




MEMORANDUM

Date: February 19, 2008

To: The Honorable Chairman and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator 

Re: Pima Health System Attendant Care Program

At the Board meeting of December 18, 2007, specific direction was given regarding the proposed transition of the Pima Health System Attendant Care Program to other providers. Attached is a status report of the activities to date regarding this matter. Two public meetings have been held: one on Friday, January 25, and another on Saturday, February 9. The attached February 4, 2008 memorandum from Dennis Douglas, Deputy County Administrator for Medical and Health Services, summarizes the discussions and public meetings. In addition, a question and answer sheet has been prepared regarding the transition proposal.

In the meeting before the Board in December, there was some concern over the continued pairing of attendant care workers with clients. Because of this concern, we have been contacting the over 700 members who have attendant care workers in our system; at least 70 percent have been contacted to date. Most of the contacts have been through home visits. All members should be contacted by the end of February.

I will report to the Board regarding the final meeting and provide information regarding the financial impacts associated with this transition, the capacity of the private healthcare system to meet the needs of the transition, and contractual assurances that can be obtained from private providers regarding continuity of care between the attendant care worker and client.

CHH/jj

Attachment

c: Dennis Douglas, Deputy County Administrator for Medical and Health Services
Karen Fields, Pima Health System Director



MEMORANDUM

Date: 2/4/08

To: C. H. Huckleberry,
County Administrator

From: Dennis Douglas,
Deputy County Administrator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "D. Douglas", is written over the printed name of Dennis Douglas.

Regarding: Pima Health System Attendant Care Program - Progress Report

Pursuant to the Pima County Board of Supervisors' meeting on December 18th, 2007, the following actions have been taken related to the proposed transition of the Pima Health System Attendant Care program.

Notification to Pima Health System members and Attendant Care Workers

- After receiving required approval from AHCCCS in January, letters were mailed in English and Spanish to the members served in the Pima Health System Attendant Care program. The letter informed them of the proposed transition and invited them to public meetings scheduled to receive their input on the matter.
- Letters were distributed to Pima Health System Attendant Care Workers in December and January, inviting them to the public meetings.
- In the letters to both members and Attendant Care Workers, it was emphasized that the relationship of members and Attendant Care Workers who choose to remain together would continue.
- In addition to the letters, Pima Health System Attendant Care program nurses have made direct contact, either by phone and/or visit, with over 700 members and Attendant Care Workers regarding the transition proposal. So far, the nurses have reached over 70% of the total program members and Attendant Care Workers. These contacts have primarily been made via home visit, to ensure understanding of the information and adequate opportunity for questions to be answered. The contacts are ongoing and are anticipated to be completed in February. Input received from these contacts will be included in the final report.
- A hot line (243-8055) has been established to provide updated information about the proposed transition. A voice message option for input on the transition from callers is available.

Assurances from home care providers regarding maintaining existing matches

- A meeting was held in January with the contracted community agencies providing Attendant Care services. At the meeting, the goals for the transition; namely maintaining continuity and quality of services, were emphasized with the providers. The plan for increased quality assurance monitoring by Pima Health System to ensure compliance was outlined.
- Draft contract language has been developed and reviewed by the Pima County Attorney's office for the agencies that accept members and Attendant Care Workers transitioning from the Pima Health System Attendant Care program. This language requires that the agencies assign the members together with their existing Attendant Care Workers.

Public meetings

- Planning for three public meetings seeking input from Pima Health System members, Attendant Care Workers, and other interested parties on the proposed transition involved Pima Health System staff, Pima County Health Department staff and Carolyn Trowbridge from the Quality of Life and Care Alliance.
- The meetings were planned to accommodate Pima Health System Attendant Care program members' and caregivers' schedules. The most convenient times and locations for attendance were selected. To this end, a Pima County payday, a Saturday, and a weekday evening were scheduled, at three different and accessible locations. (List attached).
- The meeting facilitator is Stew Grabel, Ombudsman from Pima Council on Aging.
- The first public meeting was held on payday Friday, January 25th, 2008 at the Herbert K. Abrams Public Health Center.
- The meeting was attended by over 100 people, including Pima Health System Attendant Care Workers, members, staff, provider agency representatives and community advocates.
- The input received in the first meeting was consistent with input received by the Pima Health System nurses through direct contact with members and Attendant Care Workers.
- A review of the first meeting was conducted by PHS staff to identify areas for improvement for the following meetings.
- Positive aspects from the first meeting were identified. These included the presentations about the history of the PHS Attendant Care Program, the timing of the meeting and excellent attendance and the summary of the proposed transition plan. In addition, answering questions by attendees was felt to be effective in clarifying information.
- Areas for improvement included the Spanish translation service, which was done contemporaneously rather than via headphones due to the original contracted translator and the equipment not arriving as scheduled. A PHS staff member translated until the owner of the contracted translation company arrived to take over. Other areas for improvement included improving the sound system set-up and distributing a written agenda and Question/Answer handout (see attachment).

