A Three Decade Study of Ohio's Long-Term Services System: Past Progress & Future Challenges

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INTRODUCTION

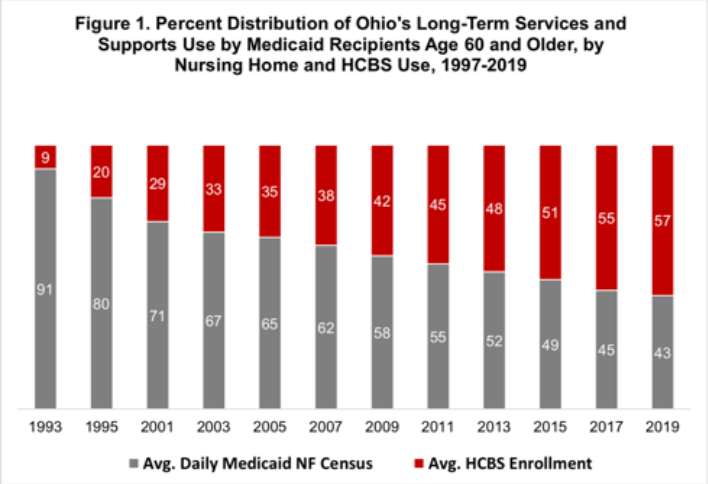
In 1993, the Ohio Legislature and the Ohio Department of Aging (ODA) committed to an ongoing research study to generate data to assist in developing state policies and plans in recognition that a growing number of Ohioans would likely need long-term services and supports. During the last 28 years, Ohio has made major strides in improving how older people with disability and their caregivers receive long-term services. The data used for this study come from an array of sources, but a major source is the Biennial Survey of Long-Term Care Facilities, collected by Scripps since 1997 and distributed to all nursing home and residential care facilities who operated in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the launch of the survey and limited the amount of time that the survey was in the field, but the 2019 response rate for both nursing homes and residential care facilities was still high at 74%.

RESULTS

Study findings show two important trends in Ohio's system of long-term services and supports (LTSS). First, Ohio continues to change its LTSS balance, shifting from providing the majority of publicly funded Medicaid services in institutions to now delivering home and community-based services (HCBS) in the community. In 1993, nine of ten Ohioans age 60 and older getting long-term services funded by Medicaid, did so in a nursing home. In 2019, that ratio had shifted to 57% HCBS and 43%in nursing homes (See Figure1). A second trend is the changing nature of nursing home care in Ohio. The expansion of HCBS means that despite an increasing older population, nursing home occupancy rates are declining, dropping from 92% in 1991 to 80% in 2019 and to 74% today, as the industry recovers from the pandemic. Ohio nursing homes also serve many more individuals with short-term care, with hospital discharged Medicare admissions increasing from 30,000 in 1992 to more than 151,000 in 2019. In addition, the number of residential care facilities, typically assisted living residences has increased in the past three decades from 250 facilities to almost 800 today.

The long-term services system of today has dramatically changed since our study began. When we started this research effort three decades ago, Ohio was ranked 47th out of 50 states (50 being lowest) in a national study of long-term care services system access and balancing. The most recent AARP Public Policy Institute Scorecard ranks Ohio 19th of 50 on overall system performance, indicating substantial progress in creating more options for older people with severe disability. Despite Ohio's improvement, the path forward includes a number of challenges. The size of Ohio's older population today is unprecedented in our history, but the more than 50% increase in those a

80 and older over the next two decades will have an even greater impact than the major demographic changes we have already experienced. These demographic shifts alone would be daunting, but in combination with additional system complications that have been heightened as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (workforce, infection control, individual and public funding, quality of care, and family caregiving pressures), the path forward will not be an easy one. The COVID-19 pandemic shined a spotlight on the need for system changes; policy makers, consumers, family members, advocates and providers will need to work together to address current issues and future needs.



CONCLUSION

Ohio's progress in LTSS system reform has been significant. The changes that have occurred were almost unimaginable three decades ago. However, the demographic and service hurdles of tomorrow will be more difficult than the path we have already traversed as a state. What our experiences have taught us is that we can respond to these new and never experienced challenges associated with population aging, but it will take creativity, commitment, and cooperation to succeed. While creating an efficient and effective system of long-term services is no small task, the large number of Ohioans, our family, our friends, and us, are counting on Ohio being a good place to grow old.

To download the full report, go to: http://hdl.handle.net/2374.MIA/6810

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