




February 23, 2010


Gary R. VanLandingham, Ph.D., Director
The Florida Legislature
Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis
and Government Accountability (OPPAGA)
111 W. Madison Street, Room 312
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1475

Dear Mr. VanLandingham:

The OPPAGA Report dated February 2010 (Report No. 10-23) is based on inappropriate hypotheses that do not acknowledge the true measurable cost savings and outcomes of the Alzheimer's Medicaid Waiver program. Listed below are the reasons I am righteous about the credibility and cost savings of the Alzheimer's Medicaid Waiver.


1. The comments about not delaying nursing home placement any more than the other waivers causes me concern because the criterion used (at least 30 days total in nursing homes over a two month period) seems to capture not only permanent placement (the key factor), but also convalescent and other temporary stays. Therefore, I think the heading of the report, and the conclusion, may be overstated.
2. The fact that the Alzheimer's Waiver group was more likely, at enrollment, to need supervision and to wander suggests they are a somewhat different population.
3. The fact that the Alzheimer's Medicaid Waiver group has to be diagnosed specifically with Alzheimer's disease (ICD-9 code 331.0) in order to participate while most recipients enrolled in the other groups do not, suggests there may be problems with comparisons.
4. The fact that the Alzheimer's Medicaid Waiver program had multiple start up delays, combined with the use of fairly old (June 2008) data due to problems with the ACHA fiscal agent, means that the latest data, which could have captured up to the point where the full targeted enrollment was finally reached, was not available for the analyses.

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The phone call I received today from the Florida Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA) leads me to understand it is aggressively moving forward with initiating the process for taking patients and caregivers off of the Alzheimer's Medicaid Waiver as soon as March 1, 2010. This is heartbreaking to me. I find it most disturbing that Alzheimer's Community Care, as well as the other providers, have not been given the opportunity to discuss these and other issues in the report. I feel there is another agenda for sun setting this Waiver as early as May 2010, without giving us the opportunity to have a full hearing on its outstanding merits.

If we fade this Waiver we will never get it back again, at a time when we should be thinking smarter about how we spend our money rather than thinking politically. It has been amazingly cost effective and efficient. The DOEA has acknowledged that if our patients are transferred to the Aged and Disabled Waiver, both they and their caregivers will **not** receive the specialized care that they have benefitted from through the Alzheimer's Medicaid Waiver.

The unanswered concerns that I have raised requires great consideration. Again I ask for a full hearing about them. It is not about the money. It is about the service. To have our families suffer because there was not a fair and open discussion on the merits of the Alzheimer's Medicaid Waiver is not what I think the Legislators want for this most fragile and vulnerable population.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


Mary M. Barnes
President and CEO

cc: Governor Charlie Crist
Senator Jeff Atwater, President of the Florida Senate
Representative Larry Cretul, Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives
Senator Durell Peaden, Jr., Chair of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services Appropriations
Representative Denise Grimsley, Chairperson of the House Committee on Health Care Appropriations
Senator Don Gaetz, Chair of the Senate Committee on Health Regulation
Senator Ronda Storms, Chair of the Senate Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs
Representative Thomas Anderson, Chair of the House Elder and Family Services Policy Council