

The President's FY 1998 Budget: The Medicare Respite Benefit

- Most families of Medicare beneficiaries with Alzheimer's disease or other irreversible dementia make enormous personal and financial sacrifices to care for their ill relatives.
- The President's budget introduces a respite benefit for families of beneficiaries with Alzheimer's disease or other irreversible dementia. Other disease which can result in irreversible dementia include Huntington's disease, Parkinsons, and multiple sclerosis, to name a few; to be eligible, the beneficiary with these types of diseases must be classified as impaired and need either help in specified activities (or instrumental activities) of daily living or constant supervision.
- This care would consist of temporary assistance with protective supervision of people whose dementias have progressed to the point of impaired memory, orientation and judgment. In addition to providing protective supervision, respite providers may also provide personal care or household maintenance activity. Respite care would be provided by home health agencies or other organizations designated by the Secretary in regulations. Respite aides would be home health aides, certain nurses, or other individuals licenced by states or recognized by the Secretary as having the skills necessary to provide such services. Services could be provided at home or in a day care setting. The benefit covers up to 32 hours of care per beneficiary per year, beginning in fiscal year 1998.
- About one and a half million Medicare beneficiaries and their families would be eligible for this benefit, according to the Department of Health and Human Services.
- The cost of this benefit is estimated to be \$2 billion between 1998 and 2002, or about \$400 million per year, according to the Department of Health and Human Services.