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September 15, 2009

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Report: The State of Aging Services Technologies in Minnesota is Strong

Minnesota is a leader among states in using technology to care for the aging, according to a new report released today by the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging's Center for Aging Services Technologies (CAST) and Aging Services of Minnesota.

According to the report, which studied both public and private initiatives, the specific areas of aging-related technology that Minnesota excels in are:

- **Health Information Technology (HIT) Policy.** The state legislature in 2007 enacted a series of three HIT mandates for all health care providers, including aging services providers: eBilling by Dec. 15, 2009; eRx by Jan. 1, 2011; and interoperable electronic health records (EHR) by Jan. 1, 2015.
- **Reimbursement for Telemedicine and Telehomecare.** Since 2001, Minnesota has covered certain home care skilled nurse visits and other telemedicine consultations for low-income older adults.
- **Grants to Aging Services Providers for Technology Adoption & Research.** Over the past few years, no less than four major state grant initiatives have been available to aging services providers in Minnesota to support the piloting and deployment of health information technology (HIT) and aging services technologies.
- **Aging Services Provider Leadership.** Many aging services providers have both individually and jointly, under the Aging Services of Minnesota, aggressively pursued partnerships with other sectors of health care and have assembled critical tools to accelerate the use of technology in providing care and services to older adults.

“Minnesota’s leading position is most attributable to the state’s legislative HIT requirements and diligence in providing guidance and support to health care providers, including aging service providers,” said Scott Peifer, CAST’s associate director for state policy and the report’s lead author. Moreover, because of extensive state grants and other incentives, and provider’s entrepreneurial approach to utilizing technology, Minnesota’s aging service providers have developed a great deal of expertise with telehomecare, telehealth and many other technologies.

“States and aging service providers across the country have a great deal to learn from Minnesota’s innovative state policies, incentives and support, and from providers’ innovation, collaboration, and willingness to adopt aging services technologies,” said Peifer. “Minnesota is ahead of most states in advancing HIT and is well-positioned to benefit from federal stimulus funds.”

According to a survey commissioned by the state of Minnesota and cited in the report, 32 percent of Minnesota nursing homes indicate they have fully or partially implemented an EHR system. Thirty-eight percent of providers are in the planning or information-gathering stage, and seven percent are in the vendor development or selection stage, participating in demonstrations or developing a request for proposals.

“As Minnesota moves forward with interoperable EHRs and other HIT, we encourage the state to build upon its track record of including aging service providers by involving them in the federal stimulus activities to the greatest extent possible to attain the intended benefits of the stimulus,” said Majd Alwan, Ph.D., director of CAST. “We hope to see the reimbursement of aging services technologies in Minnesota further developed to cover a wider array of technologies, similar to coverage provided in Pennsylvania’s TeleCare program, to make such services more broadly accessible.”

“Many providers are working hard to maximize how technology impacts every aspect of the care and housing they provide to older adults, and we’re doing everything we can to help them do that,” said Gayle Kvenvold, president & CEO of Aging Services of Minnesota. “They are creating new business models that make substantial investments in technology because they fully believe that it will transform aging.”

In ways both large and small, technology has the potential to offer the community of aging services providers the opportunity to:

- Improve care and quality of life for seniors.
- Support consumer independence.
- Increase staff productivity.
- Enhance the speed and accuracy of communication.
- Increase operational efficiencies.

According to the Minnesota State Demographer, the number of people in Minnesota aged 65 and over will double from 620,000 to 1.3 million between 2005 and 2030. This is an unprecedented demographic shift that will strain state resources, tax families and informal caregivers, and question current models of care delivery.

However, the coming “age wave” also presents incredible opportunities to explore new ways of caring for seniors that enhance their independence, quality of care and quality of life. Along with other endeavors, Aging Services of Minnesota is committed to strategies that identify and achieve technology’s potential in this new world.

The full report is available on CAST's Web site, www.agingtech.org.

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About CAST

The Center for Aging Services Technologies (www.agingtech.org), an international coalition of more than 400 technology companies, aging-services organizations, research universities, and government representatives that is leading the charge to expedite the development, evaluation and adoption of emerging technologies that can improve the aging experience.

About AAHSA

The members of the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (www.aahsa.org) help millions of individuals and their families every day through mission-driven, not-for-profit organizations dedicated to providing the services that people need, when they need them, in the place they call home. Our 5,800 member organizations, many of which have served their communities for generations, offer the continuum of aging services: adult day services, home health, community services, senior housing, assisted living residences, continuing care retirement communities and nursing homes. AAHSA's commitment is to create the future of aging services through quality people can trust.

About Aging Services of Minnesota

Aging Services of Minnesota (www.agingervicesmn.org) is Minnesota's largest association of aging services organizations. Its 680+ members serve over 40,000 Minnesotans in settings across the continuum from their home to congregate housing to assisted living to care centers. Aging Services members are diverse but share a common focus on person-directed living, missions of service to their communities and choice in older adult services. Committed to excellence and to innovation, Aging Services is a leader in pioneering new service delivery models and is nationally recognized for expertise in aging services issues related to long term care, senior housing and supportive services. Through effective grassroots advocacy, cutting edge information, education, and public information aimed at increased consumer awareness, Aging Services of Minnesota is dedicated to creating the future of aging services. Aging Services of Minnesota is the state affiliate of the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (AAHSA).