



News Release

For Immediate Release:
Monday, October 6, 2003
Media Contact:
Steve McDonald
801-538-7099

Utah Department of Health to Launch Phase Three of Long Term Care Program

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) is moving to the next and third phase of Utah's Long Term Care/Managed Care Initiative Project. This project is a model developed by the UDOH that allows Medicaid benefits to be paid for health care services outside of a traditional nursing facility. Phase three extends the project into Weber and Morgan counties.

The project, under the name of FlexCare, was experimental in Salt Lake and Davis Counties three years ago, but it has proven its value and is moving forward into other Utah communities. The vision for this program is to have this service available throughout the Wasatch Front and other areas that can support this program with available services.

"I'm really pleased to see one of my last initiatives mature to the point where it is now a desired alternative to nursing home care and can be expanded to other communities," says Rod Betit, Executive Director, UDOH. "I'm confident that UDOH staff will continue this effort so that families statewide can benefit from this program."

FlexCare was implemented in April 2000 and currently serves more 300 residents of Salt Lake, Davis and Tooele counties. Utah's first two phases have served about 400 people since April 2000. The program is made possible under federal demonstration authority. Other related waivers include covering those with physical, mental and developmental disabilities, brain injuries, the elderly and those who are technically dependant. These waivers are available through 1981 Congressional Legislation, which allowed states greater flexibility in providing services outside institutional settings.

Utah's Long Term Care/Managed Care Initiative Project promotes, greater choice, independence, quality care, and quality of life for Medicaid enrollees with long-term care needs. Decisions regarding services are coordinated with enrollees, their families, and other caregivers. The project is not only beneficial to the patient but also to the taxpayers as costs are better controlled while

Page 2 of 2 - UDOH to Launch Phase Three of Long Term Care Program

providing improved quality of life. To be eligible for FlexCare you must be more than 18 years of age, currently residing in a nursing facility and be on Medicaid.

Norman Sorensen, a disabled 37 year old, has been able to move into an assisted living center as an enrollee of the FlexCare program and feels he is living with more independence and dignity. “The FlexCare program has been a blessing for Norman and our family,” said Evy Lofthouse, Sorensen’s mother. “For some people nursing facilities are appropriate, but not for Norman, he just didn’t need that much assistance, our family can help and he can do a lot for himself.”

Mike Richins, another FlexCare enrollee, lived in a nursing facility for six years due to a seizure disorder before moving to a semi-independent apartment. The FlexCare Program worked with his doctors and other caregivers in the nursing facility to help Richins become more independent and prepare him for a less restrictive living situation. “It has been a thrill to watch Mike progress to living more independently, he is stable and happy and continues to work on his rehabilitation.” said Faye Richins, Mike’s sister-in-law.

The next Initiative project to come on line, Weber MACS (Managed Access to Comprehensive Care) Plan, will be implemented by Weber Human Services and will serve Weber and Morgan Counties. Weber MACS will have the same eligibility criteria and provide a similar package of services; however, they will tailor the program to their community to improve the quality of life for adults in their community who need long-term care by helping them access the most effective configuration of service options to meet their individual needs. “This community has a fantastic network of service providers that are working together to bring this project to fruition,” said Kelly VanNoy, Weber Community Services Director.

In an effort to expand the Initiative, the UDOH has been meeting with local long-term care groups to present the idea and determine the community’s readiness to implement such a demonstration project. The UDOH hopes to partner with other interested organizations to identify other opportunities.

#