Mills Administration Takes Steps to Support Personal Care Workers, Maine Seniors in Response to COVID-19

March 30, 2020

Actions will accelerate benefits for personal care workers and residents who are home-bound

Governor Mills and Commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Jeanne Lambrew announced today that the Administration is accelerating pay increases for personal care workers and expanding access to meals for older Mainers who are home-bound because of the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Maine DHHS will accelerate MaineCare (Medicaid) rate increases that are designated to support pay raises for personal care workers, including personal support specialists, home health aides, private duty nurses, and other professionals who care for Maine's older residents at home. Starting April 1, 2020, providers will receive rate increases that will allow them to fund pay raises for approximately 20,000 personal care workers, instead of on July 1, 2020 as previously approved by the Legislature.

> *"As COVID-19 continues to impact our state, we know our older residents and those who need personal care are at particular risk," said Governor Mills. "To ensure everyone in Maine, especially our most vulnerable residents, have the care they need, we are expediting measures to support them and the dedicated workers who care for them as this pandemic continues."*
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> *"It's more important now than ever to ensure that older Mainers and those with disabilities can receive the care and nutritious meals they need at home," said Commissioner Lambrew. "We'll continue to act to support Maine seniors and personal care workers as Maine responds to COVID-19."*

The Legislature previously ratified this rate increase for the next State fiscal year, but in order to support these workers and their clients in response to COVID-19, DHHS has authorized using existing funds to begin all payment rate increases in the supplemental budget early.

The accelerated payments for personal care workers follow the Mills Administration's earlier action to financially support Maine's compassionate, quality long-term care providers, through an extraordinary circumstance allowance for nursing facilities announced last week.

Additionally, Maine has received $800,000 through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act to support meals for older Mainers who are home-bound, and more federal funding is expected through future allotments. This is especially important at a time when the Governor encourages all Maine to people to stay home. DHHS expects to be able to provide its local partners with this support in the coming days. Meal delivery volunteers will knock at the door of each home and then step back to ensure that the meal is received while maintaining physical distancing.

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