



Oregon Project Independence

Investing in proven, cost effective strategies to protect independence for Oregon's Seniors

OPI is an innovative strategy in helping to reduce costs in Oregon's long-term care system. OPI provides a small amount of help to a senior who is at risk for premature or unnecessary placement in a more restrictive care setting and entering the Medicaid system. OPI was the **first program of its kind in the nation to provide a safety net for people who could be diverted from Medicaid services and premature entry into restrictive and more costly care settings.**

Cost Effective: OPI clients receive approximately \$200 in services per month that allows them to retain their independence and stay in their own home.

- Medicaid long-term care services will cost state and federal budgets anywhere from \$1,179 per month for Medicaid In-Home Care (plus homecare worker benefits) to \$6,744 per month for Medicaid nursing facility care.
- Seniors who are able to remain at home with help from OPI are saving the state and federal budget over \$1 million for every 13 clients who are not in a nursing facility prematurely.
- It is important to remember that all Medicaid long-term care client also receive the Oregon Health Plan benefits, at an additional cost to the state. OPI clients do not receive OHP.

Client Effective: OPI is reaching individuals who are living at poverty levels.

- Approximately 93% of all OPI clients are at income levels that would qualify them for Medicaid services, below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.
- About 1/3 of OPI clients have incomes below \$900 per month.

In long-term care, those individuals over the age of 85 account for the highest cost in care.

- A third of OPI clients are over the age of 85.
- 76 percent are female, 24 percent are male and 81 percent of the clients live alone.

OPI is critical in helping these individuals stay in their home.

Public Policy Effective: At the federal level, work is being done by the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) to look at bending the cost curve for numbers of individuals

entering the Medicaid system. A key element in this strategy (Project 2020) is investing in preventive services of the aging network to increase evidence based healthy living and nursing home diversion programs. This type of investment is seen as one of the only solutions possible to help lower reliance on costly Medicaid services that provide a significant challenge to budgets. Smart investment in prevention and intervention programs is one of the key strategies we can use in Oregon to use our general fund dollars more wisely.

Long-term care accounts for 1/3 of all Medicaid spending on a national level and is seen as unsustainable which demonstrates a need to look at programs that can prevent unnecessarily reliance on entitlement programs. Oregon Project Independence is Oregon's opportunity to achieve this goal.

Making A Wise Investment: The Governor's Balanced Budget proposes slashing funding to OPI by more than 50% compared to the \$12.6 million appropriated for the 2009-11 biennium. Due to uncertain budgets and restrictions in funding, the OPI program has already shrank by 1,000 clients and there are approximately 1,000 seniors on waiting lists across the state. *With the proposed cut in the GBB, OPI would have to cut seniors currently receiving services from the program leaving them with very few alternatives other than to enter the Medicaid program.*

The 2011 Legislative body must restore funding to the OPI program and invest in this smart strategy to divert unnecessary or premature entrance into the Medicaid system and restrictive care settings. A small amount of support reaps a tremendous payback not only to our budget issues but also the insuring the independence, safety and dignity of Oregon's seniors.

Oregon Association of Area Agencies on Aging & Disabilities

For more information, please contact Nicole Palmateer Armstrong. 503-463-8692 or nicole@o4ad.org