



Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Committee Hearing
September 26, 2018

Testimony submitted by Dr. Kalpana Char
Community LIFE

I currently serve as the medical director for Community LIFE. I am graduate of University of North Carolina and completed Internal Medicine Residency in 1992 from University of Pittsburgh. I have been a primary care provider in a variety of models of care including academic outpatient clinics, Kaiser Permanente, and the VA medical center prior to my job at Community LIFE. During my VA employment, I served as a liaison to contract Community Based Outpatient clinics.

Community LIFE has operated in Pennsylvania for 18 years, serving 592 participants in Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties from four neighborhood centers in McKeesport, Homestead, Wilkinsburg, Tarentum and Lower Burrell. The centers are central to high concentrations of low-income, frail seniors; the majority of our participants are living in Health Professional Shortage and Medically Underserved Areas. Community LIFE opened a new center in Bedford, PA on September 10, and has plans to open a center in Somerset County in 2020. Community LIFE is a joint venture of the Jewish Association on Aging, Presbyterian Senior Care and UPMC, which was started when LIFE was a new concept to increase home-based options for those needing long term care.

What are the LIFE Service Areas and are there gaps in service?

LIFE is available in the majority of counties and accessible by a substantial portion of the population. There is a website to consult for availability in an individual's zip code: www.palifeprograms.org

What is the average cost of care for a LIFE program participant?

The participant, if eligible for Medical Assistance LTC, has no out of pocket costs, deductibles or co-pays for anything including prescription drugs. If they only have Medicare, there is a fixed per month out of pocket that varies by program. The participant would pay the state's Medicaid LIFE capitation for dual eligible individuals is \$3,717.08 plus the Part D premium for the specific LIFE provider. At Community LIFE it is \$511.30 for 2018. Part D is an enhanced benefit in LIFE and under the LIFE/PACE-VA model a veteran could get their prescription drugs through the VA benefit instead if they prefer. There are details that need to be worked out including who is the prescribing physician, VA or LIFE/PACE. LIFE/PACE is preferred due to the coordination of medical care through the LIFE primary care doctor and the Interdisciplinary Team.

What Pharmacy services are included for the average LIFE Program participant?

All. Participants do not have to pick up their own medications, their delivery is arranged by the LIFE program.

What are the specific requirements or Level of Care Determination for "Skilled Nursing Care"?

The same as anyone qualifying for nursing home level of care whether in a facility, through the various HCBS waiver programs, or Community HealthChoices. Area Agencies on Aging/Aging Well is the state's contractor for performing all assessments.

What is the minimum level of care to qualify and how does LIFE meet the need?

The nursing facility level of care requirements defined by the state.

Are any conditions exempted and what are the protocols for referral outside of the LIFE Program?

The individual has to be assessed by the LIFE team as being able to live safely in the community at the time of enrollment. These criteria are spelled out in our State and Federal contracts and generally include safe housing, ability to summon help in an emergency, ability to be left alone for periods of time or family caregiver, etc. After enrollment the LIFE program is at full risk for all care needed through the person's life whether it is at home or a facility. Sometimes people move out of the area as family members change roles and other circumstances, in which case we coordinate their transition to another PACE program if there is one available, to facilities, other HCBS programs, and back to other insurances per the participants' choice.

What are the "in home" staff requirements for the average LIFE Program participant?

These are determined by the Interdisciplinary Team based on need for assistance with tasks of daily living, and are provided in the home and also at the LIFE Center depending upon the participants' abilities to care for self. **Many people forget that a great deal of daily care happens at the LIFE center.** Less home care would be needed than other options for this reason. (We can talk about average home care hours per month and center attendance using NPA data but rather not unless asked.)

What are the protocols should a participant need/request placement in a nursing home or assisted living facility?

Interdisciplinary Team assessment as to whether it is necessary for the safety of the participant, and whether their needs exceed what the program can provide outside of the nursing facility.

How may a LIFE Program participant transition from each level of care and how is the continuity of care maintained during this transition?

(If they mean settings of care, LIFE is responsible for monitoring the care in all settings, whether hospital, skilled nursing, or home, and the medical and nursing staff and other disciplines are a liaison and care manager with other care providers and coordinate the transfer from one setting to another so that they are happening at the right time and the service needed in the home are in place upon discharge.

What Medical Specialty Services are included/excluded by the program?

All covered by Medicare and Medicaid, and anything else the IDT determines is needed to optimize the function and health of the participant.

What Medical Specialty Services are contracted out?

Anything other than Primary Care, with a few exceptions that could vary by program (for example a program could hire its own psychiatrist or dentist – two of the most frequently used specialties – but we don't).

What is the case load for a primary care physician who is part of the LIFE Center?

Community LIFE caseload is approximately 150 but the MDs are supported by nurse practitioners as well.

How does the LIFE Program handle assessment of financial assets/real property when qualifying a resident for the program?

Financial criteria the same as any other Medical Assistance funded long term care in the community. LIFE intake staff do a lot of free case management to help individuals assemble all their needed financial information and submit to the County Assistance office. We continue to assist if the CAO needs more information, and even through appeal if the individual wishes to do that.