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RHODE ISLAND SENIOR BEAT

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SHARED LIVING PROVIDES OPTIONS FOR SENIORS AND ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES TO REMAIN IN THE COMMUNITY

CRANSTON --- With the advent of the Medicaid Global Waiver in July 2009, the State of Rhode Island entered a new age in long-term care planning. The Medicaid Global Waiver changed the way older Rhode Islanders and Rhode Island adults with disabilities receive long term care services. These services were redesigned to enhance the opportunities for seniors and adults with disabilities to remain independent and in the community. With access to additional services, individuals receiving support under the waiver have a customized plan of care. This plan is tailored especially to their needs and provides services that are cost effective, person-centered, and driven by resources that support their independence and recognize their dignity. Individuals who meet the criteria for a long-term care facility level of care are given the option to move into in a caregiver home after careful screening and the discussion of community-based alternatives.

One of these options is the Shared Living model. Earlier this year, the state Executive Office of Health and Human Service (EOHHS) announced the start-up of the Shared Living program. Shared Living allows seniors and disabled adults to live in the community rather than in a long term care facility. They are supported by a network of programs and services that will give them the best chance to remain in the community. Shared Living was developed as part of the Global Medicaid Waiver and is designed to help re-balance long-term care resources between community options and long term care placement.

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Under the Shared Living model, Medicaid-eligible seniors or adults with disabilities, who cannot live independently, choose to live in a caregiver's home. The client must meet a level of care specified by the state Department of Human Services. There may be a cost-share for the person receiving care and spouses are not eligible to be the designated caregiver the purpose of qualifying for the Shared Living initiative.

Shared Living caregivers must provide a home-like environment for the senior or adult with disability, and also for providing personal care, meals, transportation, laundry, shopping, paying the bills and meeting other individual needs. As the EOHHS notes, "One of the benefits of the Shared Living program is that person can 'age in place,' meaning that they can stay in one care setting as their health needs change."

Shared Living programs are currently operational in over 30 states in the United States. The Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals already administers a Shared Living program for people with developmental disabilities. For more information, please contact the Shared Living agencies, referenced later in this column, directly or check the Department of Human Services' website at www.dhs.ri.gov.

"We are very pleased to announce this new program and to give elders and adults with disabilities more choice in the type of setting where they will live," said Gary D. Alexander, Secretary of the EOHHS. Many families struggle with the decision of whether a nursing home is the best option for a loved one. Shared Living helps by providing families another choice for obtaining long term care."

As a result of a competitive bidding process, Caregiver Homes of Rhode Island and the Homestead Group were selected by the state to assist interested persons or families in determining program eligibility and providing information about the Shared Living Program. The Shared Living agencies will recruit host homes, oversee and monitor services, ensure the safety of the host home, provide training for the caregiver and provide nursing services if needed.

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Caregiver Homes of Rhode Island can be reached at 866-797-6222, or by e-mail jmasi@caregiverhomes.com. The Homestead Group telephone number is 410-765-3700 or by e-mail at jkorb@sevenhills-thgri.org.

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The Department of Elderly Affairs was established as a cabinet-level position in 1977 under Rhode Island General Law 42-66-1. DEA is responsible for the development and implementation of a comprehensive system of programs and services for Rhode Islanders ages 60 and older and for adults with disabilities. DEA is also the state's single planning and service Area Agency on Aging under the provisions of the Older Americans Act of 1965.