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Public Policy Issue Brief

**Medicaid Managed Long Term Care for
People with Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias**

**Jane Tilly, DrPH
Judy Riggs, MA
Katie Maslow, MSW
Kimberly Brown**

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Medicaid Managed Long Term Care for People with Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias

Summary

A growing number of states are turning to managed long term care in their Medicaid programs for younger adults and elderly people with disabilities, including those with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. States are doing this for two reasons: to control growth in their Medicaid expenditures and to improve care by helping Medicaid beneficiaries receive appropriate, quality services.

Although a number of studies of Medicaid managed long term care programs and plans have been done, none has focused on the special needs of people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. More attention to this group of beneficiaries is warranted because they represent a large proportion of those using Medicaid long term care services and because their diseases create a unique and difficult constellation of care challenges which, if not managed appropriately, result in poor care and excessive cost.

This issue brief describes how two states, Massachusetts and Wisconsin, have addressed the special needs of beneficiaries with dementia in the design and implementation of their Medicaid managed long term care programs and makes policy recommendations for states that are considering implementing or modifying such programs. In summary, these recommendations would:

1. Ensure that people with dementia and their caregivers have the help they need to make good choices about enrollment in Medicaid managed long term care plans.
2. Require managed long term care plans to identify enrollees with dementia.
3. Ensure that managed long term care plans have assessors, care managers, and providers who are dementia capable. This means that they must have the requisite knowledge and skills to assist with and manage the symptoms and care needs of people with dementia throughout the course of their disease.
4. Require that providers and professionals carry out assessment, care management, and service delivery in close cooperation with family and other primary caregivers, who are often best able to communicate the needs of those with dementia.
5. Require quality assurance processes that have special provisions for dementia care including evidence-based practice guidelines with clear outcome measures, as well as collection and analysis of data specific to beneficiaries with dementia.