

VP Harris Proposes Medicare Pay for Home Care

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Vice President Kamala Harris released a plan on Tuesday proposing to extend Medicare coverage to home care for the first time. According to the Harris campaign, the proposed coverage would include:

- **At Home Services:** Medicare enrollees will be independently evaluated by physicians or nurses as to whether seniors are unable to independently perform activities of daily living like bathing, eating, and going to the bathroom and/or face serious cognitive impairment. Aides will be designated by Medicare and can include any qualified home health aides, personal care attendants, or direct care workers recognized by their state.
- **Services Tailored to Fit Need:** Medicare at Home recognizes that the vast majority of seniors with long-term care needs are still able to live in their homes with an average of 20 hours or less a week of care provided by a home care aide for daily activities such as bathing, eating, and cleaning. Medicare will design a plan that provides coverage for those of modest incomes with a sliding scale for cost-sharing for seniors with higher incomes.
- **Innovate and Engage with the Private Sector:** This initiative will draw upon best practices across Medicare plans as well as the private sector to expand the home care workforce, partner with technology companies in areas such as remote patient monitoring and telehealth services, as well as other private sector partnerships.
- **Lift Up Care Workers:** This initiative will provide care workers access to better wages, improve quality of care for seniors and those with disabilities, and treat our seniors with the dignity they deserve.

The campaign asserts the proposal is intended to help the “[sandwich generation](#)” of adults caring for aging parents while raising their children at the same time. The campaign says about 105 million Americans are providing caregiving to others.

The vast majority of seniors could continue living at home with an average of 20 hours or less a week of care provided by an aide, according to the campaign fact sheet.

Under the proposal, Medicare beneficiaries would be evaluated, independently, to determine their ability to perform activities of daily living and those with lower incomes would be provided coverage for any needed care. Higher income senior citizens would

share in the cost of the campaign, while also qualifying for its services. The purpose is to enable the vast majority of senior citizens to continue living at home.

Dr. Steve Landers, the new President of the National Alliance for Care at Home, welcomed the proposal. “It’s another piece of evidence that the public — and families — highly value care at home. It speaks to how central and important an issue care at home is for our country.

“By raising the topic of expanding care at home in such a visible way, in high profile way, this is another acknowledgment that American families really are hoping for stronger access to care at home, that people want to age in place with dignity and independence.”

As part of a media blitz to support her campaign, Vice President Harris appeared on “The View” television show, stressing the importance of dignity in allowing people to remain at home, and the need to support family caregivers. “There are so many people in our country who are right in the middle. They’re taking care of their kids and they’re taking care of their aging parents, and it’s just almost impossible to do it all, especially if they work.”

The plan, which draws inspiration from a [Brookings Institute paper](#), would not be cheap. The Brookings paper estimates cost at \$40 billion per year, which Harris proposes to pay for by expanding Medicare drug price negotiations, increasing drug discounts from manufacturers, implementing international tax reform and other measures would also help pay for the program.