

10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

ABOUT AGING WITH DIGNITY AND INDEPENDENCE

Aging with dignity and independence is the ability to live life to its fullest in the place you call home, regardless of age, illness, or disability.

The largest generation in American history - baby boomers - has begun to turn 65. Twenty years from now this age group will double, reaching nearly 20 percent of the population.¹ The American senior of tomorrow will be better educated,

experience lower levels of poverty, live in a more diverse society and have a longer life expectancy than previous generations. On the flip side, we will also live with more illnesses and have fewer loved ones to help support us as we grow older.

A better system of care will ensure that Americans can age with dignity and independence in the place we call home.



Here are 10 things everyone should know, along with five steps you can take to be ready should the time come that you or someone you love requires supportive services.

1

Most of us will need a little bit of help to get by as we get older.

We all see ourselves staying as healthy as possible through our golden years. The truth is that 70 percent of us who reach the age of 65 will need some form of care or services in our lives, for an average of three years.²

2

Most of us are not prepared to pay for this care.

Research shows that 43 percent of Americans over the age of 55 have less than \$25,000 saved for retirement.³

3

Supportive services are really expensive.

In 2011, nursing home care cost an average of \$78,110 a year for a semi-private room. Assistance at home, such as a visit from a home health aide cost on average \$21,840 a year.⁴

4

Medicare does not pay for these supportive services over an extended period of time.

Only short-term rehabilitative care at home or in a nursing home are covered by Medicare. Additionally, for Medicare to even pay for these types of care, you must meet certain conditions.

5

Most government assistance for supportive services is linked to poverty.

Medicaid is the nation's primary funder of personal care and supportive services, paying for about half of all services provided.⁵ However, should you need care, the only way to qualify is to spend nearly all of your assets. The nest egg you've worked hard all your life to build must be spent to qualify for help.

6

Many of us aren't aware of how to access the care we might need as we get older.

In 2009, a national AARP poll of 1,000 Americans found one in five never thought about it or did not know where they would receive long-term care if they needed it today.⁶

7

So far, private insurance has not been the answer.

Just seven percent of the spending for personal care and supportive services comes from private long-term care insurance.⁵ This is because less than 10 percent of adults actually have purchased a policy.⁷ According to experts, few people purchase it because it is expensive, rates have historically increased rapidly, and potential buyers can be denied coverage due to pre-existing conditions.⁸



8

There is a growing demand for supportive services and care as people grow older.

Today, over 12 million Americans rely on these services and supports, with 58 percent of those individuals over the age of 65.⁹ By 2050, it is predicted that this number will more than double, with 27 million Americans relying upon long-term services and supports.¹⁰ America needs a comprehensive system in place that will support our needs as we grow older.

9

Soaring costs threaten the health system.

In 2010, spending on supportive services for adults age 65 and older was estimated to be \$182 billion, and projected to increase to \$684 billion by 2050.¹¹ Such projections threaten both state and federal budgets. Nevertheless, little has been done in the past 40 years to address this problem and create a healthy network of supports and services allowing Americans to age with dignity in the place we call home.

10

Helping people stay in their homes and communities for as long as possible is a goal of the federal health reform law.

The federal health reform law created a number of opportunities to help older people and adults with disabilities remain in their homes and communities. It includes programs to help states provide more in-home care to low-income adults in need and ways to help those living in nursing homes to return to their homes and communities.¹²

Now that you know more about the need for a network of supportive services for older Americans, **here are five steps you can take today to prepare for tomorrow.**

5 THINGS YOU CAN DO

TO PLAN FOR AGING WITH DIGNITY AND INDEPENDENCE

1

Stay healthy.

A healthy diet balanced with physical activity and regular checkups by your health care provider can be the best means of preventing future health problems. For those facing chronic illness, it is important to develop an effective self-management program with your caretaker that builds confidence in your ability to manage your condition and maintain an active and fulfilling life.

2

Talk with your loved ones.

