



## *Silver Paper on Long Term Supports and Services*

California faces a significant challenge in meeting its growing need for long term services and supports (long term care). Seniors, people with disabilities, caregivers, and our families need California to develop a road map for addressing this challenge. We know that by 2030 the number of seniors in the state will grow from 5.2 million (1/5 of the states' population) to 8.4 million. We will need to recruit more care workers (almost 500,000) to meet this growing need. This increase will further strain California's existing, ad hoc system of long term care and supports – a system that is costly, fragmented, and ineffective.

We have an opportunity to create a comprehensive system of long term services and supports that is person-centered, high quality and accessible to all who need it. Here are some principles that CARA supports and were developed as part of the CARE Agenda for California.

### **California needs a plan to address the long term care needs of its rapidly aging population.**

Seventy percent of Americans who reach the age of 65 will need some form of long term care for an average of three years. Few can afford to get the care they need. Many families must "spend down" to a poverty level to be eligible for MediCAL provided support. Medicare does not cover long term care (accept for 100 days after a hospitalization). Most long term nursing home care is not covered, leaving the burden of care to family members. Eighty percent of the care in California is uncompensated and provided by family members.

### **Long term services and supports must be accessible to Californians of all economic backgrounds.**

Currently we have a complex web of state and federally funded programs for seniors and people with disabilities, providing various services to different populations at various levels of eligibility. These programs are not integrated and as a result work in "silos". Our State dollars are not working in a coordinated way that maximizes choice and quality of care.

### **Consumer choice is vital.**

The U.S. Supreme Court's 1999 Olmstead decision determined that people with disabilities must receive care in the most integrated and least restrictive setting possible, recognizing their right to live with self-determination and independence. In this spirit, California can do more to ensure seniors and people with disabilities stay in their homes and communities. We must continue to improve consumer choice, and shift some of the resources away from institutional settings toward more community based services.

### **We must address the shortage of trained care workers and create good jobs.**

California is home to the largest care workforce in the country. Yet the shortage of care workers who are trained, and have the culturally appropriate language and communication skills is staggering. We must be proactive in recruiting a skilled workforce, and commit to effort to retain this workforce to meet the growing demand. We must improve working conditions for these workers so that care work can become a valued profession with stable wages, benefits and opportunities for advancement. This will help improve the quality of service and attract new workers.

***CARA pledges to work with the members of the Care Alliance to support a CARE Agenda in California that advances these principles.***