



Capitol Focus

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Capitol Focus is a weekly activities summary of the Colorado Legislature for CAHSA members, provided by staff of the Colorado Association of Homes and Services for the Aging. Contact Laura Landwirth, executive director, at cahsa@cahsa.org.



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What's new at the Capitol?

What is the Governor up to?

Who are my legislators?

This week marked the first hearing we attended at this year's Legislative session to provide testimony on a bill. I would like to share with you how it went as it is a great example of the process we sometimes use when trying to accomplish one of our policy objectives on behalf of our members.

As you know, each week our Legislative Task Force reviews new bills that have been introduced and determines our position on each. At our first meeting we reviewed HB 1070, Concerning Safety in Day Treatment Centers. This bill had nothing to do with CAHSA's Adult Day members who are Medicaid certified under the HCBS – Elderly, Blind, Disabled waiver. However, the bill title was very broad and we believed it might offer us an opportunity to move forward one of our suggestions for reform of Medicaid Home- and Community-based services.

For several years we have been trying to get the adult day Medicaid regulations amended to allow programs the option of installing keypad access for secured doors. Most recently we submitted the concept to the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) in the late spring of 2009 when they requested suggestions from stakeholders for how to better utilize the Medicaid funded programs. Our proposal was prompted by the reality that many families are able to support the care of a loved one with dementia or Alzheimer's who is on Medicaid by the use of a day program for the elderly. These programs allow the families or caregivers to continue to provide care in the evenings and weekends, while feeling secure that their loved ones are in a safe environment during the day. Due to the wandering that may occur with dementia or Alzheimer's disease, many Medicaid clients have to be sent from a day program to a more restrictive or expensive setting. Day programs are not allowed by regulation to install keypad access for secured doors. Keypad access would create a safe environment for a wandering elderly person and allow notification to staff if that person has left the day program. If the state would change the regulations for day programs and allow them to use keypad access, the state could serve these individuals in a less expensive setting, thereby saving dollars in the Medicaid program. We have even drafted proposed revised regulations and submitted them to HCPF staff.

After discussion with our Legislative Task Force, we sought and received permission from the sponsors of HB 1070 to draft an amendment to be introduced when the bill was heard in the House HHS committee this past Monday. Legislative task force members Anne Cuizon (Life at the Bluffs – Goodwill Industries), Lori Sanchez (Morning Star Senior Day Program), and Linda Johnston and John Zabawa (both from Seniors' Resource Center) provided technical input on the amendment for us. Anne Cuizon drove up from Colorado Springs and proceeded to wait for several hours for the bill to be heard in committee. Unfortunately, we learned just before the hearing began that the bill may be in trouble due to the original language proposing the use of "locked doors." Anne did eventually get to testify. While it was clear that the committee did not take issue with our amendment, they did not support the bill as introduced and it did not pass out of committee.

We are, of course, disappointed but remain committed to another opportunity during this session to try again. Thanks to our dedicated members for their time and input on short notice. Working together we will achieve success....just not this week!