



VNAA's Legislative Priorities (2008)

The following six legislative objectives would strengthen VNAs' ability to provide the highest quality healthcare to some of the nation's most frail and vulnerable individuals.

Preserve Funding for the Medicare Home Health Benefit

The President's FY 2009 Budget calls for \$18.62 billion in home health payment reductions over five years. This proposal would come on top of payment cuts authorized by Congress or CMS in 8 out of the past 11 years despite the fact that home health reduces the need for institutional care.

Preserve Funding for the Medicare Hospice Benefit

The President's FY 2009 Budget calls for \$7.43 billion in hospice payment reductions over 5 years -- \$5.14 billion in legislative cuts and \$2.29 billion in regulatory cuts. The services that would be affected by a payment reduction of this magnitude include nursing care, physician services, short-term inpatient care, bereavement counseling, respite care, and medications.

Create a Medicare Chronic Care Management Program for the Highest Cost Beneficiaries

Provide federal funding for a chronic care management program that allows for advanced practice nurses employed by Medicare-certified providers to develop, direct, and manage beneficiary plans of care in collaboration with a physician as specified under state law.

Strengthen the Non-Profit Home Health Nurse and Therapist Workforce

Invest in a federal program that would provide funds to non-profit home health agencies for the purpose of developing preceptorship programs for nursing students and training programs for new nursing graduates in the specialized field of home healthcare.

Support Reforms to the Medicare Advantage (MA) Program that Better Inform Beneficiaries of Differences Between Traditional Medicare and Each MA Plan and Reforms that Ensure Appropriate Reimbursement for Providers

Many MA plans cover substantially less home healthcare than what is covered under traditional Medicare and charge copayments, which is prohibited by the Medicare home health benefit. In addition, providers are burdened with more paperwork and report that reimbursement by MA plans is generally substantially less than the cost of care.

Enable VNAs to Support their Lean Clinical Staffs by Funding "VNA Technology Grants" for Investment in Home-Based Healthcare Technology.

The urgency for home health providers to purchase telehealth and other healthcare technology is increasing due to the national nursing shortage. Clinicians must manage more patients with fewer fulltime staff. Medicare does not reimburse for this technology and non-profit providers have little access to capital for purchasing such technology.

For more information, please contact Kathy Thompson at VNAA (202/384-1456)



What are VNAs?

Visiting Nurse Agencies (VNAs) are:

- Non-profit, Medicare-certified providers of home and community-based services
- United by a charity-based mission to provide medically-necessary home healthcare to all individuals in need of such care regardless of their ability to pay
- Governed by voluntary boards of directors

For more than 100 years, Visiting Nurse Associations (VNAs) have been providing healthcare to some of the nation's most vulnerable individuals, including the frail elderly, impoverished families, and those with chronic conditions and disabilities.

As pioneers of public healthcare in the United States, VNAs made a critical difference in the late 1800s by controlling the spread of infection diseases, including smallpox and polio, and in providing prevention and wellness services. Today, VNAs represent the largest network of nonprofit providers of influenza vaccine in the nation—giving nearly two million flu shots per year.

The 415 VNAs today maintain their founders' non-profit, charity-based mission to provide medically-necessary home healthcare to those in need of such care regardless of their ability to pay. They are dedicated to preserving quality of life and independence for individuals of all ages by offering both skilled medical care and an array of community support services such as Meals on Wheels. VNAs also offer end-of-life care, including hospice and support groups for patients with terminal illnesses and their families.

The role of VNAs is more important than ever as patients spend less time in the hospital, the number of those with chronic illnesses continues to increase, and the demand by consumers for home health care grows stronger. To meet demands, VNAs' expertly trained clinical staff use the latest technology available. They specialize in chronic care management, having successfully reduced costs for some of the highest cost health conditions – diabetes, Alzheimer's, congestive heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, HIV/AIDS and cancer.



Vision—As mission-driven, non-profit organizations dedicated to the health and well-being of all persons in their communities, Visiting Nurse Agencies (VNAs) will be the quality and value leaders in providing home healthcare and related services, and the VNAA will play a central role in helping them establish and maintain their leadership position.

Mission—The mission of the VNAA is to support, promote and advance VNAs in their mission to serve their communities.

History—The VNAA was established in 1983, yet the history of visiting nurse agencies dates back to the 1880s in New York, where free nursing care was provided to the sickest and poorest who otherwise would not have access to healthcare. The influx of immigrants to the Northeast spurred several VNAs to emerge to address the increased prevalence of illness and infectious diseases, such as polio and small pox. Lillian Wald, the pioneer of public health nursing, advanced the principle that “Society benefits when healthcare is provided in the least costly and most comforting setting—most often the home.”

Values

- The VNAA is committed to providing its members with the highest possible levels of service to support their not-for-profit missions.
- Like its members, the VNAA promotes the principle that all persons must have access to affordable, high quality, compassionate home and community-based healthcare, regardless of the complexity of care or ability to pay.
- The VNAA embraces its role as a responsible, persuasive and information-driven advocate for changes in public policy that further the work of VNAs and improve the lives of their patients.
- The VNAA and its staff are committed to the highest standards of service, professionalism, integrity and ethical conduct.
- As a service driven organization, the VNAA actively engages its members in carrying out its mission, regularly seeking feedback and volunteer participation by, and guidance from, members in the Association's work.
- The VNAA promotes shared learning among member agencies.
- The VNAA recognizes that its ability to excel depends on the integrity, knowledge, imagination, skill, diversity and teamwork of its employees. The VNAA therefore strives to create an environment of mutual respect, encouragement and teamwork that rewards commitment and performance and is responsive to the needs of its employees.

Membership—With offices in Washington, DC, VNAA represents over 400 nonprofit Visiting Nurse Agencies (VNAs) from all regions of the country and has an active membership of 170 different agencies ranging in size from 3 clinicians to over 12,000 employees. VNAA members serve over 4 million patients annually and employ over 90,000 clinicians. VNAs represent the largest network of nonprofit providers of influenza vaccine—over 2.5 million flu shots per year. VNAA works hard to educate, advocate and collaborate on issues facing home healthcare.

Educate. Advocate. Collaborate.