

## Reimagining Long-Term Supports and Services in Tennessee

The Tennessee Coalition for Better Aging, in collaboration with other stakeholders and partner organizations, is organizing a series of virtual conversations and working meetings to reimagine long-term services and supports (LTSS) in Tennessee. Many states are already innovating how they provide and finance long term care, and it's time for us to do the same, especially as more of us are living longer and as COVID-19 has highlighted the shortcomings of our current system and the need to prioritize the health and well-being of older Tennesseans.

LTSS encompass a broad range of paid and unpaid care provided in a home, community setting, or congregate care setting (i.e., assisted living, nursing home). LTSS may last for several weeks, months, or years depending on the person's needs related to aging, chronic illness, or disability.

The need for reimagining our LTSS system is underscored by the newly released 2020 Long Term Services & Supports State Scorecard which ranks Tennessee 43<sup>rd</sup> overall, 46<sup>th</sup> for choice of setting and provider and 49<sup>th</sup> for support of family caregivers. Family caregivers are the backbone of our long term care system, yet our state ranking shows that we must do more to support families caring for loved ones.

Studies have also shown that more than half of us over the age of 65 will need long-term care at some point, either at home or in an assisted living or nursing home residence. In addition, we know that while older adults are more likely to need long-term care, 45% of people with significant disabilities needing long-term care are under the age of 65. For both older Tennesseans and Tennesseans with disabilities, long-term care services are essential to survive and thrive in our communities.

The *Reimagining Long-Term Supports and Services in Tennessee* initiative will consist of 3 virtual meetings where experts, service providers, and other stakeholders will convene to look at our state's long term care systems and assess what lessons we can learn from other states. Then we will collectively draft a set of guiding principles that we all agree should be at the heart of LTSS in Tennessee. We will use those agreed upon principles to envision and develop collective policy recommendations with input from experts and ideas from innovative best practices.

We hope to spark genuine conversation about how we want to live as we grow older, and how our state can best support older Tennesseans and adults with disabilities who need long-term care, as well as family caregivers. We invite you to be part of these conversations so that together, we can create a better LTSS system for all of us who call Tennessee home.