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RESEARCH REPORT – MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON

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"I want to go home!" How often is that call heard in long-term care institutions?

Money Follows The Person is a way for people to get back to their homes and communities. But Ontario and Canada do not have this program. Instead public dollars are invested again and again in building even more institutions.

Money Follows The Person (MFP) is a centerpiece of U.S. state and federal efforts to ensure that people have choice in long-term care services and supports. It is also an effective means of containing costs in long-term care because it places the emphasis on helping people living in institutions to re-enter the community. It effectively ends the segregation, isolation, and exclusion characterized by life in institutional long-term care – something Andre Picard has called elder apartheid.

Money Follows The Person (MFP) is a legislated program¹ that supports state efforts to ensure that seniors and people with disabilities who require care have real choice in how and where that care is provided. MFP has been highly successful, transitioning 101,540 people out of institutions from 2008 to 2019 (Medicaid.gov, 2021). It does this in two ways. First by providing funding allowing people to transition from institutions to community-based settings. Second by providing funds to improve home and community-based services infrastructure, thereby facilitating individuals being able to live in their own homes and apartments, homes of relatives and friends, as well as small group living accommodations operated by community-based agencies (Robison et al, 2015). The program has been so effective that the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 extended its funding through 2023 and expanded eligibility for it, reducing the minimum qualification period of living in an institution to 60 days. This is expected to greatly increase the number of people leaving institutions to live in the community (Administration For Community Living, 2021).

Canada currently has no such program even though it could have, funded under the Canada Health Act.

Money Follows The Person Program Goals

- “Increase the use of home and community-based services (HCBS) and reduce the use of institutionally-based services;

¹ “Authorized in Section 6071 of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (P.L. 109-171), as amended by Section 2403 of Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (P.L. 111-148), the Medicaid Extenders Act of 2019 (P.L. 116-3), the Medicaid Services Investment and Accountability Act of 2019 (P.L. 116-16), the Sustaining Excellence in Medicaid Act of 2019 (P.L. 116-39), Sec 205: Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-94), and Sec 3811: Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-136) the Money Follows the Person (MFP) demonstration supports state efforts for rebalancing their long-term services and supports system so that individuals have a choice of where they live and receive services.” <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/long-term-services-supports/money-follows-person/index.html>

- Eliminate barriers in state law, state Medicaid plans, and state budgets that restrict the use of Medicaid funds to enable Medicaid-eligible individuals to receive support for appropriate and necessary long-term services and supports in the settings of their choice;
- Strengthen the ability of Medicaid programs to provide HCBS (Home and Community-Based Services) to people who choose to transition out of institutions;
- Put procedures in place to provide quality assurance and improve HCBS.”

How Does The Program Work?

MFP provides grants from the federal government to states through existing Medicaid resources such as HCBS waivers to help people move out of nursing homes, thereby helping to develop a broader, more comprehensive system of support including housing coordination, case management, and tele-health services (Paying For Senior Care, 2021).

Money Follows The Person Is Effective

Connecticut has carefully documented the effect of Money Follows the Person with over 2200 people having successfully transitioned out of institutions from 2008-14. Their quality of life and life satisfaction improved considerably after transition and stayed high. Only 14% were re-institutionalized, primarily because of lack of family support and/or mental health issues that prevented them from exercising choice and control in their daily lives. These factors are being examined in order to meaningfully improve the program (Robison et al, 2015).

How Would A Canadian Money Follows The Person Program Look?

The Canada Health Act’s primary objective is "to protect, promote and restore the physical and mental well-being of residents of Canada and to facilitate reasonable access to health services without financial or other barriers." (Government of Canada, 2021). Introducing a Money Follows The Person program under this Act would meet its primary objective. If Canada introduced this kind of program it would likely be just as successful in promoting community integration rather than unjustifiable institutionalization, and it could help Canada to re-balance its expenditures to better support home and community care rather than over-spending on institutional care.

Introducing a Money Follows The Person program under the Canada Health Act would allow transfer payments to the provinces for the specific purpose of greatly expanding non-profit community-based in-home and residential services and case management support to facilitate people leaving institutions to return to their homes and communities. This would show more respect for older adults and people with disabilities, prevent unjustifiable institutionalization, and welcome people back to their communities instead of funding practices that promote segregation and exclusion that are currently the norm.

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