

## **Community HealthChoices implemented in southwestern PA**

This January 1 brought changes for people receiving long-term care services through Medical Assistance (MA) and people with both Medicare and MA.

The changes stem from a new state program, Community HealthChoices (CHC). Under CHC, eligible individuals are required to enroll with one of three state-contracted managed care organizations (MCOs) to coordinate their long-term care and health services. The goal of CHC is to improve coordination of physical health benefits, as well as behavioral health services; encourage holistic service planning and service participation; and improve the overall quality of care.

CHC has been implemented in 14 southwestern Pennsylvania counties, and affects those who are in a nursing home paid for by Medical Assistance; those previously in Aging Waiver or receiving services through Attendant Care, CommCare and Independence Waivers, and some in the OBRA waiver; and those with both Medicare and Medical Assistance, unless they are eligible for services through the Office of Developmental Programs because they have an intellectual disability or autism. Those in the LIFE program can stay in the LIFE program as an alternative to CHC.

“CHC provides an opportunity to serve more people in communities, rather than facilities,” said Kurt Emmerling, deputy administrator of the Area Agency on Aging (AAA). “The Allegheny County Department of Human Services is providing services through CHC. Service coordination teams and other staff have been trained for new systems and processes in delivering person-centered care for the CHC MCO members.”

The impact of Community HealthChoices will be determined by an evaluation plan devised and implemented by the University of Pittsburgh Health Policy Institute. Those who are impacted by this program are encouraged to monitor the CHC website at <https://www.enrollchc.com>. For more information, providers can contact the CHC Provider Hotline at 1-833-735-4417. For general question about CHC, participants can call the CHC Participant Hotline at 1-833-735-4416. Specific questions about a MCO should be directed to the MCO.