

2007 Priorities of the Connecticut Elder Action Network (CEAN)

A coalition of leaders advancing responsible public policy for older adults

1. Long-Term Care / Health Care

- ❖ **Provide more long-term care options for older adults and persons with disabilities.**

Though progress has been made, funding for long-term care in Connecticut, which represents over \$2 billion (14% of the entire State budget) remains heavily institutionally biased. We seek an allocation of more of this funding for home and community-based care options and for enhanced support of family and informal care networks. This funding approach will achieve cost-savings for the state and reflects consumer preference to remain at home. We seek to capitalize on the opportunities created by data and findings of the Long-Term Care needs assessment, the 2007 Long-Term Care Plan, and the Money Follows the Person (MFP) Initiative.

- **CEAN urges you to support efforts to: implement the Money Follows the Person proposal to expand home and community-based options, provide more expansive pre-admission screening for all potential nursing home residents, establish a single point of entry that ensures that consumers are easily able to access programs, and expand planning and education initiatives.**

2. Continue to Fund the Medicare Part D Wrap Around & Provide Outreach Funding through CHOICES

- ❖ **Continue to Hold Harmless Connecticut's dually eligible & ConnPace Participants:**
This position is presented in collaboration with a statewide Part D Wrap-Around coalition lead by the Center for Medicare Advocacy

Connecticut has demonstrated commitment to "hold harmless" people who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid, and those who participate in ConnPACE, both of which populations now depend upon Medicare as the primary payer for prescription drug coverage. Connecticut law provides ongoing State coverage for many of the out-of-pocket costs not covered by Part D. Further, in the 2006 session, the Legislature appropriated \$5 million in the SFY'07 budget to create a Medicare Part D "Supplemental Needs" fund to cover medically-necessary drugs that are not on a dually eligible or ConnPACE enrollee's Part D plan formulary. Also in the 2006 session, the Legislature appropriated an additional \$1.5 million to DSS and directed it to use those funds to contract with an outside organization to assist consumers with the Medicare Part D exceptions (appeals) process.

- **CEAN urges you to support continued, full protections for participants in the ConnPACE and Medicaid programs who must rely on Medicare Part D to cover their prescription drugs (e.g. effective and adequate coverage of non-formulary drugs, protection of current dosage supplies available for each co-payment, and meaningful "exception" and appeal rights) as the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit continues to be implemented.**

- ❖ **Support Outreach through CHOICES Funding:** Connecticut's Program for Health Insurance Assistance, Outreach, Information & Assistance, Counseling & Eligibility Screening (CHOICES) has been identified as the focal point for information and referral regarding health care coverages by numerous state and national sources. The CHOICES program, a collaborative effort among the CT Area Agencies on Aging, the State Unit on Aging (DSS-Aging Services Division), the Center for Medicare Advocacy, and numerous community partners, including senior centers, provides older consumers and their caregivers with unbiased and comprehensive information on Medicare, Medigap, Medicaid, and a range of community resource topics. Since 2005, it has seen exponential growth in requests for assistance because of its outreach and educational activities in support of implementation of Medicare Part D. In 2006, with temporary federal grant funding, CHOICES helped 60,000 individuals and caregivers navigate the Medicare Part D benefit and held almost 900 outreach presentations and forums. This funding was dramatically reduced in July 2006 and will run out by April 2007.

- **CEAN urges you to appropriate \$2 million in support of CHOICES' efforts to help older adults navigate the complex and ever -changing Medicare Part D program.**

3. Improve Senior Housing

- **CEAN urges you to fund capital improvements for existing senior housing and to expand the availability of Resident Services Coordinators.**

4. Maintain Support for the Elderly Nutrition Programs

- ❖ **Support bills that maintain and enhance funding for the Elderly Nutrition Program**

State match and state supplemental funds for home-delivered and congregate meal programs are provided through the "Elderly Services" line item of the Dept. of Social Services budget. These critical funds are inadequate to meet the growing demand in Connecticut, especially given significant recent reductions in federal funding. Home-delivered meals are a core long-term care support for frail, homebound elders representing a vital source of balanced nutrition, a social connection with the delivery person, and an essential element of preventative health. Congregate meals have similar nutritional and psycho-social benefits.

- **During the 2006 Legislative Session, the General Assembly allocated one-time supplemental funding of \$800,000 for the elderly nutrition program. CEAN urges you to make this an annual commitment.**

Other Priorities for CEAN include:

- **Transportation, including the Dial-a-Ride matching grant fund and seed money for self-sustaining independent transportation networks for municipalities (ITN)**

CEAN Executive Committee Members:

AARP- CT

Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.

CT Association of Area Agencies on Aging

CT Association of Municipal Agents for the Elderly

CT Association of Senior Center Personnel

CT Coalition on Aging

CT Commission on Aging

CT Community Care, Inc.

CT Legal Services

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