



## **LAW PROVIDING GREATER ACCESS TO IN-HOME CARE FOR SENIORS TAKES EFFECT; SURVEY TRACKS TRENDS IN INSURANCE, SERVICE**

A law going into effect this weekend will allow seniors immediate access to home care where the state can provide services for a third of the cost of nursing homes, advocates said Wednesday.

The legislation passed last May (HB398, 128<sup>th</sup> General Assembly) eliminates a wait list for the PASSPORT program so that older adults discharged from hospitals, living in unsafe conditions or who have depleted their assets for assisted living can have immediate access to home care.

Gov. John Kasich mentioned in his State of the State address Tuesday that his budget would also include a focus on more in-home care programs. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, March 8, 2011)

The expansion of the Home First policy, which goes into effect Saturday, will be administered by Ohio's 12 Area Agencies on Aging.

"Legislators rely on Area Agencies on Aging not only to deliver quality services but also to rein in Medicaid costs," Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging Executive Director Larke Recchie said in a release. "Since the inception of PASSPORT over 20 years ago, we have reduced the rate of consumers in nursing facilities vs. home and community care from more than 90% to 58%."

The state pays about \$20,000 annually to care for a person at home, compared to \$62,000 annually at a nursing facility, the association said.

If the number of Medicaid long-term care consumers' services were equally split between home care and nursing facilities, as the group suggests, Ohio could save \$500 million over the next biennium, according to the association. When Ohio reaches the national average, almost \$1 billion per year could be saved.

"Area Agencies on Aging are the best solution to achieve dramatic savings in Medicaid long-term care costs," Ms. Recchie said.

**Health Survey:** Preliminary results from the 2010 Ohio Family Health Survey indicate that although Ohio's percent of uninsured children has declined overall since the survey in 2003-04, the proportion has increased since the last study in 2008.



Whereas 5.4% of children were uninsured in 2003, 4% were uninsured in 2008 and 4.6% fell into that category in 2010, according to the findings. Ohio's percentages are below the national average that exceeds 10%.

The proportion of uninsured working-age adults increased from 15% to 18.5% between 2003 and 2010, for an increase of 308,645 Ohioans. About 46.5% of this number has occurred within the past two years, the report says.

In 2003, uninsured females outranked their male counterparts, but the proportion of uninsured men increased at twice the rate of women. For those age 18-64, the number of women without coverage increased 4.5% between 2003 and 2010, compared to 9% for men.

The preliminary findings report also offers data on employer-sponsored insurance, Medicaid, access to care and affordability, and health behaviors and health status.

#### **About the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging | o4a**

The Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging (o4a), a nonprofit organization, is a statewide network of agencies that provide services for older adults, their families and caregivers, as well as advocate on their behalf. The Association addresses issues that have an impact on the aging network, provides services to members, and serves as a collective voice for Ohio's Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). Equal Opportunity Employer/Provider. For more information visit, [www.ohioaging.org](http://www.ohioaging.org).