

Introduction

The Governor's Task Force on the Future of Services to Seniors and People with Disabilities is pleased to present this initial report for consideration in the 2003-2005 budget and legislative process. This report was created under the leadership of Co-Chairs Senator Kate Brown and Terri Waldroff and reflects the desire of Governor John A. Kitzhaber, M.D. that Oregon plan and prepare for the aging of the "Baby Boom" generation and the anticipated growth in the numbers of people with significant disabilities.

Oregon has long been considered a national leader in the provision of long-term care services and options to seniors and people with disabilities. In 1981, Oregon was the first state in the country to receive a Medicaid waiver to pay for community-based care. As a result, more than 50 percent of our Medicaid clients are living in their own homes or in other community-based settings rather than in more costly and restrictive nursing facilities. Oregon is better prepared and has more infrastructure and capacity than most states. Even so, our system is neither prepared nor adequate enough to meet the aging crisis looming before us in the first half of the 21st Century. There continue to be barriers to services, lack of capacity, system and infrastructure fragmentations, and financial and program needs that must be addressed in order for the state to meet the challenges of providing services to the aging baby boomers.

The Task Force believes that the recommendations in this report will provide the foundation for an aging and disability services system that will be capable of handling the burgeoning elder and disability populations anticipated in 2030. The recommendations are based on information and data gathered, reviewed and analyzed by the Task Force members.

The Task Force regrets that, due to time constraints and under-representation of persons with disabilities, it was not able to adequately provide recommendations on a variety of issues related to younger individuals with disabilities. As a result, we recommend another Task Force be created, consisting of advocates, providers, legislators and persons with disabilities to thoroughly address the future of services for children and younger adults with disabilities. Nevertheless, the Task Force has included, where possible, people with disabilities throughout the recommendations of this report.

The Governor convened the first Task Force meeting in October 2001, consisting of representatives from the Oregon Legislative Assembly, various commissions, agencies, provider organizations, consumers, advocates, and two physicians specializing in gerontology. The Task Force originally divided into five subcommittees to gather and analyze information and develop a set of recommendations on specific topics, including: 1) Finance, 2) Service Delivery, 3) Planning, 4) Housing and Special Supports, and 5) Health and Prevention. The subcommittees met over a six-month period.

Due to requests by various advocacy groups, the co-chairs agreed to increase membership to each of the subcommittees by a maximum of two advocates or consumers. Therefore, eight more individuals were appointed to serve on the subcommittees (Planning and Services merged into one subcommittee.) The subcommittees developed goals, strategies and actions related to their subject areas.

The recommendations from the subcommittees were first presented to the full Task Force in June 2002 for review. A subsequent Conference Committee of the Task Force combined the subcommittees' recommendations into one report for the approval of the full Task Force. The Task Force, at its August and September 2002 meetings, voted to approve the initial recommendations reflected in this document.