

Direct Care Workforce

Effective laws and regulations can help support the training and advancement of our Direct Care Workforce, directly affecting the quality of life the older and disabled adults we serve. At Spectrum Generations, we believe that advocacy at a state and federal level is imperative to achieving laws and regulations that support our community's seniors and their desires for aging well. Providing direct-care workers with a fair wage and access to employee benefits, we will be able to start addressing the workforce stability of direct service workers and caregivers to deliver services is critical to sustaining the growth of Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS). We not only help to ease the burden for those who provide support to those who are homebound or live with disabilities, but also guarantee a consistent level of care by highly trained individuals. To that end, we support legislation that:

- Funding for Personal Support Services and Adult DayCare direct care workers at adequate levels to support the 23% of Maine's population age 65+, 30% of whom live alone and nearly 20% of whom have a cognitive impairment. Such legislation would ensure a wage rate for direct care workers that demonstrates caregiving is "not a minimum wage job" but rather, an important part of supporting and strengthening Maine families and communities.
- A law that creates a MaineCare policy of reviewing reimbursement rates each year against a fair economic index and adjusting rates consistent with other economic impacts in a way to ensure permanent, minimum floors, not one-time "pass-throughs".
- Requires competency training to support DSW credentialing, implementing innovative recruitment strategies, investing in data and information technology, and developing community integrated approaches to Long-Term Services and Support (LTSS) that are inclusive of rural areas in Maine.

Therefore, Spectrum Generations supports the following pieces of Legislation proposed in the 2021-22 Biennial Session:

Nutrition

Getting older often creates obstacles to eating well at the very time that it is most important to do so. When older adults do not eat enough, do not eat the right foods, or lose the ability to absorb certain nutrients, it can cause physical decline or exacerbate pre-existing conditions. Malnourished seniors may lose weight, get tired or become anemic. They are more likely to have diminished muscle strength—a prime risk factor for falls—and wounds that fail to heal properly.

Maine's Meals on Wheels program, administered by the five Area Agencies on Aging, provides delicious, nutritionally balanced meals for homebound individuals 60 years of age or older and to persons with a disability who are unable to prepare a meal due to physical or mental limitations, or who have no one to prepare a meal for them. Meals on Wheels are delivered to homes by our dedicated volunteers and staff. This also provides an opportunity to check in on the meal recipient as a safety measure.

Because of significant increases in federal funding, Maine's five area agencies on aging were able to meet the nutritional needs of Maine's older and disabled adults during the COVID 19 pandemic. For the first time in 10 years there was no waitlist for Meals on Wheels. After September 30, 2021, federal funding is expected to return to its pre-COVID 19 levels and current state supplemental funding is currently scheduled to expire on June 30, 2021. Without new and increased state funding, the waitlist for Meals on Wheels is expected to grow to over 1,000 older and disabled adults' next fall.

Housing to Support Community Living Options

Currently nearly 10,000 Mainers are waiting for affordable senior housing, a number expected to climb to 15,000 by 2022; we strongly encourage both the executive and legislative branches of state government to work toward solutions resulting in more available senior housing to older adults.

Accessible and affordable housing can enable community living, maximize independence, and promote better health outcomes for individuals eligible for Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS). We encourage Maine's Department of Health and Human Services to utilize Federal Financial Participation (FFP) under certain federal authorities for housing-related supports and activities that promote health and community integration for Medicaid beneficiaries, including one-time community transition costs, pre-tenancy and tenancy supports, home accessibility modifications, and state-level housing-related collaborative activities.

- MaineCare can play an integral role in developing, building, and strengthening cross-agency housing and health partnerships. These partnerships can involve developing models for coordinating and integrating housing-related supports, sharing information between housing and health care partners, and creating sustainable partnership models that increase housing opportunities for individuals eligible for HCBS;
- Maine should take advantage of the flexibility under certain Medicaid (MaineCare) authorities to provide services and supports to help individuals maintain their health, to stay in their homes, and to avoid unnecessary institutionalization. Maine should choose to cover such services as personal care services, case management, behavioral health services, and housing-related supports such as: conducting an individualized screening and housing assessment that identifies the individual's preferences and barriers for community residence; education or training on the role, rights, and responsibilities of the tenant and landlord; and skill acquisition to help individuals maintain community-based housing;
- Maine should institute incentives and payment reform approaches to facilitate the delivery of high quality and effective services that support successful community living; and
- MaineCare should help to coordinate cross-sector health and housing system networks that may include hospitals, managed care plans, community health centers, and supportive housing providers.

Effective laws and regulations can help support the Aging in Place living philosophy and encourage choice, dignity, independence, and quality of life for older adults. At Spectrum Generations, we believe that advocacy at a state and federal level is imperative to achieving laws and regulations that support our community's seniors and their desires for aging well. To that end, we support:

[**Spectrum Generations Supports LD 296: An Act to Provide a Tax Credit for Family Caregivers**](#)

[**Spectrum Generations Supports LD 86: An Act to Make Sales to Area Agencies on Aging Tax-exempt**](#)

Convenient and Accessible Transportation Options

Safe, reliable, and affordable transportation is an important Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) element that can support states to expand and enhance HCBS systems. Transportation can help individuals to achieve community living goals, to access preventive health care, to increase functional independence, and to improve health and well-being.

Non-medical transportation can enable individuals receiving HCBS to gain access to community-based activities and resources consistent with their service plan. Examples include transportation to grocery stores and places of employment.

Transportation to and from medical care is a mandatory assurance in the MaineCare program when the beneficiary has no other available means to access medical services. Federal Medicaid regulations require states to detail the methods to be used to meet this requirement in the state's approved state plan. Maine is responsible for determining how to structure and administer the required transportation assurance under broad federal requirements.

Maine has the flexibility in designing and implementing non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) services. We encourage both the Department of Transportation and the Department of Health and Human Services to adopt innovative approaches to delivery systems and payment models to provide convenient, accessible, and effective NEMT, such as:

- Improved oversight of NEMT providers;
- Investing in state NEMT information technology infrastructure to improve efficiency and quality of NEMT services; and
- Working with NEMT brokers, vendors, and/or Medicare plans to promote the use of technologies to improve beneficiary experience that could include scheduling, route development, automated ride reminders, on-time ride-request functionality, and real-time information on vehicle location and wait time.

[**Spectrum Generations Supports LD 17: Resolve, to Provide Rural Nonmedical Transportation Services to the Elderly and Adults with Disabilities Receiving Home and Community Benefits under the MaineCare Program.**](#)

[**Spectrum Generations Supports LD 166: An Act to Allow Participants in the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary Program to Qualify for MaineCare Transportation Services.**](#)

Legal Rights for Older and Disabled Adults

Health care, health insurance, Medicare (including Part D), MaineCare (Medicaid), Social Security and other public benefits, pension and retirement benefits, powers of attorney, consumer matters including creditor and bankruptcy problems, physical and financial abuse, guardianship defense are significant and complex challenges facing aging and disabled adults and their care partners.

Safeguarding the rights of older and disabled adults is of paramount importance to Spectrum Generations. To that end, we strongly support the following legislative bills:

[**Spectrum Generations Supports LD 499: An Act TO Eliminate the Waiting Lists for Older and Disabled Residents Who Are Eligible to Receive Home-based Care**](#)