

VNA & HOSPICE

of the Southwest Region

Serving Bennington and Rutland Counties

The VNA & Hospice of the Southwest Region, Inc. (VNAHSR) is a Medicare certified and State Designated Home Health and Hospice Agency serving Rutland and most of Bennington Counties.

We are here to ask the legislature to make the Choices for Care program solvent through rate increases and home health provider tax relief. The VNAs of Vermont's most recent loss estimate totaled \$4M – a 27% loss statewide.

The Choices for Care program began in 1990 to give Vermonters equal access to home and community-based services. Choices for Care is a Medicaid-funded, long-term care program that provides for personal care, companionship, respite and homemaking services to residents 18 years of age and older living with a physical disability who need assistance with activities of daily living. Choices for Care helps individuals remain independent and safe within their home while improving quality of life.

Patients in this program meet the clinical criteria for nursing home level of care but prefer to receive services at home surrounded by the people and things they love most. Services are provided throughout the VNAHSR service area – from the city to the most rural of homes.

We ensure, by working as a team, that patients receive the care they need from not only VNAHSR but from other community agencies who can assist them with such things as fuel and utility bill assistance, transportation to appointments as well as basic needs such as food, safety and companionship. People who need nursing home level of care typically require extensive or total assistance on a daily basis with personal care.

Federal and state studies continue to show how home health care provides the best value in health care – it saves taxpayers money and keeps insurance costs down. Home health care reduces the cost of having to care for someone in a more costly setting such as a nursing home or hospital.

Since the program began there are 500 less nursing home beds in the state of Vermont. At average yearly cost of \$80,000 per year that is a savings to the State of \$40 million.

Choices for Care offers many services including:

- A case manager helping the patient and their family understand and disseminate the eligibility criteria and options available through the Choices for Care program.
- Assisting the patient and their family in navigating the application process for Long Term Care Medicaid needed to help finance participation in the Choices for Care program.
- Hands-on assistance with activities of daily living such as helping the patient bathe, use the toilet and get dressed. They can also get assistance being transferred from bed to chair when they are no longer able to do so on their own.
- Assistance with household chores, meal preparation, light housekeeping, basis errands.
- Assistance with medication management.
- Assistance obtaining assistive devices and/or home modifications to keep the patient safe and comfortable in their home. Assistive devices can include a ramp to make it easier to access the home, a bath/shower chair, life line or an adaptive telephone with larger numbers.

- Respite care offers relief for family, partners and friends so they can take a break – a respite- from the demands of providing constant care. Respite care can be crucial in deterring premature institutionalization of the patient and reducing physical and emotional stress for the caregiver.
- Companionship gives the patient some variety in their routine and allows them to have other social opportunities. Based on the patient’s interests and goals this can include assistance with opening/reading mail, gardening, playing cards or going for a walk.
- Advocacy and coordination of services with other providers such as fuel assistance and Meals on Wheels.

Staffing is a major challenge in the CFC program. Because of low reimbursement rates it is difficult to recruit and retain staff. Our turnover rate for Personal Care Attendants is 70% and our current vacancy rate is 25%.

CHOICES FOR CARE FACTS – 2019

A) Utilization:

	VISITS	HOURS	CLIENTS SERVED
Homemaker	7,962	16,098	134
Respite	1,125	2,449	18
Personal Care Attendant	21,046	50,322	99
Case Management	9,955	4,298	214
TOTAL	40,088	73,167	465

B) Staffing:

CHOICES FOR CARE PROGRAM EMPLOYEES	
Licensed Nursing Assistants	12
Personal Care Attendants	35
Case Managers	7
TOTAL	54

C) Other Program Statistics:

- Program Losses in 2019 were (\$632,302)
- 10 year program losses were (\$2,366,094)
- Turnover rate for Personal Care Attendant is 70% and the current vacancy rate is 25%
- VNAHSR cannot cost shift – 83% of revenue comes from Medicare (58%) and Medicaid (25%)
- VNAHSR pays Medicaid tax of \$741,000 annually