

## **Long Term Care (LTC) Restructuring Initiatives in Mississippi**

### **Strengthening the State Government Infrastructure:**

- Mississippi is making efforts to encourage more cooperation and collaboration between long term care service providers and housing authorities under its project "Bridge." The state developed a statewide Action Plan with recommendations for interagency coordination of policies, resources, and services to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, resulting in production of a report entitled "*What Does It Take? Improving Housing Choices for Medicaid-Eligible Mississippians Needing Long-Term Care.*" The Bridge project members also created an action council composed of housing and long term support providers, state agency staff members, individuals with disabilities, and families of consumers whose purpose is to guide an agenda for systems change. As part of the project's efforts, the University of Southern Mississippi's Institute for Disability Studies is developing an action plan outlining means of coordinating efforts between LTC providers and housing authorities, which it will test on two model communities.
- In addition, the state developed a comprehensive preadmission screening process that established Medicaid eligibility criteria for both nursing facility services and Home and Community Based waivers. Every person seeking long term care services is screened using a common instrument and screening criteria.

### **Improving Information About LTC Options:**

- In 2005, the state received \$750,000 from the Administration on Aging to create an Aging and Disability Resource Center designed to create a single point of entry for consumers, which, in turn, enables consumers to obtain information on LTC resources, streamlines and coordinates LTC services, and increases the number of people using the single point of entry system.

### **Evaluations of Mississippi's Restructuring Initiatives**

- A study done by the Mississippi GetHelp Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) utilized a focus group to evaluate the effectiveness of Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and ADRCs in providing accessible, useful information to consumers of LTC services. The results of the study

showed that knowledge of the existence of the AAAs and ADRCs was very low, and most participants in the study did not know which agency or organization was responsible for providing services to them. Consumers also indicated that the services were provided inconsistently and at some points were just stopped altogether without explanation. Consumers further indicated that they were not satisfied with the services they received due to interruptions, personnel changes, and cessation of services without notice. Seniors and consumers with disabilities who resided in the independent living centers that the study targeted were not aware of the existence of area or community-based services. Those that were receiving independent living services (such as meal support, housekeeping, transportation services, and direct health services such as physical therapy and occupational therapy) were unaware of the eligibility requirements for such services. Thus, the study concluded that consumers gained information from others such as social workers and hospital workers following hospital visits, or by word-of-mouth, rather than from AAAs or ADRCs.

- Customer satisfaction surveys conducted from 2006-2008 show that consumers who have utilized the Mississippi Pilot ADRC at the Central Mississippi Planning and Development District – Area Agency on Aging are highly satisfied with the ADRC's services and its ability to facilitate and expedite long term care services. However, the majority of individuals are not satisfied with the independent living support services and many community-based individuals are still largely unaware of the HCBS that may be available or how to go about locating a service provider.
- Currently, based on focus group data and additional available data, the AAA/ADRC does not achieve the following Administration on Aging standards of operation:
  1. ADRCs serve as *highly visible* and trusted places where people can turn for the full range of long-term support options
  2. The ADRC and the AAA do not have a *high profile* in the community.
  3. The ADRC actively promotes public awareness of both public and private long-term support options, as well as awareness of the ADRC, *especially among underserved and hard-to-reach populations.*

## **Conclusion**

- Although the state has made efforts to increase access to long term care information and services to its consumers, in general, the results of such efforts have not proven to be effective with respect to AAAs and ADRCs. It appears that the state needs to make its resources more conspicuous to the population of long term care consumers it seeks to reach, either through better advertisements, client outreach, or both.

## **Resources**

1. Kassner, E., Reinhard, S., Fox-Grage, W., Houser, A., Accius, J.; *A Balancing Act: State Long-Term Care Reform*, AARP Public Policy Institute, July, 2008 (<http://www.aarp.org/research/ppi/ltc> ).
2. *Mississippi GetHelp Aging and Disability Resource Center 2008 Focus Group Summary Report*, Institute for Disability Studies (IDS), May, 2008.
3. *Project Bridge*, The University of Southern Mississippi, Institute for Disability Services, last updated August, 2009 (<http://www.usm.edu/ids/bridge/index.php>).