In 2006, the Ohio General Assembly authorized the creation of a Medicaid-funded Assisted Living Waiver (ALW). Ohio is one of more than 40 states that offer the waiver to Medicaid recipients. The Assisted Living Stakeholders Committee provided guidance and resources to help develop and implement the waiver. The committee included representatives from: the Ohio Assisted Living Association, Advocate for Not for Profit Services for Older Adults, Ohio Health Care Association, Ohio Center for Assisted Living, Academy of Nursing Homes, Public Housing Authority, HUD, Masonic Homes, Ohio Association for Area Agencies on Aging, PASSPORT Site Directors, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Ohio Department of Aging, Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Office of Budget and Management.


What is the purpose of the Assisted Living Waiver?
Ohio's Medicaid Assisted Living Waiver provides a long-term care option for low-income older adults and people with disabilities. It is a popular alternative as an intermediate form of care. Before 2006, assisted living was not an option under Ohio's Medicaid program. Compared with nursing care, assisted living offers residents more independence, privacy and services more tailored to their needs. The program is open to people who: are age 21 or older; meet the financial criteria for Medicaid eligibility (low-income) and are able to pay monthly room and board; and are in need of skilled or intermediate care (hands-on help with dressing, bathing, toileting, grooming, eating or mobility).

What services must facilities provide as part of the Assisted Living Waiver Program?
Two types of services are provided by the ALW: assisted living services and community transition services. Facilities are only responsible for assisted living services which are prescribed on an individual basis according to a client's care plan.

- Assisted Living Services include: 24-hour on-site response, personal care, supportive services (housekeeping, laundry and maintenance), nursing, non-medical scheduled transportation, three meals per day and social/recreational programming.
- Community Transition Service is available to individuals leaving a nursing facility to enroll in the Assisted Living Waiver. It helps them obtain essential household furnishings and other items.

Who can provide assisted living services and offer the Assisted Living Waiver?
Providers interested in offering the ALW must:
- be licensed as a residential care facility by the Ohio Department of Health; and
- be certified by the Ohio Department of Aging (ODA) as an assisted living provider.

Who is eligible to obtain ODA-certification as an assisted living provider?
Rules regarding assisted living provider certification and qualifications became effective April 1, 2006. An eligible provider is a residential care facility that can provide clients with their own residential living units. The living units must be single occupancy (unless otherwise requested by the consumer), include a private bathroom with a working toilet, sink, and shower or tub, and identifiable space for socialization.

- Read the conditions of participation: http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/173-39-02
How can I get more information about the program and becoming a provider?
Call Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio (COA) at (513) 345-8682 to speak with a member of our assisted living team. Our staff will be happy to answer any questions you might have about the program.

What is the first step to become an ODA-certified assisted living provider?
Apply online via the Medicaid Information Technology System (MITS) portal: http://jfs.ohio.gov/mits/index.stm. TIP - From the ODJFS webpage, click on "Click here to access the MITS portal," then click "Provider," "Enrollment," "New Application." Select "Organization," "Initial Enrollment," and "45-Waivered Services Organization" from the drop-down boxes. Click "Next" and complete the application.

Call Council on Aging (513) 345-3347 for assistance.

Why is the application so complex?
ODA administers this waiver. Eligible providers must be able to show that they are a residential care facility that can provide quality care. We will help you complete the application and become your partner throughout the process.

My facility already has a Medicaid provider number. Do I still need to complete the Ohio Health Plans Provider Enrollment application?
Yes. This application will be used to assign a new provider type and category of service.

What happens after I submit the application?
ODA reviews your application and COA conducts a pre-certification review, which includes: a tour of your facility; a review of applicable policies and procedures; review of a sample client record; and a discussion of program rules. The provider also determines the number of beds to designate for ALW clients at this time. We will then forward our recommendation to ODA. ODA finalizes certification.

What happens if my facility doesn’t meet all requirements at the time of the on-site visit?
In most cases, COA's assisted living team is able to provide technical assistance to help facilities meet the application and certification requirements.

Where can I find the Assisted Living Waiver program rules?
The program rules are included in the application packet and can also be obtained online at:

- Conditions of participation: http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/173-39-02
- Assisted living services: http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/173-39-02.16
- Community transition services: http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/173-39-02.17

Is my facility required to have nursing services round the clock?
No, but it is expected that the provider will have the capacity to provide nursing services when ordered on the care plan by the care manager.

How will my facility receive referrals for the program?
Once your facility is certified, COA will begin referring eligible clients to your facility. Your facility will also be listed on our Web site. You are not obligated to accept every referral sent to your facility, even if you have vacant living units that meet the waiver requirements.

