

Indiana Home Care Task Force
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HOOSIERS TO THEIR ELECTED LEADERS: LISTEN TO THE LESSONS FROM HOME. STOP THE CUTS IN THE CHOICE HOME CARE PROGRAM. ACT TO DEFEND SENIOR CITIZENS, PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, THEIR FAMILIES, AND TAXPAYERS.

(Indianapolis, IN) On August 26, 2010 in Indianapolis civic leaders called on Governor Daniels and the members of the Indiana General Assembly to take immediate action to stop the cuts in the CHOICE home care program, to lift the freeze on the enrollment of clients into services provided through the Medicaid aged and disabled waiver, and to protect senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and families that need home care services, medical care, and nutrition.

The impact of the state's actions to limit the public's access to home and community based services is already reflected in key data indicators. According to data submitted to the General Assembly's Select Joint Commission on Medicaid Oversight on August 12, 2010, the waiting list for CHOICE home care services has jumped to 4,388 individuals and the waiting list for the Medicaid aged and disabled waiver for similar home care services has jumped to 4,027. In the first six months of 2010 that data indicated an increase in screenings for home care services by area agencies on aging of 2,615 persons over the same period in 2009.

However, the civic leaders at the August 26th press conference based the plea for action by Governor Daniels and the Indiana General on a new report by The Generations Project entitled *Lessons from Home Applied*, which is available at www.generationsproject.org.

The civic leaders made the following statements during their press conference.

John Cardwell, chairperson of the Task Force and director of The Generations Project, opened the press conference by saying: "We are here today under the shadow of the State Capitol to ask our elected representatives to take immediate action to protect senior citizens, persons with disabilities, family caregivers and taxpayers who are now being harmed by the actions of the State Budget Agency, the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, and the Division of Aging. We are here today to implore Governor Daniels and the General Assembly to stop the cuts in the CHOICE home care program, to lift the freeze on Medicaid waiver slots, and to stop the forced institutionalization of Hoosiers. Denying qualified individuals access to needed home care services when thousands of people are already on waiting lists leaves people no option for care other than Medicaid funded nursing home care, which is a legal entitlement."

Elmer Blankenship, president of the Indiana Alliance for Retired Americans and president of The Generations Project board, stated: “We are here today to say there is a better way. That way is pointed out in *Lessons from Home Applied*, a report that has just been released by The Generations Project. That report contains dozens of recommendations to improve home and community based services, and public benefit programs, now and in the future. These are recommendations that have been advocated by people throughout Indiana since 2007.

“The better way means stopping the 15 percent cut in the CHOICE home care program today. The better way means investing in home care that is far cheaper than Medicaid funded nursing home care, whenever and wherever the need for home care services exist.

“The better way means using CHOICE, the Medicaid aged and disabled waiver, food stamps, Medicaid medical care services, and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program whenever and wherever appropriate to keep Hoosiers who qualify for these services healthy, safe and with their families. The better way means *stopping the practice* of forcing Hoosiers who need publicly financed long term care, medical care and nutrition programs, to use the most expensive forms of care or to wait until treatable and temporary health needs become expensive and far more difficult to resolve.”

Nancy Griffin, president of the United Senior Action Foundation, added the following comments regarding the savings associated with the CHOICE home care program: “Consider these facts and calculations from pages 13 and 14 of the *Lessons from Home Applied* report. The cost of serving a person on Medicaid in a nursing home is now \$55,000 per year. The cost of serving a person on the Medicaid aged and disabled waiver is \$32,772 per year. The state’s share of that cost is \$8,193 per year. The total cost of serving a person on the CHOICE program is just \$5,086 per year. These are the average costs for these programs, which essentially serve persons with like long term care needs. Yet here we are today, in the midst of a state fiscal crisis, witnessing the state driving people into nursing homes and onto the Medicaid program. That is fiscal nonsense, harmful to taxpayers, and just plain wrong in a democratic society based on the principles of individual freedom.”

Jim Wallihan, immediate past-president of United Senior Action of Indiana, commented on the aggregate costs associated with long term care and the most effective way to use taxpayer dollars: “The *Lessons from Home Applied* report calculates that nearly 14,500 people among the more than 28,500 people currently on Medicaid in nursing homes should be receiving other forms of long term care. That’s 14,500 Hoosiers who have been forced to use the wrong form of care at the highest price for taxpayer. That’s nearly \$800 million that could be used for other purposes including home care, assisted living, adult family care, self-directed care, and for giving people who do need nursing home care far better services. That’s nearly \$800 million that could serve Hoosiers better, and still produce a tax break for everyone.”

June Holt, outreach coordinator for The Generations Project, spoke to the public’s concerns about CHOICE and other long term care options: “However, the lessons in the

report are far larger than the CHOICE program. The report is based on what over 700 Hoosiers told The Generations Project in dozens of community meetings since 2007. The recommendations from those citizens are throughout the document. They include recommendations to stop the welfare privatization mess and to vastly improve all forms of long term care.

“The report also contains model reform bills regarding long term care and public benefit programs. If politicians claim advocates only complain but provide no answers then all they have to do is read the report.”

John Cardwell offered the following conclusions: “The crisis in the CHOICE program, the crisis in Medicaid and food stamp benefits, and other problems facing Hoosiers needing long term care have not been created by nursing home lobbyists and other special interests. The lobbyists and trade associations will always communicate their views to the governor, state agencies, and legislators. That is their job and that is what they should do. As citizen advocates we understand and respect that fact.

“However, under our state constitution legislators make the laws, and the governor directs the actions of the state agencies according to the laws and the constitution. *They* are the public’s elected decision makers. They are selected for that purpose by the voting citizens of Indiana.

“The crises facing Hoosiers who must use the CHOICE program, Medicaid, food stamps, and other vital public services has been created by the decisions of elected officials and their appointed administrators. They are the decision makers and they can change their decisions. They have the authority to resolve these crises. They can listen to and implement the better way advocated by citizens and presented to you today in *Lessons from Home Applied*.”

The *Lessons from Home Applied* report can be read and reproduced by going to The Generations Project’s website: www.generationsproject.org.

The report was compiled and written by John Cardwell and June Holt of The Generations Project based on the comments of home care consumers, their family caregivers, long term care professionals, and other citizens at community meetings hosted by the Project from 2007 through 2009. The more recent findings in the report regarding the actions by the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration and the State Budget Agency to cut the CHOICE home care program by 15 percent, to freeze the enrollment of clients for home care services through the Medicaid aged and disabled waiver, and to establish or continue practices that are harmful to citizens who must use home care, Medicaid, food stamps, and other services for low income Hoosiers, are based on discussions by the Project with state officials, the CHOICE advisory board, local citizens, leaders of the organizations that compose the Indiana Home Care Task Force, and the board of The Generations Project.