Have the “tough conversations” with your loved ones today about what is important to you as you grow older and how you will get services and supports should you need help in the future.

3

Talk with your doctor.

You might not think so, but your main health care provider has an important role to play in helping you plan for future needs as you grow older. Start the conversation today about your desires as you age, and treatment options you want considered if you're ever in a position where you can't make those decisions on your own.

4

Consider purchasing insurance coverage that is right for you.

If eligible and you can afford it, consider private long-term care insurance options in your state.

5

Stay informed, get involved and take action.

Understanding the realities of what services you might need as you age, what's available, how to find them, and how to pay for them allows you to be better prepared for tomorrow. Also, learn more about what's being done to ensure that as Americans age, a healthy network of services and supports is available to care for those who need it. Talk with local, state, and federal elected officials about what you want as you grow older. Visit our [Web site](#), follow us on [Twitter](#), or 'like' our page on Facebook, and send us a message about what aging with dignity and independence means to you.



Authors:

Victoria R. Ballesteros, Director of Communications

Athan Bezaitis, M.A., M.P.W., Communications Specialist

References:

1. Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics. Population: Number of Older Americans. http://www.aoa.gov/agingstatsdotnet/Main_Site/Data/2008_Documents/Population.aspx. Accessed March 30, 2011.
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Clearinghouse for Long-Term Care Information. 2011; http://www.longtermcare.gov/LTC/Main_Site/index.aspx Accessed March 30, 2011.
3. Helman R, Copeland, C., & VanDerhei, J. Will More of Us Be Working Forever? The 2006 Retirement Confidence Survey. 2006; http://www.ebri.org/pdf/EBRI_IB_04-2006_1.pdf.
4. MetLife Mature Market Institute. Market Survey of Long-Term Care Costs: The 2011 MetLife Market Survey of Nursing Home, Assisted Living, Adult Day Services, and Home Care Costs. Accessed December 30, 2011. <http://www.metlife.com/assets/cao/mmi/publications/studies/2011/mmi-market-survey-nursing-home-assisted-living-adult-day-services-costs.pdf>.
5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Clearinghouse for Long-Term Care Information: Paying for LTC. 2010; http://www.longtermcare.gov/LTC/Main_Site/Paying/Index.aspx.
6. Barrett, Linda. Perceptions of Long-Term Care and the Economic Recession. 2009. http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/il/bulletin_ltc_09.pdf Accessed May 26, 2011.
7. Wiener JM. What does health reform mean for long-term care? Public Policy and Aging Review. 2010;20(2):8-15.
8. Kaiser Family Foundation & The Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured. Medicaid and long-term care services and supports. 2010; http://www.kff.org/medicaid/upload/2186_06.pdf Accessed November 18, 2010.
9. Weiss Ratings Inc. Weiss ratings' consumer guide to LTC insurance. In: Inc. WR, ed: Palm Beach Gardens, FL; 2002.
10. Kaye H, Harrington C, & LaPlante M. Long-term care: Who gets it, who provides it, who pays, and how much? Health Affairs, 2010;29(1), 11-21.
11. The Lewin Group. Medicaid and Long-Term Care: New Challenges and New Opportunities. 2010; http://www.lewin.com/content/publications/Genworth_Medicaid_and_LTC_Final_Report-6.23.10.pdf. Accessed September 29, 2011.
12. The SCAN Foundation. Policy Brief #1: A Side-by-Side Summary of Key Provisions Supporting the Continuum of Care for Seniors in the House and Senate Health Care Reform Bills. Accessed Oct. 10, 2011. <http://www.thescanfoundation.org/foundation-publications/side-side-summary-key-provisions-supporting-continuum-care-seniors-house-an-2>.

Photos by Cynthia August Images

The SCAN Foundation

3800 Kilroy Airport Way, Suite 400, Long Beach, CA 90806

www.TheSCANFoundation.org

(888) 569-7226 | info@TheSCANFoundation.org

 Follow us on Twitter  Find us on Facebook