What is the reimbursement schedule for the program?
The reimbursement rate includes the room and board payment made by the client and a daily rate for services based on the level of service a client requires. A 31-day reimbursement package ranges from $2,122.38 to $2,742.38, depending on the client's care plan.
How is the facility paid?
The assisted living provider will receive two payments: one from the client for room and board and one from the Council on Aging/Medicaid for services administered according to the client’s care plan.

What if a married couple uses the ALW?
Medicaid considers each person an individual client, regardless of whether they are married. As such, the husband and wife would each have to pay the established room and board rate to the facility, and the facility would receive two reimbursements from Medicaid, one for care of each client.

What if the client is hospitalized? Are "bed hold" days paid?
"Bed hold" day reimbursement does not apply in the ALW. Reimbursement for waiver services is not available when services are not delivered. However, the client is responsible for continuation of the room and board payment.

How is the level of service determined for an individual client?
The level of service is determined by an in-person assessment conducted by COA, the client and facility staff. A client’s level of service can change while he or she is on the waiver. This is determined by the client’s care manager, with input from the client and facility staff.

How is the term “care plan” defined in this program?
A client’s care plan is a description of the types and amounts of services he or she needs. It also identifies who is responsible for providing the service(s). The plan is developed by the client, the COA care manager and the facility. Facilities receive copies of care plans for every client on the waiver program.

What is the role of the COA care manager?
The care manager’s primary role is to verify that the client’s needs are being met. The care manager will have monthly contact with the client (phone calls and in-person visits) and will collaborate with facility staff in determining the client’s needs, level of service and care plan.

Do all of the living units in my facility have to meet the space requirements?
No. Facilities often offer a variety of living space configurations. But, we do require the provider to identify specific units that meet the requirements for the waiver as stated in the rules. These units will be certified for the program.

Are there a minimum/maximum number of living units required to participate in the program?
No, but we recommend facilities certify all the living units that meet the requirements. This allows maximum flexibility when considering admissions to waiver clients.

Can I use the living units that meet the waiver space requirements for other residents?
Yes. You are not required to reserve living units.

Is our facility required to have vacant living units that meet the space requirements at the time of application?
No. The provider must simply confirm that its units meet the space requirements stipulated by the waiver: single occupancy rooms with full, private baths.

The living units in our facility are studio apartments without separate bedrooms. Will this meet the space requirements?
Yes, as long as the room includes a full, private bath and is large enough to allow for a clearly defined socialization area. There is no requirement for a physically divided bedroom space.

Our facility only has double occupancy rooms and/or no private bathrooms. Can the space requirements be waived?
No. These requirements are a condition for approval of the waiver by the Center for Medicare/Medicaid Services.
Is my facility responsible for a waiver client's property loss?
Yes. The provider must provide evidence of insurance coverage for a client's loss resulting from the action or inaction of facility staff.

Wouldn't my facility be better off waiting to see how this works for other providers?
Demand is high for facilities offering the ALW. The program has grown from 48 clients in 2007 to 363 in September 2010. That's over 600% growth in just four years. As of November 2011, 32 facilities in our region were certified for the Assisted Living Waiver. But the number of certified facilities often lags program enrollment. As a result, many eligible seniors in our area are on a waiting list while new providers join the program and make more beds available.

Your facility has the opportunity to join others across the state and the U.S. in providing independence and long-term care choices for Medicaid-eligible seniors and disabled adults. Your participation demonstrates your support for our community's most vulnerable residents.

If this is your first experience working with a government program, we think you'll be pleasantly surprised by the experience. COA will work with your facility every step of the way - from certification through care management.

Our beds are full. Why would we want to consider applying for certification?
There are many reasons, including advocacy and support for our community's elderly and disabled residents.

- It's consistent with the mission of many facilities - especially faith-based to have a mixture of clients, including the poor.
- It helps family caregivers. Some are struggling to care for family members on PASSPORT. They need more help, but want independence and some autonomy for their loved ones.
- As taxpayers, why should we pay for a level of care that may not be required? Many people enter nursing homes prematurely and end up on Medicaid. Often, less restrictive, less expensive options are available. Assisted living facilities are one of those options.

For more information about the Assisted Living Waiver Program or becoming a certified provider:

- (513) 345-8682
- www.help4seniors.org

“I had to be in the hospital and money kind of ran out, so where do you go from there?” said Caroline. “The Assisted Living (Waiver) was the obvious choice. It has really worked for us.”

The Assisted Living Waiver made it possible for Carl and Caroline to stay in their Middletown retirement community apartment.