

## Independent living: Strengthen core services, choice

Minnesota sustained its national leadership in supporting community living and independence for older adults and people with disabilities during the 2017 legislative session. New legislation will help people with disabilities access affordable housing and supports, get competitive jobs and otherwise participate fully where they live. Older adults will have more assistance to remain in their homes with services that help them stay independent.

Measures to address a workforce shortage include new grant funds for family and other informal caregivers; funding to enhance pay and benefits for direct care workers serving people who manage their own services; new provider qualifications for autism services; and a step toward Elderly Waiver rate reform. Funding is also provided for deaf and hard of hearing services, including child and adult mental health services, deafblind services and family communication mentor services.

### 2017 legislation

---

**Individual community living.** Income supports will be expanded to help people move out of group settings and support more people to live independently in the community. New Medical Assistance benefits include Housing Transition Services to help people find and obtain housing and Tenancy Support Services to help people maintain stable housing. Housing outreach, technical assistance and other resources will also be provided. *SFY 2018-19: \$2.7 million*

**New disability employment services.** Three new employment services will be added to the disability home and community-based waivers, upon federal approval. These services will support people to make informed choices about whether to work in the community, find competitive employment and maintain their employment. Other changes to the disability waiver rate system support more services that promote independence and community inclusion. *SFY 2018-19: Savings of \$4.9 million for all disability waiver-related legislation*

**Return to Community.** Eligibility was expanded for this program, which has helped some 4,000 people move from nursing homes back home or to other less restrictive settings. Older adults at risk of admission or readmission to a hospital or nursing home will be targeted to receive services. New grant funds will help family and other informal caregivers, recognizing their critical role during a workforce shortage. *SFY 2018-19: \$1 million*

**Elderly Waiver reform.** First steps were approved toward reforming the Elderly Waiver to meet the needs of the growing aging population. This includes a new methodology to keep rates for these home and community-based services in line with the labor market. DHS also is directed to study adult day care and the role that service can play in keeping people independent. *SFY 2018-19: \$2.6 million*

**Deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing services reform.** Additional funding will continue new mental health services for children and adults, new services for people who are deafblind and family communication mentor

services. The legislation also offered flexibility for providing statewide services to people who are deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind. *SFY 2018-19: \$2.1 million*

**Direct support worker contracts.** The Legislature provided funding to benefit direct care workers who serve people who manage their own services. This will help enhance pay and benefits for this historically low-paid but critical workforce, and provide additional training for direct care workers. *SFY 2018-19: \$24 million*

**Autism services:** New provider qualifications will help increase the workforce for autism services. The Legislature more clearly defined covered autism services, agency responsibilities and service recipient rights.