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## Public health won't provide services reimbursed by Medicare, Medicaid

As of Jan. 1, Clarke County Public Health will not provide skilled home-care services reimbursed by Medicare, Medicaid or private insurance.

The decision was made by Clarke County Board of Health in late October.

According to Sandy Eddy, administrator at Clarke County Public Health, there are already 10 Medicare-certified agencies with a service area that includes Clarke County. Clarke County Public Health was one of those 10 agencies.

Another reason is Unity Point Health (formerly Iowa Health System) is opening an office in Clarke County Jan. 1.

"This is a small county," Eddy said. "It's not a gap-filling service that we need to put public funds into. We need to work on other things that nobody else is really doing."

### 'Smooth transition'

Clarke County Public Health sent out a letter to its patients in early November with a list of other agencies that serve the county so they could pick a new provider.

"Per their guidelines, we need to make sure they have a smooth transition — the current clients we have," Eddy said.

A public notice regarding Clarke County Public Health ran in the Osceola Sentinel-Tribune Nov. 28.

The notice stated current Clarke County Public Health clients receiving skilled services will be given referrals to other Medicare-certified agencies serving Clarke County residents.

"The services are still being provided," Eddy said. "They're just being provided by a different entity. The services are more than available in our community. That's why we're dropping out."

### Still open

The notice stated, "Clarke County Public Health will continue to operate, focusing on the mission of preventing illness, promoting health and providing care to the population as a whole."

Clarke County Public Health will continue to provide public-health services, including immunizations, health-promotion activities, homemaker services and Parents as Teachers for children from birth to age 5.

Parents as Teachers is a service that offers parents support and tools to help their child learn as they grow. Home visits are made by parent educators.

Eddy said Clarke County Public Health will still remain an "elderly-waiver provider" because it will still offer homemaker services. Homemaker services are available for general housekeeping, laundry, meal preparation, grocery shopping and essential errands. Fees are based on a sliding-fee scale.

Eddy said Veterans Affairs (VA) pays for homemaker services, and Medicaid pays for homemaker services if people are on an elderly-waiver provider.

Eddy said she wanted to remind the public, Clarke County Public Health's office isn't closing, however, it will concentrate on having a more "public-health focus."

"There's no point in us using county funds to duplicate service for people," she said.

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