care, which are commonly less expensive than nursing home care and are generally preferred by the frail elderly and other potential recipients of long-term care services (e.g., people who are dying from AIDS). We have barely begun to tap the potential of residential care, including assisted living. In fact, one of the most underdeveloped parts of the long-term care system in Florida and other states is community-residential care for publicly supported long-term care clients.

This paper provides a historical analysis of public policy to support assisted living and extended congregate care in Florida. It describes the collective efforts of advocates, providers, and public officials to address a publicly supported assisted living program for people with level; of impairment which place them at serious risk of nursing home placement. A number of additional initiatives are proposed to ensure a high quality of care in Florida's publicly supported assisted living program. These proposals are based on recent findings (Yee et al., 1996) which highlight the potential threats to quality of care and new approaches to regulations. A second paper will address the state-of-the art of outcomes-based research on assisted living;.

The six chapters describe: 1) rationale for developing publicly supported assisted living; 2) the legislative process used in Florida to establish extended congregate care; 3) the major features of the legislation; 4) the regulatory framework established for the program; 5) the major unresolved and emerging issues related to assisted living and extended congregate care; and 6) recommendations related to the further development of Florida's assisted living program.