



## **PAR: Proposal cuts elderly's home service**

*Jindal budget in reverse, group finds*

By [MARSHA SHULER](#)

Published: Apr 3, 2010

Gov. Bobby Jindal's proposed budget is headed in the wrong direction, reducing funding for in-home services for the elderly while increasing money for nursing home care, a Public Affairs Research Council report concludes.

PAR said the state has increased the share of its long-term care budget that supports home- and community-based services from 1.4 percent in 2002 to 29 percent by 2010. The national average is 40 percent of funds to community-based services so Louisiana is still behind, according to the report.

If Jindal's proposed \$24.2 billion state budget is approved, Louisiana will reduce spending on the "high-demand" community-based services to 24 percent of the total budget for long-term care spending.

"The Louisiana system has traditionally favored providing Medicaid care for the elderly in nursing homes, but has been shifting resources in recent years to provide more care at home and in the community," PAR President Jim Brandt said.

"It is crucial that this budget not reverse those gains," Brandt said in a statement issued with the report's release.

Jindal's budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1, cuts \$61 million out of home- and community-based care for the elderly and disabled while it increases nursing home care funding by \$16 million, the report said.

Since the budget was crafted, PAR said more federal dollars have become available for Medicaid — the government health insurance program that serves the elderly, pregnant mothers and children and the poor and disabled. More money is expected to be approved in the coming weeks, PAR said.

"These funds can be used to plug gaps in the budget, especially those that are most troublesome such as the disproportionate cuts to in-home care for the elderly," PAR said in a brief authored by David Hood, a former state health secretary.

PAR said the state financing mechanism for long-term care for the elderly is biased toward nursing home care. The research group said there are some 9,000 vacant beds in nursing homes while there is an 18,000 person long waiting list for in-home care services.

PAR recommended that the state:

- Reduce the 18,000-person waiting list for in-home and community-based care by redirecting \$62 million in anticipated cost-control measure savings the state health agency is implementing into the Elderly and Disabled Adult and Adult Day Health Care programs.
- Implement a tracking and reporting system to ensure that the state continues its shift toward “a better balanced continuum of long-term care for the elderly” providing more home and community-based options.
- Change laws governing the use of the Elderly Trust Fund to allow interest earnings to be spent on services provided in nursing home and home-based settings.