- In addition to the public meetings, options for providing comments on the proposed transition include leaving a phone message on the information line, faxing comments to 243-8453, e-mailing to attcare@pimahealthsystem.org, and discussing input with the Pima Health System nurse or Case Manager.
- These options for comment were published in the Tucson Citizen, with an article describing the January 25th public meeting. (see attachment) They are also posted in two places on the Pima Health System website (www.pimahealthsystem.org).
- A survey has been developed to facilitate input from homebound members. AHCCCS approved the survey and it will be mailed to the members and Attendant Care Workers next week. The survey is in English and Spanish. Self-addressed, stamped envelopes will be included to further encourage responses.

Quality monitoring

- Pima Health System has existing contract requirements for attendant care providers related to hiring, training, supervision of caregivers and service monitoring.
- The quality of provider service is monitored by a variety of methods. These include Case Management visits to clients at least every ninety days, and monitoring of agency records and processes by PHS Provider Services staff at least annually. Also, PHS performs concurrent tracking and trending of member complaints, service gaps, and quality of care issues. Follow-up intervention with providers related to these measures may include mandatory plans of correction, sanctions, or contract termination as indicated.
- There are additional quality management activities that have begun, and are planned, related to the proposed transition. These include calls to members and Attendant Care Workers who have elected to change to an agency two to three weeks after the date of the change. Also, the monitoring activities above will be increased and focused for the agencies involved in the transition for a one year period following the transition.

Attachments

Public meeting schedule

Public meeting agenda/options for input

Tucson Citizen articles

Questions and Answers handout

cc: Karen Fields, Director Pima Health System

Public Meetings on the Proposed Transition of the Pima Health System Attendant Care Program

Friday, January 25, 2008

10:30am

Herbert K Abrams Public Health Center
1st Floor Conference Rooms
3950 S Country Club Road

Saturday, February 9, 2008

10:30am

El Rio Neighborhood Center
Community Center Building
1390 W Speedway Blvd.

Wednesday, March 5, 2008

6:30pm

TMC Senior Services at Avalon Skilled Nursing
(Formerly El Dorado Hospital)
1st Floor Meeting Room
1400 N Wilmot Road

Should you require ADA accommodations, please contact
Pima Health System at 243-8002 five(5) days prior to the meeting.

A copy of the agenda is available from Pima Health System,
3950 S. Country Club Rd., Suite 3300, Tucson, AZ. 85714

For further information contact

Jo Ann Siemsen, PHS Business Continuity Planning Coordinator, at 243- 8104, or
Robin Gwozdz, RN, Home Care Support Services Manager, at 243-8066

Pima Health System (PHS) public meetings
about the proposed transition of the
Pima Health System Attendant Care Program

Agenda

- I. Opening remarks
Stew Grabel, Pima Council on Aging Ombudsman
- II. History/background
Karen Fields, PHS Director
- III. Proposed transition plan
Robin Gwozdz, RN, Program Manager
- IV. Call for comments
Stew Grabel
- V. Closing remarks
Stew Grabel

Additional ways to provide input

Public meeting - Wednesday, March 5, 2008, 6:30 PM at TMC Senior Services at Avalon Skilled Nursing (formerly El Dorado Hospital), 1st Floor Meeting Room
1400 N Wilmot Road

PHS staff - Input can be provided directly to the Pima Health System Nurses or Case Managers. The Nurses can be reached at their individual phone numbers or through the Attendant Care program receptionist – 243-8071. The Case Managers can be reached at their individual phone numbers or through the Case Management receptionist at 243-8122.

Survey – Surveys will be mailed to clients and Attendant Care Workers

Phone – A message may be left on the Attendant Care program information line
(243-8055)

Fax – Comments may be faxed to 243-8453

Email – Comments may be emailed to attcare@pimahealthsystem.org

Pima Health System Attendant Care Program Transition Proposal Questions and Answers

1. What is happening with the proposed transition of the Pima Health System (PHS) Attendant Care program? Who will make the final decision?

