

Introduction

This special volume features a set of articles focused on key issues related to the linkages between housing and supportive services for an aging U.S. population. Assuring adequate access to necessary long-term care (LTC) services is often identified as an aging issue, but the fact that housing can be a significant problem for the elderly is often overlooked by policymakers and the public at large. Even less apparent to many is the connection between the two areas, despite the fact that people's ability to receive services is often contingent on where they live. Moreover, the potential to increase the quality of both services and housing can be greatly enhanced when the two are considered together.

The subject of linking housing and supportive services is receiving more attention as states attempt to balance increasing LTC costs with the legal ramifications of the Olmstead decision.¹ In addition, consumers—both older adults and their grown children—are becoming increasingly vocal about their preferences and, like many state policymakers, are looking for examples of attractive, affordable housing-with-services options. Pressure will increase as baby boomers begin not only to help their parents make decisions but as they consider their own options as they join the ranks of older adults.

The nexus between housing and supportive services is complex; even identifying what types of services or housing are being discussed is difficult because terms mean different things to different people. This is a significant problem for policymakers concerned with funding, targeting, regulation, eval-

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uation, and even marketing in this area. For example, there continues to be disagreement about how “assisted living” differs from “residential care” and how both differ from “institutional care.” Advances in policy and research will require clearer definitions and classifications.

In an attempt to clarify the issues related to housing and service linkages, a number of specific questions need to be addressed. What populations are being served now, what is their level of frailty, and who is being left out? What types of services are needed by whom? What services might be needed in the future? What are the sources of payment (e.g., out-of-pocket, Medicaid, other insurance)? Where are people being served? Are they living in individual or group settings? Who are the owners of the residential settings, what are their physical characteristics (e.g., are there private bathrooms and common spaces?), and what policies govern entrance and exit decisions? Finally, exactly what types of services are being provided, who is providing them, and how are they packaged? Are services limited to “hotel services” (e.g., meals, laundry, recreation) and/or “personal assistance services” (e.g., bathing, dressing), or do they include “skilled care” (e.g., service coordination, medication management, 24-hour nurse oversight)? In addressing these questions, the articles in this volume analyze the issues, identify barriers to progress, and generate specific recommendations on ways to better link housing and supportive services for older adults.

The seven articles in this collection are an outgrowth of a national conference on housing and supportive services sponsored by the Center for Home Care Policy & Research of the Visiting Nurse Service of New York. The conference, entitled “Linking Housing and Long-Term Care Services for Older Adults,” was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and held in New York City over a 2-day period in February 2004.

In “Homes of Choice: Towards More Effective Linkages Between Housing and Services,” Jon Pynoos, Phoebe Liebig, Dawn Alley, and Christy M. Nishita present the argument for increased development of supportive housing for older adults, while examining the barriers that states face in moving that development forward. The authors propose a range of strategies that states should consider pursuing and recommend areas for future research in the growing area of supportive housing. Among their many recommendations, they suggest the most effective strategies for states are to increase service coordination in multi-unit housing, to retrofit existing buildings and modify existing units, and to use Medicaid waivers in conjunction with SSI and Section 8 vouchers to make assisted living affordable in both existing and new developments.

In “Public Funding for Long-Term Care Services for Older People in Residential Care Settings,” Janet O’Keeffe and Joshua Wiener focus on the issues related to providing a variety of housing and service options to the Medicaid

population. They address topics ranging from current Medicaid reimbursement rates and regulations to the ability of residential care facilities to provide quality care and support aging in place. In their analysis they examine a number of difficult policy trade-offs and observe that states need to find the appropriate balance between competing goals, which will vary depending on their fiscal and political environments as well as the unique characteristics of their current LTC systems.

Two case studies included in this volume—"Public Policy Initiatives Addressing Supportive Housing: The Experience of Connecticut" by Nancy Sheehan and Claudia Oakes and "Supportive Housing Initiatives in Arkansas" by Debra Tillery—illustrate how policies aimed at linking housing and services play themselves out at the state and local levels. These case studies provide a wealth of information about specific initiatives that have been successful in two very different geographical and political contexts. Notably, a common theme in both case studies is that strong leadership and the ability to develop key partnerships were at least as important as identifying and creatively using various funding sources.

Donald Redfoot and Andrew Kochera's "Targeting Services to Those Most at Risk: Characteristics of Residents in Federally Subsidized Housing" focuses on the interrelationship of factors associated with nursing home admission, the availability of subsidized housing and Medicaid eligibility. The article makes a strong case that because of its unique population, subsidized housing should play an integral role in LTC reform.

The importance of the environmental perspective is emphasized in Leonard Heumann's "Assisted Living for Lower-Income and Frail Older Persons from the Housing and Built Environment Perspective." Heumann argues that the next wave of care management needs to be holistic and include environmental care assessment, repair and renovation management in addition to the more traditional medical and social services management services found in current LTC settings.

The final article provides a detailed look at how to create affordable assisted living facilities for older persons eligible for Medicaid services. Robert Jenkins, Paula Carder and Lindsay Maher's "The Coming Home Program: Creating a State Road Map for Affordable Assisted Living Policy, Programs, and Demonstrations" describes the successful components of the national Coming Home Program as well as four case studies that emphasize different finance and regulatory approaches to provide lessons learned for developers, state agencies, and advocates of affordable assisted living.

This special publication can help state, federal, and local policymakers pursue projects that strengthen linkages between housing and supportive services. The experience of the highlighted programs underscores the importance of

partnering, the necessity of crossing administrative boundaries, and the pay-off of innovation in the cause of better meeting the needs of frail older persons. The authors urge us to learn from both past mistakes and successes in order to overcome barriers and to pursue strategies that will allow us to replicate what has been done well—on larger scales, when possible. Their recommendations include building public/private partnerships, ensuring consumers have a voice, improving communication between housing and service agencies, being creative with funding sources, finding a regulatory framework that can monitor quality while preserving consumer choice, and continuing to invest in vital policy-related research. Following such recommendations can help provide more optimal residential choices for the increasing number of frail older adults.

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NOTE

1. The Supreme Court's 1999 *Olmstead v. L. C.* decision requires states to provide services "in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of qualified individuals with disabilities." <<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/olmstead/default.asp>>