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Growing Number of Tennessee Seniors Will Increase Demand for State Services

The Tennessee Comptroller's Office has released an updated version of its report on Senior Long-Term Care in Tennessee. The report indicates the number of Tennessee seniors age 60 and over is expected to increase by 30% from 1.6 million in 2020 to 2.1 million in 2040. The number of those age 80 and over in Tennessee is forecast to double during this time.

This population trend will likely create a significant growth in the demand for and potential cost of public long-term services and supports programs for low-income Tennessee seniors.

The Comptroller's Office of Research and Education Accountability (OREA) report focuses on the three primary publicly funded long-term services and supports programs for low-income elderly Tennesseans: TennCare CHOICES (Medicaid), Options for Community Living, and Older Americans Act programs. Together, these programs provide a continuum of services ranging from information and referral, meals, varying levels of home and community-based services, and nursing home care.



OREA's first report on this topic was released in 2017. The updated report focuses on four issues that continue to be critical in 2022:

- expanding home and community-based services for senior at risk of nursing home care, which would likely result in decreased future use of more expensive home-and community-based services and nursing homes;
- expanding community-based residential alternatives;
- addressing front line workers' pay; and
- providing additional support for family and other unpaid caregivers.

The report includes several policy options that the General Assembly may wish to consider. The report also notes that Governor Lee's proposed budget for fiscal year 2022-2023, and actions taken as a result of the influx of federal money during the pandemic, address concerns presented in the report.

To read the 2022 update, please visit the Comptroller's website at: tncot.cc/orea.

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