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Increasing Consumer Involvement in Medicaid Nursing Facility Reimbursement: Lessons from New York and Minnesota

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Background

- Medicaid is the main purchaser of nursing home (NH) care in the United States.
- States design their methods of reimbursing NHs to achieve desired policy objectives.
- Few consumers or resident advocates have been involved in the development or modification of state methods for reimbursing NHs .
- Lack of consumer involvement has resulted in payment systems that favor industry and government interests at the expense of issues important to residents and families.

Study Objective

- To draw lessons for successful consumer engagement from New York and Minnesota, two states where advocates have influenced NH payment policy to better encourage access, care quality, and quality of life.

Methods

- Data derived from archival sources and interviews with stakeholders in NY and MN.
- Twenty-four interviews were conducted with 27 individuals from 2/2/11 to 6/20/11.
- Subjects included agency officials, legislators, legislative staff, consumer advocates, union staff, and NH industry representatives.

Methods-Continued

- Transcripts were coded to identify recurring themes and patterns in responses.
- Documents were used to cross-validate informant responses and to provide background.

Findings

Prerequisites for Successful Consumer Action

- Instill reimbursement as an important issue in the organization; leadership is critical.
- Make sure you know your stuff; learn the basics, both in your state and in other states.
- Produce and disseminate knowledge through research and reports.
- Generate good will and trust by sharing information with other constituency groups.

Primary Strategies for Effective Consumer Action

- Develop Relationships with Key Legislators/ Staff: Meet one-on-one; Share information; Testify at hearings; Make issues “real”/“local” by having constituents tell their stories.
- Develop Relationships with State Officials: Meet one-on-one; Bring otherwise non-communicating agencies together; Share information; Account for, and, perhaps, ameliorate agencies’ workload.
- Participate in Work Groups and Taskforces: Serve because they are important conduits for consumer input; Be assertive in promoting consumer representation on these panels.

Findings-Continued

Supplemental Strategies for Consumer Action

- Issue action alerts; undertake email, phone call, and letter writing campaigns.
- Take advantage of legislative lobbying days.
- Let officials know that you have people behind you; that they should pay attention.
- Develop coalitions with other consumer groups, unions, and provider organizations, to increase the resources available for your efforts.

Implications

Findings suggest the importance of developing, demonstrating, and volunteering expertise as a means of gaining legitimacy, which, once earned, will lead to an ongoing role in reimbursement policy discussions. It also suggests supplementing higher-level participation in taskforce deliberations and stakeholder meetings with grassroots activities and coalition memberships that draw more widespread attention to the issue.

Dissemination

- Produced/distributed 5-part online seminar series and issue briefs for consumers and policymakers.
- Presented 3-hour seminar before the National Consumer Voice for Quality Care Long-Term Care.
- For additional information, see: <http://www.ltccc.org/ConsumerParticipationinReimbursement.shtml>.