

Excerpts from *A Quiet Crisis in America*

A report to Congress by the Commission on Affordable Housing and Health Facility Needs for Seniors in the 21st Century

RECOMMENDATION 3.1: CONGRESS SHOULD TAKE ALL NECESSARY STEPS TO IMPROVE AND FUND SERVICE COORDINATION IN FEDERALLY ASSISTED SENIOR HOUSING.

The Commission urges Congress to:

Assure funding for service coordination in all federally subsidized housing with senior populations;¹¹⁷

Continue and expand the existing HUD service coordinator grant program, especially for HUD and RHS housing developments without project-based subsidies; and provide resources to allow eligible developments to incorporate a service coordinator position into their operating budgets. This provision includes transferring grant-funded programs to operating budgets.¹¹⁸

The first stage in providing a continuum of housing and service choices for seniors often is in-home supportive services. Individuals with ample resources have the greatest choice in how and from whom they receive these services. Those with low-incomes are more reliant on publicly or privately funded services. Publicly subsidized services are often overburdened and available resources often cannot meet demand.

In addition, navigating a system of segmented service providers and benefits is difficult for many seniors. Service coordination is a profession that acts as a bridge between housing and an array of available services and providers.

In the early 1990s, HUD created service coordinator programs to help seniors in subsidized housing find appropriate providers and services. Service coordinators are members of a housing development's management team. Their role is to assist residents in obtaining affordable supportive services provided by community agencies. The service coordinator facilitates the receipt of home and community-based services to residents in their own homes, thereby promoting aging in place and preventing premature institutionalization. Service coordination also influences the cost of caring for seniors by allowing them to remain in non-institutional settings longer.

Unlike case managers working in the health care field, service coordinators are based at housing sites. They may often be involved in creating new services or educational programs, advocating for residents, working with resident councils to improve the development's community life, assisting with community outreach, and educating housing management staff on aging issues. They may also act as a broker for services that cannot be obtained through public resources.

Currently, service coordinators work in various types of federally subsidized housing. Although many residents of developments benefit from this program, funding is not permanent and many housing facilities and individuals are still not served. At present, many HUD housing developments must compete for funds each year, with concerns of not being able to continue the program once it is established, because of a complex grant process.

The service coordination movement has grown exponentially over the past 10 years, due to its success with residents and housing managers alike. Service coordinators and housing management staff report noticeable improvements in both the community's environment and in the everyday lives of residents and their families. In the coming years, service coordination is poised to play an ever more significant role in the services-enriched housing component of the continuum of care options for seniors. In testimony to the Commission, Janice Monks, executive director, American Association of Service Coordinators, stated that, "almost every property that has added a service coordination component to its operation has benefited from significant improvements."¹¹⁹

RECOMMENDATION 2.3: HUD SHOULD INCREASE THE SECTION 202 PER UNIT FUNDING ALLOCATION TO COVER THE REALISTIC COST OF DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE COST OF PUBLIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE SPACES. HUD SHOULD ESTABLISH REASONABLE OPERATING COST STANDARDS TO COVER SERVICE COORDINATION AND OTHER RELATED EXPENSES.

To improve program efficiency, the Commission recommends that Congress direct HUD to make the following program modifications:

...Establish reasonable operating cost standards. Operating cost standards in PRAC programs need to reflect the costs of operating a building with integrated supportive services. This should include the funding of a service coordinator, as well as a reasonable amount for services such as transportation. Additionally, the PRAC funding should not be limited to 75 percent of the anticipated operating budget.

Several independently conducted program studies 110 conclude that service coordinators provide an important service and are strong determinants of the extended well being of residents. Service coordinators should be fully funded in Section 202 operating budgets. Moreover, existing HUD guidelines for service coordinators should be fully integrated into the training component of the operating budget...

RECOMMENDATION 2.8: CONGRESS SHOULD MODIFY RURAL HOUSING PROGRAMS TO MORE APPROPRIATELY SERVE SENIORS AND FUND THEM REALISTICALLY.

...Service coordinator grant legislation should be amended to permit Section 515 facilities, and other rural developments serving senior residents at 60 percent area median income and lower, to apply for HUD service coordinator grants. To facilitate partnerships among senior housing providers, HUD and RHS should encourage federally assisted facilities, including Section 515, Section 202 and other facilities whose residents are at 60 percent area median income and below, to jointly apply for service coordinator grants.