



[Homepage](#) [News](#) [Sports](#) [Business](#) [Entertainment](#) [Shopping](#) [Jobs](#) [Cars](#) [Homes](#) [Place an ad](#)

State would pay neighbors to perform chores for elderly

By CANDICE CHOI
Associated Press Writer

January 15, 2006, 1:05 PM EST

ALBANY, N.Y. -- Taking out the trash for an elderly neighbor may come with a cash reward under a state program that would pay people to do chores for senior citizens.

"Cleaning, shopping, transportation _ we need to find new ways to support those kind of tasks that don't require a skilled work force," said Neal Lane, executive director of the state Office for the Aging.

The services would be made available through a state's Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly Program, which is expected to serve 51,000 seniors this year. A similar program is already available under Medicaid, mostly for the disabled.

The office is reviewing the details surrounding implementation, but Lane said they are moving toward making the service available as soon as possible.

The program, which got an additional \$25 million in funding this year, is part of a larger effort by the state Health Department to keep the elderly out of costly nursing homes.

Seniors can live in their homes longer when they get help in performing such day-to-day chores, said Laurie Pferr, deputy director of the Office for the Aging.

Otherwise seniors run out of money by hiring help and become eligible for Medicaid more quickly, she said.

"There's a direct correlation in providing these kind of services and delaying entry into Medicaid," she said. "This is thinking beyond medical services and looking at intervening earlier."

The Office for the Aging is reviewing who would be eligible to be paid as caregivers, Lane said.

The program would also address the fear of abuse many seniors have when hiring strangers from home care agencies, said Michael Burgess, spokesman for the New York State Alliance for

Retired Americans. Abuse is much less likely when seniors are getting help from people they know, he said.

A survey by AARP found 85 percent of its members in New York state would prefer to receive long-term care at home for as long as possible. That same survey found 49 percent of those people would prefer to receive care from a friend or loved one, said Bill Ferris, AARP spokesman.

The state Health Department last month requested a waiver from the federal government that would allow people eligible for nursing home care to receive at-home care. Up to 5,000 people would be eligible for the waivers over three years.

"What's really unique is these services requested _ they're services that one typically can receive through Medicaid," Pferr said.

"The priority here is that individuals receive the care they need so they can maintain independence in the community. In addition, there will be a cost savings to the state," said Rob Kenny, spokesman for the Health Department.

There are more than 600 home health care agencies in the state, in addition to the range of adult homes, enriched housing, adult day cares and nursing homes.

On the Net:

New York State Office for the Aging: <http://aging.state.ny.us/>

Copyright 2006 Newsday Inc.