



# Just the Facts:

## Consumer Directed Care: The Choices Program

### What is The Choices Program?

Choices is a Medicaid waiver program with the same eligibility criteria as PASSPORT. The program allows the older adult to become the employer and hire service providers, including friends, neighbors or some relatives to provide community-based care. Choices is available in the central Ohio and southern Ohio regions served by the Area Agencies on Aging based in Columbus, Marietta and Rio Grande.

### How is Choices different from PASSPORT?

Choices offers a great degree of flexibility for the consumer. Traditional PASSPORT care plans are often limited to certain types of services from an authorized list of providers. Some older adults would prefer different types of services or greater flexibility in scheduling services. Choices helps meet the long-term care needs of these older adults.

### What types of services are available through Choices?

Choices consumers receive the same types of services that are available through traditional PASSPORT, such as homecare attendant service, meals, adult day care, etc., and may return to traditional PASSPORT at any time.

### Do Choices services cost more than traditional PASSPORT home care services?

Choices care plans must meet the same financial cap as traditional PASSPORT care plans. That is, care plan costs may not exceed 60% of the cost of nursing home care.

### How many older adults participate in Choices?

Choices is not for everyone. Since the initial Central Ohio pilot program began in 2002, 5% of the Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging's caseload has enrolled. Through 2007, the three Area Agencies on Aging that offer Choices may enroll 500 older adults cumulatively.

### What types of responsibilities do older adults have in Choices?

The consumer is the "employer of record" under the Internal Revenue Code and responsible for all necessary tax forms and payroll duties. All taxes must be paid, including worker's compensation. Older adults use a fiscal intermediary to assist with the financial aspects of the program.

### How do older adults handle the responsibilities of being the employer?

Choices' consumers receive significant and extensive training. The older adult has a specialized case manager to assist in navigating the intricacies of acting as the employer. Finally, a Review Team must evaluate and approve the older adult for enrollment.

### If family members are already providing care, are public funds used to pay them through Choices?

Family caregivers already provide 80% of long-term care for older adults. Research indicates that family caregivers do not use public funds to substitute for informal, unpaid care. Formal care generally replaces informal care only when there is a loss or change in the informal caregiver because of illness or death. Spouses, parents, stepparents, legal guardians and representatives are not authorized to provide services. Many consumers appoint an Authorized Representative, who may not be an individual provider, to act on the older adult's behalf and direct services.



### **Are individual providers able to provide the same quality of care as traditional agency based providers?**

Research indicates that providers trained by the consumer provide an overall higher quality of service because their training is uniquely tailored to that particular older adult.

### **Can older adults in *Choices* use traditional PASSPORT providers for services?**

Older adults in *Choices* may use traditional agency based providers as well as informal caregivers to provide services. As the employer, consumers have a wide degree of flexibility as to whom they can choose to deliver services.

### **Is *Choices* the only consumer-directed care program in the United States?**

Thirty-one states currently offer some form of consumer-directed care through home and community-based waiver programs according to the U.S. General Accounting Office. Colorado, Oregon, Michigan, and California have consumer-directed care programs dating back to the late 1970s and early 1980s.

### **Who do families contact if they are interested in *The Choices Program*?**

The *Choices* Program is available in the planning and service areas served by the Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging, the Area Agency on Aging District 7 and the Area Agency on Aging Buckeye Hills-Hocking Valley Regional Development District. More information about the counties served by these Area Agencies on Aging and contact information is available at [www.ohioaging.org](http://www.ohioaging.org).