

## **BUDGET ISSUES**

Increase Medicaid waiver slots for elders and people with disabilities. Increase number of Long-Term Care Ombudsmen. Create permanent funding for community-based services now funded with Tobacco Settlement funds (Independent Living Grants). Streamline application process for Medicaid waivers.

**Need:** Unlike most states, Nevada has allocated a certain percentage of the funds received in tobacco settlement funds to grants that promote independent living for Nevada's seniors. This program funds a number of vital services for seniors, such as respite care, transportation and supportive services. The funds have declined since 2009, and are due to run out in 2023. This funding is critical to prevent institutionalization, and permanent state funding for the Independent Living Grants (ILG) is necessary. According to the ILG 2013 Annual Report, these grants served a total of 10,985 clients at an average annual expenditure of \$399 per client, compared to the annual General Fund expenditure of \$18,564 to institutionalize a Medicaid client. Additionally, as the population of elders and people with disabilities continues to grow at an unprecedented pace, more community-based services are needed through increasing the amount of Medicaid money dedicated to the community based care waivers.

The 9.5 State Long Term Care Ombudsmen are now responsible for advocating for the residents in almost 1,500 beds each. This does not allow them to pay as much attention as they would like, especially to those who are in group homes. Aging and Disability Services Division is asking for more employees for this program in their budget.

**Potential Model:** Other states rely more heavily on federal money from the Older Americans Act to provide the services that Nevada funds through tobacco settlement funds. Also, savings derived by keeping Medicaid recipients out of expensive facilities can be reinvested in community-based services for seniors.

**Benefits:** Eliminating or postponing institutionalization saves taxpayer funds, provides for a better quality of life for the elder or person with a disability, and allows for participation in family and community activities. Nevada funds remain in-state rather than in supporting out-of-state facility placements. All of these suggestions add to the number of people who can remain in their home when they receive necessary services.

**Implementation:** Planning must be done for the time that the tobacco settlement funds will not be available to pay for the basic home and community based services that are now provided through the Independent Living Grants.