



RICK SCOTT
GOVERNOR

Better Health Care for all Floridians

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SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT:
***Tampa Bay Times* Mischaracterizes State's Efforts to Serve Medically
Complex Children and Honor Parent Choice**

Claim: "For two years, Gov. Rick Scott's administration has made clear that it had no intention of changing course on a policy that punishes children with complex medical needs and keeps them from their homes, families and communities."

Fact: The State has, within the past year, implemented numerous policy changes to its already excellent Medicaid service package for medically complex children residing in the community and in skilled nursing facilities. This includes the provision of professional case management services of one case manager for a maximum of every 15 medically complex children, and elimination of unnecessary restrictions on when and how many hours of medically necessary services are provided in the home. These improvements are evidenced by the fact that requests for fair hearings by parents to dispute the hours or availability of services in the home are at an all-time low. In May 2013, there was only a single request for a hearing relating to the provision of nursing services in the home from the more than 1,000 medically complex children residing in the community.

The evidence, as opposed to the rhetoric, shows that the State is making progress in transitioning children out of nursing facilities in accordance with their parents' choices and ensuring parents know about alternatives to having their child receive care in nursing facilities.

Claim: The state has cut aid to families and either reduced or limited community-based services even as it upped payments to nursing homes.

Fact: More community-based services are available now than ever before. The critique of the State's purported underfunding of waivers resulting in unacceptable wait lists is misplaced. Florida has led the nation in its efforts to provide optional Medicaid services through waivers. The State added \$36 million in additional funding for the Developmental Disability Medicaid Waiver (DD waiver) and new funding for 40 more slots in the Traumatic Brain and Spinal Cord Injury waiver (TBI/SCI waiver) for the 2013-14 fiscal year.

Federal Medicaid law requires nursing facilities to be an option for medically necessary care. Thus, if Florida did not provide this option for the families that choose it, the State would be violating federal law. The increase in payments to nursing facilities is due to Florida's implementation of the long-term care quality assessment policy which, effective April 1, 2009, permitted nursing facilities themselves to put up their own dollars to receive a federal match. During that same period, the State-funded portion of payments toward nursing facility rates has declined every year compared with inflation. Thus, it is



funding by the federal government, not the State of Florida, which has facilitated the increased reimbursement rates for nursing facilities.

Claim: "...many families have no real choice: Nursing homes are a default because parents, grandparents and siblings don't have the resources, training or confidence to manage a child's chronic medical condition."

Fact: Parents of medically complex children are more informed now than ever before as to their choices. AHCA's care coordinators, who as noted above have very low case loads and can therefore have extensive and comprehensive interactions with parents and medical professionals serving medically complex children, regularly reach out to every parent or legal guardian willing to speak with them in order to assist in transitioning their child home or in keeping their child home if they desire. And, as a result of the Agency's efforts, medically complex children have more staff looking out for their health and welfare, and the specialized facilities that serve them are under consistent monitoring.

In 2013, 31 children have been discharged from nursing facilities to their family, adoptive placements, group homes, or medical foster care; 6 children being discharged after hospitalizations were discharged to their family homes instead of nursing facilities due to the care coordinator's assistance in organizing private duty nursing and other services; and 3 children were diverted from nursing facility placements and reside in medical foster care homes.

The Agency for Health Care Administration is committed to better health care for all Floridians. The Agency administers Florida's Medicaid program, licenses and regulates more than 45,000 health care facilities and 37 health maintenance organizations, and publishes health care data and statistics at www.FloridaHealthFinder.gov. Additional information about Agency initiatives is available via [Facebook \(AHCAFlorida\)](#), [Twitter \(@AHCA_FL\)](#) and [YouTube \(/AHCAFlorida\)](#).

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