On December 18th, 2007 the Pima County Board of Supervisors discussed a proposal to transition the clients and Attendant Care Workers in the PHS Attendant Care program to contracted community agencies. As a part of their discussion and decision making process, the Board of Supervisors asked for more information about the proposal, including input from the PHS Attendant Care program clients and caregivers. Input from the public meetings, as well as any other comments received, will be provided to the Board of Supervisors in March. After receiving the information, the Board of Supervisors will make the final decisions about the program transition.

2. Will clients be able to keep their current Attendant Care Workers, and will Attendant Care Workers be able to keep their clients?

The primary goal of the proposed transition is to keep existing client and Attendant Care Worker assignments together, without any interruption in the care, as long as both the client and the Attendant Care Worker choose to stay together. The agencies who will be hiring the Attendant Care Workers will assign and schedule the Attendant Care Workers' current clients with them as existing matches. In the meantime, Attendant Care Workers will continue to be employed with Pima Health System and work their current schedule with their current client(s).

3. How does Pima Health System ensure that these agencies offer quality services?

Another goal of the proposed transition is to ensure that clients continue to receive the same, or better, quality service as they currently receive through the PHS Attendant Care program. Pima Health System has contract requirements to ensure that agencies provide adequate training, supervision, back-up caregivers, and other processes for quality services. PHS staff will do additional monitoring of the agencies during and following the proposed transition. PHS also tracks and takes action on any complaints or concerns from clients served by agencies. The goal of keeping clients and Attendants matched together is another key to maintaining quality care, as the clients' current caregivers are experienced and familiar with their clients' care.

4. Who will choose the new agency?

Attendant Care Workers and clients will choose the agency that is best suited to meet their needs and preferences for supporting the ACW's individualized care of their client(s). Pay, benefits, and other options for the ACW's continued employment need to be considered. Each client and Attendant Care Worker has unique needs and preferences, and agencies offer a variety of options for clients and Attendant Care Workers to consider. Pima Health System nurses and Case Managers will provide information and support to each client and Attendant Care Worker on an individual, case-by-case basis, in choosing a new agency or agencies.

5. What will the pay and benefits be with the new agencies?

The pay and benefits that Attendant Care Workers are offered by the agencies will depend on a number of factors, such as where they choose to interview, how much experience they have, and how many hours per week they work. Attendants have the option to interview with any or all of the agencies contracted with Pima Health System for attendant care. The agencies offer a variety of wage rates, raises, benefits, retirement options, and paid time off. PHS nurses have a list of agencies available at the request of the ACW. In addition, pending direction by the Board of Supervisors, PHS may hold job fairs so that Attendant Care Workers can get information and talk to multiple agencies at one time.
6. Will the new agency change the hours worked by the Attendant Care Worker or the schedule and hours of care received by the client?

The number of hours of care authorized for the client and paid to the Attendant Care Worker are not decided by the agencies, but are determined by the client's Pima Health System Case Manager, under Arizona Health Care Cost Containment (AHCCCS) guidelines.
7. Do agencies hire Attendant Care Workers who are family members?

There are only two contracted Attendant Care agencies out of 20 in Pima County that have indicated they will not hire family members who are Attendant Care Workers. In fact, the general input from the rest of the agencies has been that they are excited to be able to hire experienced and committed caregivers for the clients they are looking forward to serving.
8. Will Attendant Care Workers have to do a new interview, and provide proof of TB clearance, CPR, and fingerprinting?

The hiring and orientation process will differ depending on which agency Attendant Care Workers choose for an interview. The PHS nurse will provide Attendant Care Workers with copies of their TB, CPR and training certificates, at their request, for interviewing with the new agency. Most agencies have indicated they will accept the PHS training certificate as credit towards their training requirements.
9. Will ACWs be eligible to be hired by a new agency?

Pima Health System's Attendant Care Program hiring and training processes meet the requirements determined by AHCCCS for Attendant Care providers. There should be no reason that ACWs employed by PHS would not be eligible for hire by the contracted agencies based on their work experience and training. In fact, some of the contracted agencies hire and train Attendant Care Workers who speak only Spanish, which is not a current option with the PHS Attendant Care program.
10. What will happen to a PHS Attendant Care Worker's retirement money?

The money taken out of a Pima Health System Attendant Care Worker's check for retirement belongs to the Attendant Care Worker, in an individual account with the Arizona State Retirement System. The Arizona State Retirement System website <http://www.azasrs.gov/web/index.do> has information about options for individual accounts. One of these options is to roll over the money to another qualified retirement program with a new agency. The phone number for the Tucson office of the Arizona State Retirement System, located at 7660 E. Broadway, Suite 108, is 239-3100.