

Written by Minnesota Department of Human Services
Monday, 02 December 2013 13:47



Minnesota has been given a green light to deliver better care and more choices for senior citizens and people with disabilities. The federal government has granted formal approval for the state to proceed with its Reform 2020 initiative – a nation-leading, innovative approach to delivering long term care services. This initiative, the result of bipartisan efforts, aims to help more seniors and people with disabilities stay in their homes and remain active and independent rather than being forced into costly nursing facilities.

"Minnesota has been recognized as having the best long term care system in the nation," said Human Services Commissioner Lucinda Jesson. "But we can do better – and we will do better – under this new model. Minnesotans deserve the choice to live with dignity, and get the quality care they need in their own homes for as long as possible. Hard-working Minnesotans, regardless of their abilities, should be empowered to contribute meaningfully in their communities and in the workplace. And if doing both of those things will save the state money in the long-run, that's even better."

Federal approval for the state's new Alternative Care initiative will free up an additional \$58 million over four years in state funds to reinvest in services that will keep more seniors and people with disabilities in their homes and communities. Those services include:

- **More employment opportunities** – Investing in support services to help more Minnesotans

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with disabilities find and maintain employment in their communities.

- **More help in choosing quality care** – Providing one-on-one support to help older adults, people with disabilities and their family members understand and choose the long term care services that best fit their individual needs.
- **More funding for community-based care** – Reversing and partially restoring deep cuts in reimbursement rates for home and community based services that help people with disabilities stay in their homes.
- **One place to report abuse** – Consolidating more than 160 separate phone services into one easy-to-reach hotline to report the abuse of seniors and other vulnerable adults.

These measures represent just one portion of the state's bipartisan Reform 2020 initiative. All told, the initiative is expected to save and reinvest an estimated \$121 million over the next four years by transforming the state's long term care system. Other key components of the initiative are still awaiting federal approval.

"We know Minnesotans are getting older, and that is going to put more fiscal pressure on our state in the future," said Jesson. "Reform 2020 anticipates this and looks to get people help earlier so they can live as independently as possible for as long as possible."