

Sample Letter to Legislators - Home Care Industry Stabilization

I write you today to request support to protect the continued viability of home care providers and services in Missouri

Amidst the coronavirus outbreak, Home Health, Hospice and Home & Community Based Services (Private Duty Nursing, In-Home, Consumer Directed) workers are tirelessly on the front lines providing care in people's homes, the safest and most cost-effective locations for people who don't need acute support.

Missouri's home health, hospice and home care personal care workforce provides medical and non-medical care to people of all ages — from infants to seniors — allowing people with special health needs to remain living in their homes. From both a public health and quality-of-life standpoint, that is significant.

The services that home care agencies provide has been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been dramatic changes in the make-up of patients, care refusals by patients and their families concerned about transmission of the virus, and new service and cost demands as infected patients are diverted to care in the home to free up ever-increasing need for hospital bed space. **As a result, the home care infrastructure is in great jeopardy at a time when it is needed the most to deal with seniors and persons with disabilities who should be isolating at home while still needing care for a wide range of conditions.**

Both personal protective equipment (PPE) and lost revenues from utilization declines put both home-based care providers and their patients in a precarious position.

Even before the coronavirus outbreak, home-based care providers faced big challenges including the recent minimum wage increases and Medicaid rates paid to agencies have been historically low, stagnant or have been consistently reduced or withheld. However, due to COVID-19 home care providers are facing an even more unsustainable challenge.

It is difficult to determine the exact financial impact COVID-19 is having and will continue to have on the home care industry. The cost of PPE and additional infection control supplies along with lost revenues as services may not be provided due to patients' refusal, lack of PPE and staffing issues, all contribute to the additional challenges home care providers are facing.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Concerns:

- Results from the Missouri Alliance for Home Care's (MAHC) recent survey indicate 40% of home care agencies report they have no supply of PPE; 15% reported a 1-week supply and 24% reported a 2-week supply.
- The increased cost all home care providers have incurred is enormous. Survey results show that home care agencies have spent more on PPE in the last 2 months than all of last year. Some costs have increased over 500%. This not only includes PPE but additional expenses for infection control such as sanitizing wipes, disinfectant spray, keyboard covers for nurses' laptops, additional thermometers, etc.

- Agencies that are not reporting increased cost in PPE is mainly due to its unavailability, limits to supply allocations or backorders.

Utilization Decline – Revenue Loss:

- On average, 47% of home care agencies are seeing up to a 25% decline in service utilization; 17% are seeing up to a 50% decline.
- Home care agencies reported decline in delivery of Medicaid services due to:
 - Patient/Client/Consumer refusal – 87.5% (refusing services out of fear and/or not allowing provider staff into the home without proper PPE).
 - Lack of PPE – 51% (providers unwilling or unable to provide services without proper PPE for client and/or staff).
 - Staffing issues – 73% (staff fearful of entering homes without PPE, lack of childcare and/or no increase in pay/hazard pay).
- Fifty percent of the home care agencies surveyed reported without additional reimbursement or relief funding their home care company is at risk of closing.
 - 80% are small to medium agencies with annual Medicaid billing \$0-\$999,999
 - 20% are large agencies with annual Medicaid billing > \$1,000,000

Therefore, **to stabilize and sustain Missouri's home care industry**, I respectfully request that additional funds are allocated for enhanced reimbursement rates for Medicaid Home Health, Hospice, HCBS personal care and Private Duty Nursing (PDN) services. **The current Medicaid rates allocated to these programs were never intended to accommodate these extraordinary additional business expenses and attempting to continue operating without financial relief is placing tremendous strain on home care providers.** Stabilization funding will help maintain the consistency and quality of services necessary to keep patients in our communities and out of overcrowded hospitals at this critical time.

Investing in home health, hospice, personal care and PDN providers will allow them to continue to work and provide care in Missouri's communities, not only today but in the future, for the benefit of those receiving care. **More than ever, the time to act is now.**

Thank you for your leadership and efforts during this crisis period and for your willingness to address my concerns.