



Minnesota Department of **Human Services**



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Initiative helps 2,000 nursing home residents go home *Older adults get services, supports to live successfully at home*

An initiative started in 2010 to help Minnesotans in nursing homes return home if they wish has just hit the milestone of helping to move 2,000 people.

These included:

- An 84-year-old male veteran with severe depression and other medical issues, who didn't think he could live at home after having his leg amputated. With the benefit of home modifications, a new wheelchair and other supports, he was welcomed back to his house by his family.
- A 75-year-old female surgery patient, with injuries from a fall. She returned home with meals on wheels and help changing her prescription drug plan.
- A 78-year-old man who went to the nursing home for evaluation and treatment after going through open-heart surgery. With only his Social Security income, he was able to move from substandard housing to a clean, safe, subsidized apartment in a community of his choice, near his doctor and pharmacy.

All were helped by Senior LinkAge Line community living specialists through the Return to Community initiative, a partnership of the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Minnesota Board on Aging, Area Agencies on Aging and Minnesota nursing facilities.

Every year Minnesota nursing homes receive more than 60,000 admissions. While many people are discharged to their homes, some remain in the nursing home for months and years.

Nursing home care is expensive—costing an average of \$180 per day—and is paid for with Medicare or private insurance on a limited basis only. For many people, an extended stay in a nursing home means spending down their assets and income to become eligible for Medical Assistance.

“Return to Community helps people return home, which is where most of us want to live, and also prevents or stalls people from going on Medical Assistance, which is a significant government cost,” said Human Services Commissioner Lucinda Jesson. “The longer people stay in the nursing home, the less likely they are to return to the community, and the more likely they are to spend down to become eligible for public assistance.”

Under the initiative, Senior LinkAge Line community living specialists contact people using their own funds to pay for nursing home care. The specialists offer help to plan for a discharge to the individual's home or to another community setting.

“In addition to helping people with their initial nursing home discharge and plan to live in the community, community living specialists help people thinking about moving to assisted living to explore a full range of options, including remaining in their home with appropriate supports,” said Jean Wood, executive director of the Minnesota Board on Aging.

Community living specialists also stay in touch for up to five years with people they have served. They offer help with additional services and supports so the person can avoid another nursing home stay. An admission to a nursing facility for any length of time is biggest indicator that another admission will occur.

Of people returning home:

- 30 percent live with a spouse or partner
- 33 percent live alone
- 22 percent live in assisted living
- 9 percent live in their home with a caregiver who is not a spouse or partner.

Community living specialists can be reached at the Senior LinkAge Line, 1-800-333-2433.