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Institute on Aging and MediCal Double Down on Aging in Place *Expanded Waiver Program Aims to Keep 10K Seniors and People with Disabilities Out of Nursing Homes*

San Francisco, CA - An expanded statewide waiver program aims to keep 10,000 MediCal recipients out of nursing homes by allowing them to receive treatment at home or in a community setting. The previous in-home operations waiver capped participation at 5,000 MediCal recipients across the state. The expanded waiver doubles that cap and designates local waiver agencies to implement the program. Institute on Aging has been tapped as the Designated Waiver Agency for San Francisco, San Mateo, San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. The San Francisco-based non-profit was chosen because of its demonstrated success in nursing home diversion over the past decade.

"This program benefits older adults as well as younger adults with disabilities, who may live for many years in the community and don't want to be in a nursing home setting," says Dustin Harper, Institute on Aging's VP of Strategic Partnerships. "It helps preserve people's right to direct their own care."

Institute on Aging's first foray into nursing home diversion began in 2007, when they began deinstitutionalizing long term care patients from Laguna Honda Hospital. Since then, IOAging's Community Living Fund program has transitioned more than 1,800 people from hospitals and care facilities to community settings that allow them to age in a place that feels like home.

In 2014, Institute on Aging launched Community Care Settings Pilot Project in San Mateo County to move clients out of nursing homes, and to keep others out of nursing homes in the first place, by providing appropriate housing and community support for safe, independent living. In partnership with Health Plan San Mateo and Brilliant Corners supportive housing agency, they have so far transitioned and diverted more than 200 MediCal recipients from nursing homes to community-based settings.

"Based on our experience over the past decade, as we have replicated and expanded the Community Living Solutions model, we are now better able to quantify health outcomes and financial outcomes. Besides the individual benefits of being able to age in a place that feels like home, we are finding that managing care in the community instead of a nursing home saves 50% per person, per month."

Despite the doubling of statewide waivers, demand for nursing home diversion still outstrips supply. A recent AARP MediCal report card indicates there are around 10,000 individuals currently living in nursing homes across California who have been identified as having low-care needs.

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This doesn't include individuals who are "on the doorstep" of a nursing home, as a result of increasing health needs. Based on projections from the Department of Healthcare Services, Institute on Aging is aiming to support 100 to 150 MediCal members in San Francisco, 50 to 100 in San Mateo, and 250 to 300 each in Riverside and San Bernardino.

By demonstrating continued success, Harper hopes to keep building the case for resources like the waiver program that support community-based alternatives to institutional placement. He says, "Our priority is to ensure there is no one in a nursing home in California who doesn't need to be there, or doesn't want to be there."

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