

Safeguarding the Health of Older Adults Through Medicaid

Who We Are

The Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association (GAPNA) represents advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), including nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, and other expert providers, who specialize in the care of older adults.¹

Today, over **56 million adults aged 65 and older** live in the United States, and that number is rapidly growing.² GAPNA members are on the front lines of this demographic shift, delivering high-quality, person-centered care to older adults across a wide range of settings, including:

- Primary care clinics
- Home health
- Nursing homes
- Ambulatory surgical centers
- Hospice & Palliative Care
- Assisted living and memory care platforms
- Behavioral health care
- Medical house calls
- Community-based and public health programs
- Hospitals and emergency departments
- Telehealth and virtual care

We are leaders in clinical innovation, workforce development, education, and research focused on healthy aging.

Why Medicaid Support Matters for Older Adults

Medicaid offers health coverage to approximately 7.2 million older adults with low incomes who also receive Medicare benefits.³ A significant number of older adults rely on both Medicare and Medicaid to meet their healthcare needs. Medicaid is essential for:

Serving as the primary source of health coverage for nearly two-thirds (63%) of nursing home residents, offering essential long-term services and supports such as nursing home care and home-based services.⁴

Helping with premiums, co-pays, and medications

Filling critical benefit gaps that Medicare does not, such as transportation to medical appointments, medical equipment like mobilized wheelchairs, dental, vision, and hearing benefits, and some treatment options for substance use disorder.

Reductions in Medicaid resources could severely limit access to essential services and increase costs for vulnerable populations, particularly older adults with complex medical and social needs. Medicaid makes Medicare affordable for low-income individuals and those living with disabilities and functional limitations.

The Urgent Need for Nursing Home Quality Improvement

Nursing homes remain short, more than 60,000 workers compared to pre-pandemic levels, highlighting the urgent need for targeted funding to support staff recruitment and retention.⁵ As concerns mount over how changes in federal funding, staffing mandates, and regulatory oversight may affect the quality of care, frontline providers, families, and advocates are calling for:

Increased support for state survey and inspection programs

Ongoing investment in geriatric education and workforce development

Stronger oversight mechanisms to ensure safe, high-quality care

Adequate and sustainable staffing levels across long-term care settings

Nursing homes play a vital role in our healthcare ecosystem as care providers, community anchors, and major employers in many regions.

GAPNA Urges Federal Action to Support Older Adults

GAPNA joins others in the call for a clear national strategy to advance quality in long-term care, aligned with recommendations from leading health policy bodies

We urge federal leaders to

- Ensure stable and adequate funding for programs that serve nursing home residents and support the nursing workforce
- Expand geriatric training opportunities and support interdisciplinary models of care
- Promote innovation and adoption of best practices in long-term care settings
- Elevate data transparency, equity, and consumer protections across all care settings.

Now is the time to act. Together, we can build a better, more equitable future for our nation's aging population.

¹U.S. Census Bureau. Older Population Grew in Nearly All U.S. Metro Areas. June 27, 2024. Accessed May 7, 2025. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2024/06/metro-areas-population-age.html>

²Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association. About GAPNA. Accessed May 7, 2025. <https://www.gapna.org/about>

³Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Seniors & Medicare and Medicaid Enrollees. Medicaid.gov. Accessed May 7, 2025.

<https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/eligibility/seniors-medicare-and-medicaid-enrollees>

⁴Kaiser Family Foundation. Distribution of Certified Nursing Facility Residents by Primary Payer Source. Accessed May 7, 2025.

<https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/distribution-of-certified-nursing-facilities-by-primary-payer-source/>

⁵American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living. Ensuring Access to Quality Post-Acute Care. March 2025.

Accessed May 7, 2025. <https://www.ahcancal.org/Advocacy/Testimony/Testimony/AHCA%20Statement%20for%20the%20Record.pdf>