

Personal Care Assistance

Update to 2009 Evaluation Report

Problems Identified

- **Services Are Vulnerable to Fraud.** Three-fourths of publicly funded personal care assistance (PCA) services in Minnesota are provided by unlicensed agencies, which are subject to minimal state oversight. Past Department of Human Services (DHS) and Attorney General investigations of PCA services have identified many instances of fraud. Our evaluation found that DHS paid claims in some cases involving implausible work hours or inadequate documentation that services were provided or needed. Also, we found that assessments of individuals' needs for services have varied around the state.
- **Quality Assurance Has Been Weak.** Supervision of PCA recipients' services by statutorily-defined "qualified professionals" can help protect recipients and ensure accountability, but our report found that an increasing percentage of PCA recipients did not have professional supervision of their services. In addition, DHS's quality assurance activities for PCA services have been weak.

Changes Implemented

- **Supervision Required of All Services.** Periodic supervision of PCA services by qualified professionals used to be optional. The 2009 Legislature made this supervision mandatory and required qualified professionals to complete DHS training.
- **Training Required for Providers.** The 2009 Legislature required that owners and managers of PCA agencies complete training on PCA standards and practices; previously, this training was voluntary. Also, the law now requires DHS to conduct annual reenrollment reviews of each provider agency. In addition, the 2009 Legislature required individual personal care assistants to receive training in several statutorily-specified areas; DHS will implement this training and a competency test in spring 2010.
- **Steps Taken to Ensure More Consistent Assessment Outcomes.** The 2009 Legislature adopted more specific eligibility requirements for PCA services, and DHS developed additional guidance for assessors regarding circumstances in which behavior issues justify PCA services. State law now requires the use of "certified" assessors starting in 2011, when DHS will implement a new assessment tool for home and community-based services (including PCA services).
- **Improved Review of Provider Claims.** DHS officials said they have taken steps to better identify improper claims by provider agencies before DHS makes payments.

Action Needed

- **DHS Should Implement Quality Assurance Improvements.** DHS is in the process of adding resources to its PCA quality assurance function and has been reviewing its quality assurance methods. DHS officials said they intend to implement changes in mid-2010, and that that quality assurance data will be posted on the department's web site.