



PROGRAM EVALUATION DIVISION

NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Overnight Respite Pilot at Adult Day Care Facilities Perceived as Favorable, but Lacked Objective Measures of Success

Summary

As directed by Session Law 2011-104, this evaluation examines the success of a pilot program authorized to provide overnight respite at adult day care facilities in North Carolina. Adult day care facilities already provide daytime respite to caregivers, but in 2011 the General Assembly authorized the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to pilot overnight respite at these facilities. Overnight respite provides temporary relief to caregivers of individuals who are elderly or have a physical disability or mental impairment. Session Law 2011-104 authorized a new setting for the provision of this service through a pilot program at four adult day care facilities across North Carolina: CarePartners (Asheville), Elderhaus (Wilmington), Life Enrichment Center (Shelby), and Southeastern Adult Day Services (Raleigh).

Participants, caregivers, pilot facilities, and DHHS perceive the pilot as successful, but only one pilot facility consistently provided overnight respite. Three pilot facilities saw overnight clients during the pilot, but only CarePartners in Asheville consistently provided the service.

The legislative mandate for the overnight respite pilot and DHHS's implementation of the pilot only met two of the ten recommended components of a well-designed pilot program. Examples of components partially implemented or not implemented at all include a conceptual framework, performance criteria for judging the success of the pilot, and a study design allowing for meaningful evaluation.

The legislative prohibition against using state or Medicaid funding for overnight respite in adult day care facilities hindered the effectiveness of the pilot. Adult day care facilities are eligible for state and Medicaid funding for daytime services, but not for overnight services. Caregivers, pilot facilities, and DHHS cited restrictions on state and Medicaid funding as a primary obstacle to the success of the pilot.

No organization affiliated with respite care maintains data on the need for the service. Interviews with respite stakeholders revealed a lack of data demonstrating the need for the service. The Program Evaluation Division attempted to quantify demand through surveys of pilot participants and caregivers, but these findings may not be generalizable.

To address these findings, the General Assembly should

- allow the pilot program authorizing overnight respite at adult day care facilities to expire on June 1, 2015, thereby ceasing overnight respite services in adult day care facilities; and
- require state agencies and institutions initiating pilot projects to adhere to standards established by UNC's School of Government.