

**Commissioner Alaigh's Talking Points
VD-HCBS Event @ Lyons
Dec. 14, 2010**

Introduction

Mr. Kenneth H. Mizrach (Director of the VA New Jersey Health Care System)

Mr. Daniel J. Schoeps (National Director Purchased Long-Term Care Group, Geriatrics and Extended Care, Veterans Health Administration)

Mr. Robert Hornyak (Acting Director, Ctr. for Planning, Policy and Evaluation, Administration on Aging)

Deputy Commissioner of Military and Veteran Affairs Ray Zawacki

Thank you. We are here today to celebrate the enormity of the success of the Veterans' Directed Home and Community Based Services program. Thank you for inviting me to be part of this very special day and thank you to all those who worked so hard to ensure the success of the Veterans' Directed Home and Community Based Services program here in New Jersey

Thank you to the U.S. Administration on Aging for having confidence in New Jersey and its leadership team and selecting us to field test this program. I would also like to recognize Aging and Community Services Assistant Commissioner Pat Polansky and VA NJ Health Care Systems' Community Care Program Director Heain Choi for their leadership of this project.

I would also like to thank our partners at the Area Agencies on Aging--Joanne Fetzko, Executive Director of the Somerset County Office on Aging and Theresa Davis, Executive Director of the Morris County Division on Aging, Disabilities and Veterans and our newest partner—Lorraine Joewono, Executive Director of the Bergen County Division of Senior Services.

Thank you all for your outstanding work.

VD-HCBS

What began here as a small pilot program to help our friends and neighbors is now expanding as a national model for veterans and their caregivers in 28 states.

The Department of Health and Senior Services is proud to have played a leadership role in this endeavor. Since 2009, we have seen this program meet successful metrics. We know satisfaction is high with this consumer-directed model and it is cost-effective. You will be hearing some of the success stories from several veterans a little later in the program.

We know that our seniors and our veterans prefer to live in the community. This program gives veterans and their families the support they need to remain in the community with vital services that preserve and improve their quality of life.

This program also puts them in-charge of their care. It is veteran-directed, meaning the participants and their caregivers are empowered to choose what services they need, and how and by whom they will be provided. The participant chooses the right mix that best meets their needs.

We look forward to its continued success and expansion both here and across the country.

VA hospital

Veterans hold a very special place in my heart and I am so pleased that our Department can be part of programs that support them.

I have worked with veterans here at the VA hospital at Lyons for many years. During my time here, I met so many special veterans, who shared with me many stories of their years in combat.

They told me stories that were truly unimaginable. The courage and strength of character these soldiers had is remarkable. These men and women deserve our gratitude and respect for their service to our country.

Through this program, we honor our veterans. We also honor their family caregivers who need more support than ever. A recent report confirms that caregivers are under tremendous stress and are in need of supportive services.

Veteran Caregivers

The United Health Foundation, in collaboration with the National Alliance for Caregiving, conducted a survey of people who care for veterans with service-related disabilities from World War II through Iraq and Afghanistan.

The survey results highlight the difficulties caregivers of veterans face:

- 30% served as caregivers for a decade or more
- 68% called their situation “highly stressful.”

The proportion of veterans’ caregivers who reported a high level of physical strain, who left their jobs or devoted more than 40 hours a week to caregiving – all were several times higher than figures reported in the past.

Many of us can relate to the stress of caring for a parent or aging family member. We know how critical at-home services and personal care can be to the quality of life of both patients and caretakers.

New Jersey, under the leadership of Governor Chris Christie, will continue to be a national leader in implementing innovative programs that allow those in need of long-term care services to receive those services in the community. Supporting accessible, high quality home and community-based services is in the best interests of care recipients and their families and is significantly more affordable for families and taxpayers than the alternative of institutional care.

Today is just another example of how we are offering options to those in need of services.

Through the Veterans' Directed Home and Community Based Services program, much needed support is available to our veterans and their caregivers.

Today we celebrate good news for both veterans and their caregivers. Today, we honor our veterans by ensuring they get support and services they need.

Thank you.