

Western Pa. Alliance of Senior Service Providers

Press Release

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Prominent Senior Services Agencies Collaborate to Improve Quality of Care

Two of Pennsylvania's most prominent ambassadors for senior services are collaborating to improve quality, reduce costs and improve services for Pennsylvania seniors through a newly formed alliance called The Western Pa. Alliance of Senior Services Providers.

The Faith-Based Network, headquartered in Wexford, Pa., and The Healthcare Ventures Alliance in Erie are joining forces primarily to give a more prominent voice to Pennsylvania Seniors who will be relying on skilled nursing services to age with dignity.

The two agencies include more than 20 faith-based and not-for-profit organizations in northern and western Pennsylvania that are committed to providing quality services for seniors, including skilled nursing services.

The organizations have been involved in joint-purchase agreements and a variety of other business relationships that reduce costs for all providers, and therefore saved both the state and seniors money.

But a recent decision by Gov. Rendell to impose a "zero-based" budget for providers of skilled services has increased the need for a louder voice for seniors in Pennsylvania's political arena.

"The state is moving away from long-term care to home-based services across the state, which sounds good, but is not practical when you view the demographics of Pennsylvania and the ever-increasing numbers of seniors who need skilled services in nursing homes and related facilities," said Michael Gallagher, Executive Director of Healthcare Ventures Alliance in Erie.

"We simply cannot care for everyone in their home when they have reached a level where they need hours of skilled services every day," he said.

While skilled nursing service providers are caring for residents who are more frail, as well as facing cost increases in the range of 5% to 10% annually, Rendell's decision to impose a zero-based budget basically requires facility-based providers to offer more services to more residents without an increase in Medicaid reimbursement.

Linda Massie, Executive Director of the Faith-Based Network in Wexford, said that the hope is that if these two alliances work together, there can be great success in getting the governor to hear the needs of service providers, "which have been largely ignored by the governor to this point," she said.

In addition to political influence, Gallagher said that the two organizations will continue to gain savings on joint purchasing agreements, educational cooperation, tele-conferencing among organizations and related ventures.

Gallagher points to the Alliance Rehab HVA as a therapy company formed in 2001 that is now a \$10 million company that has gained cost controls, quality enhancements and outcomes, and has produced innovative products and services as just one example of how such alliances can benefit everyone.

The Faith-Based Network includes: Baptist Homes of Western Pa.; Canterbury Place; Cedars of Monroeville; Concordia Lutheran Ministries; Jewish Association on Aging; Lutheran SeniorLife; Mt. Macrina Manor; Presbyterian SeniorCare; Redstone Highlands Presbyterian SeniorCare; Reformed Presbyterian Home for Women; United Methodist Services for Aging; Villa St. Joseph; Vincentian Collaborative System.

Healthcare Ventures Alliance includes: The Sarah A. Reed Retirement Center; Saint Mary's Home of Erie; Brevillier Village; Presbyterian Homes in the Presbytery of Lake Erie; Wesbury United Methodist Retirement Community; St. Paul Homes; WRC Senior Services; Springhill Senior Living Community.

All of those organizations now will be part of the Western Pa. Alliance of Senior Service Providers.

David Fenoglietto, President & CEO of Lutheran SeniorLife and Chairman of the Board for Faith-Based Network said: "This is a breakthrough for those of us who are providing services to seniors in a faith-based setting."

Gale Magyar, Executive Director of Sarah Reed Retirement Center and the former Board Chair for Healthcare Ventures Alliance in Erie, and the current Chair of W. PA. Alliance, concurred, saying: "This is a major step for all of us whose mission includes providing care for seniors at a skilled level, and who have as their mission to provide these services in a cost-effective manner. I am excited to be part of the executive team that is planning the implementation of many joint ventures together."