

To: The NC Study Commission on Aging
From: Richard Gottlieb
Re: Medicaid Funding for Adult Day Health Care Centers in NC
Date: October 22, 2008

My name is Richard Gottlieb and I am President and CEO of Senior Services, Inc., in Winston-Salem, NC. This private, charitable organization's goal is to help the frail elderly live with dignity and remain in their own homes as long as possible. I have been the director of Senior Services for 27 years. When I first stated at the agency, I had not heard of adult day care. I have become a believer.

In addition to an adult day health center, Senior Services operates a Meals-on-Wheels program, a group lunch program for seniors, a home health care service, an information and assistance program and coordinates the Community Alternatives Program in Forsyth County (CAP/DA).

Let me tell you a brief story about one of the participants at Senior Services' adult day health center, which is called the Elizabeth and Tab Williams Center.

"Bob" used to work at Western Electric. Bob was a hard worker and is a proud man. After retirement, Bob developed Alzheimer's disease. His wife, Mary cares for him around the clock. When Bob's memory problems progressed, Mary asked Bob if it was time to go to the Senior Services Center. Bob replied that he didn't want to go sit around with a bunch of old people.

Mary, relayed Bob's feelings to Jean Small, RN, the director of the Williams Day Center of Senior Services, Inc. Jean told Mary to tell Bob that the Williams Center needs Bob's help. Bob decided to give it a try.

Each day when Mary brings Bob to the Williams Center Martha, the wonderful receptionist at The Williams Center greets them. Mary signs Bob in for the day, and he is escorted by staff to the secure program area in the back. Bob has a number of jobs to do each day; he folds clothes, cleans up after snacks and lunch, and plays a musical instrument in the afternoon. He doesn't do any of these things particularly well, but he enjoys doing them.

At the end of the day when Mary come to pick up Bob and he is brought to the front reception desk, Bob waits for Martha to give him an envelope. Inside the envelope with Bob's name on it is a \$10.00.

"This is just a small token of appreciation for everything you have done for us today" says Martha to Bob as she hands him the envelope.

Bob is happy when he gets home. He has made a lot of friends at the Williams Center, he has a reason to get up and get dressed, he feels productive, he has a role in life and he has a lot of fun at the Center each day,

Mary is happy because Bob is no longer sitting at home in front of the TV, depressed. She has time to run vital errands and to keep herself renewed for the difficult and demanding job of care giving.

During the evening, when Bob is asleep, Mary takes the envelope with Bob's name on it and the \$10.00 bill and slips it in her pocketbook. The next day, when Bob is once again safely in the program area of the Williams Center, Mary gives the envelope back to Martha. That \$10.00 bill and envelope have been going back and forth to Bob's house for many months.

There are 130 "Bobs" who attend the Williams Center each week, an average of 80 per day. Many "work" or "volunteer" at the Williams Center. The cost of a full day of service (From 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM) is \$53.00. The service includes breakfast, lunch, snacks, stimulating activities, as well as extra services such as haircuts, baths, podiatry, dental care, etc. Many participants and their families cannot afford the fees. Unfortunately, Medicare does not cover adult day health care, nor do most private health care plans.

What has always been surprising to me is that Medicaid does not cover adult day health center services in NC, except through the very restrictive, CAP/DA program. Bringing frail, elders together in one setting each weekday for 6- 10 hours, where there are Registered Nurses and Certified Nursing Assistants on staff, is much more cost-effective than paying for one-on-one care in the home. Medicaid will pay through PCS by the hour for one Certified Nursing Assistant to visit the home, but will not pay a lesser fee for adult day health care. Yet many health impaired seniors are happier getting out of their homes from 1-5 days per week and being with other people. Some, like Bob, get to feel worthwhile again.

Would people "come out of the woodwork" and will the state go broke if Medicaid funding was made available for adult day health care? In my opinion, absolutely not. First, adult day health centers are not for everyone. There is a relatively small spectrum of the frail elderly for which adult day care is a perfect model. Second, the state could easily put a cap or maximum on how many adult day care days per week or per county might be approved for Medicaid funding on a trail basis.

In my opinion, freeing up Medicaid \$ for adult day health care services in NC will save money in the long run and prevent inappropriate or premature nursing home placement. It keeps health-impaired seniors healthier longer and allows them to live with dignity.

Thanks you for your careful consideration of advocating for Medicaid funding for adult day health care services in NC.

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