



AREA AGENCIES ON AGING ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN  
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## **FACT SHEET ON MI CHOICE**

### **What is MI Choice?**

MI Choice is a statewide program designed to give older adults and people with disabilities more choices in receiving long term supports. It provides a variety of services in a person's home that are similar to those provided in a nursing home. MI Choice is also known as the Medicaid Waiver for the Elderly and Disabled.

### **Is MI Choice an entitlement program?**

No, the state places a cap on the number of clients that can enroll. In 2001, MI Choice served 15,000 people, but then it was cut by one-third. Governor Granholm reopened enrollment in 2003. In 2008, about 10,000 were served. More will be served in 2009.

### **Which services are included?**

Services include personal care, homemaking, respite in the home, respite outside the home, respite in the home of another, adult day care, home-delivered meals, non-medical transportation, private duty nursing, personal emergency response systems, chore service, counseling, specialized medical equipment and supplies, training, nursing home transition services, fiscal intermediary, goods and services, community living supports and environmental accessibility adaptations. A new option allows clients more control in directing how services are delivered.

### **Who can participate?**

Low-income adults of all ages who have disabilities significant enough to qualify for nursing home care are eligible for MI Choice. People already living in nursing homes are eligible if they are able to live safely at home with supportive services. Income can be no greater than 300% of the SSI level (\$2,022/month in 2009), and liquid assets can be no greater than \$2,000. The income of a spouse is exempt and spousal asset protections apply. Starting 2009, people living in adult foster care homes and homes for the aged are eligible to participate in MI Choice.

### **How does the program work?**

A registered nurse and a social worker visit the person in his/her home to determine what the client wants, and what family members and friends can do to help. The nurse or social worker provides a list of qualified agencies from which the client can choose, and contacts agencies if the client desires. After services are started, the nurse or social worker stays in touch with the client on a regular basis to make adjustments, as desired. MI Choice uses an approach that is "person-centered," meaning clients are in control and make the decisions about their care.

### **What is the role of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)?**

AAAs administer the MI Choice program, meaning they provide the nurses and social workers that visit clients and help them get assistance—this service is known as "care management." AAAs are well suited to manage clients' care because they don't provide in-home services and have no financial self-interest in referring clients to particular services or service providers. AAAs are also responsible for data collection, financial management, and implementing cost controls. Fourteen AAAs administer MI Choice; seven other agencies across the state also perform this role.

**How much does it cost?**

There is no charge for people who qualify. The state has placed limits on MI Choice to control spending. The reimbursement cap is \$52 or \$53 per client per day; the cap is figured in the aggregate, so individual clients can cost more. All service costs, care management and administration must fit under the cap.

***FOLLOWING ARE TESTIMONIALS WRITTEN BY MI CHOICE CONSUMERS AND THEIR CAREGIVERS:***

**Mildred Ronan, Benton Harbor, MI Choice client:** “I am a 90-year-old widow of a retired fireman who had become ill with job related emphysema with advance lung disease. The monies we had saved for our old age was soon depleted. After his death in 1999 I had only the house left to sell to pay off his final medical and funeral bills. Then my health failed with a broken hip, pneumonia, severe edema, hypertension, and arthritis and spending much of my time in a wheelchair. I felt I had no reason to carry on my life. Then the Area Agency on Aging offered me the waiver plan...I am now a very happy old lady who would otherwise have to be in a nursing home.”

**Jacklynn Brandt, Blanchard, MI Choice client:** “...I have to thank the MI Choice waiver program...Without (this) program and these people, I wouldn't be here to write this letter. I have severe Rheumatoid Arthritis, Lupus, Pulmonary fibrosis and mental health issues due to the stress of my husband's suicide...I was taking in approximately \$900 a month and my spend down was \$552....how was I to live? I knew my life was over. I had no choice. I loaded my gun (not wanting to die as I knew it would devastate my sons and mother). As I lifted the gun to my head, it went off prematurely and the bullet went into the wall beside me. I fell in a heap and wept. When I found the strength, I called my therapist...My therapist found charities who would temporarily help with my meds while I was approved for the waiver program. (MI Choice) has been one of my greatest blessings.”

**Nancy Moore, Southfield, caregiver to mother Fannie Moore:** “I would not be able to keep my Mom at home without help. Not only because I work, but because of the emotional and physical toll...This is a 24-hour a day, 7 day a week job.”

**Beverly Barwick, Baroda, caregiver to daughter Jennifer Mielke:** “(Jennifer) is paraplegic due to Multiple Sclerosis. She has had it since she was 17 years old and is now 28 years old. She lives with me, her stepfather and her daughter. I have a great deal of health problems of my own. They include three leaking heart valves, diabetes, hypertension...I am unable to care for Jennifer in total by myself because of my many health problems. Her stepfather has a number of health problems also. We try to do the best we can to raise our granddaughter. The MI Choice waiver program allows us to have Jennifer home with us instead of in a nursing home. She now gets help during the day to bathe her, dress her, get her up for dinner and put her back into bed at night.”

**Roberta Offord, Detroit, MI Choice client:** “I have been in the MI Choice waiver program for 5 years. This program has saved my life and kept me away from the nursing home. My kids are a great support system, but are unable to care for me because they have their own family. Because of this crippling rheumatoid arthritis sometimes I can't even get out of bed – at least now I can rely on my aide who makes sure I am clean, my house is clean and that I receive my meals—God bless this program.”