



DHS Oversight of Personal Care Assistance

Project Description

June 2019

BACKGROUND

Personal care assistance (PCA) services help individuals with disabilities, chronic diseases, or mental illness live independently in their homes. Publicly funded PCA services are available to eligible individuals enrolled in state-administered health care programs, including Medical Assistance, Minnesota’s Medicaid program. Individuals receive an assessment to identify the activities for which they need assistance and how much assistance they need with those activities.

The individuals who provide PCA services—personal care assistants—may help with daily living activities (such as eating and dressing), observe and redirect behaviors, or perform health-related tasks. Personal care assistants must be affiliated with PCA agencies. Prior to providing services, personal care assistants and PCA agency staff must meet certain requirements, such as completing Department of Human Services (DHS) training. Assistants and PCA agencies do not need licenses, but they must enroll with DHS.

DHS oversees the provision of PCA services. DHS is responsible for enrolling personal care assistants and PCA agencies, creating assessment tools, paying PCA services claims, and investigating potentially fraudulent claims, among other duties.

In Fiscal Year 2017, the cost of PCA services provided through state-administered programs was about \$1.1 billion split evenly between state and federal funds. According to DHS, about 42,600 individuals received PCA services that year.

It has been ten years since OLA last evaluated this topic; our 2009 report states that PCA services “lack[ed] sufficient state oversight and accountability” and were “unacceptably vulnerable to fraud and abuse.” Given these findings and ongoing concerns about potential fraud, the Legislature asked OLA to evaluate PCA services.

POSSIBLE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. To what extent has DHS complied with requirements related to PCA agency and individual personal care assistant enrollment?
2. To what extent has DHS ensured that PCA agencies have complied with requirements related to the provision of PCA services?
3. To what extent has DHS provided effective guidance for completing assessments for PCA services?
4. What is DHS’s process for identifying and recovering improper or fraudulent payments for PCA services, and what have been the results of that process?

DISCUSSION

This evaluation will focus on the extent to which DHS has provided effective oversight of PCA services. To determine whether DHS’s oversight activities have complied with legal requirements, we will review DHS’s policies, procedures, handbooks, and other documents. We will also analyze DHS data on enrollment, assessments, payments, and investigations for compliance.

We will examine the effectiveness of guidance DHS provides assessors by reviewing assessment tools, training, appeals of PCA service assessments, and other documents. We will also conduct a statewide survey of assessors to solicit their opinions on guidance they have received.

In addition, we will interview DHS staff from several divisions and solicit input from a variety of stakeholders, including groups that represent people with disabilities, personal care assistants, and PCA agencies.

This evaluation is scheduled to be completed in early 2020. For additional information on this evaluation, contact Jodi Munson Rodríguez, evaluation manager, at 651-296-1230 or jodi.rodriquez@state.mn.us.