



Transitioning to New Prospects

Senior and Long-Term Care's New Digs

In the thick of a bustling legislative session, the Senior and Long-Term Care Division (SLTCD) faced an additional task: relocating their Helena office from the intersection of Last Chance Gulch and Euclid to a more compact space on Prospect Avenue (2550 Prospect Ave., Suite 500). This challenge, although marked by logistical puzzles and tight schedules, showcased the team's creativity and resilience.

"The timing was tough," said SLTCD administrator Lindsey Carter. "Managing the move alongside legislative responsibilities was a bit challenging."

The transition, completed at the end of January, required significant coordination.

"There were so many details and logistics," said Carter. Fiscal bureau chief Karen



Antonick led efforts to coordinate the move. "Karen did a lot of the heavy lifting when it came to organizing and keeping everyone updated — everything from office furniture to IT equipment," Carter added.

Antonick noted that January was a particularly challenging time for such an undertaking. She worked with the state operations project manager, Tim Dwyer, to get the job done.

"Tim did a great job of coordinating the move," said Antonick. "Our IT division was also really helpful in providing laptops to people sharing spaces and getting us all connected."

The new Prospect office is a smaller space, resulting in major changes for the team.

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DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES

Montana Caregivers at the Heart of it All

Celebrating Care Workers Recognition Month this April

April is Care Workers Recognition Month, honoring those who provide essential care to Montana's aging population and individuals with disabilities. From home care aides to family caregivers, their dedication ensures dignity and independence for many. Often unrecognized, care workers are vital to community well-being, and this month highlights their contributions.

SLTCD Community Services Bureau supports care workers through a variety of Medicaid programs and resources.

The [Big Sky Waiver Program](#) helps individuals remain in their homes and communities by providing services tailored to their needs. This program also supports care workers by offering tools and training to enhance their skills.

Additionally, the [Community First Choice Services \(CFCS\) Program](#) provides long-term care in home settings, enabling care workers to deliver person-centered services that allow elderly and disabled Montanans to maintain their independence.

The SLTCD Aging Services Bureau offers further resources to support care workers and the individuals they serve.

[Aging and Disability Resource Centers](#) provide information, referrals, and options counseling to help caregivers navigate long-term care services and supports. These centers are a valuable



April is Care Workers Recognition Month, honoring Montana's caregivers who ensure dignity and independence for others. © Sasirin Pamai/Shutterstock

resource for care workers seeking guidance or assistance.

Another key program is the [Lifespan Respite Program](#), which offers temporary relief to family caregivers by providing access to trained respite care providers. This service helps caregivers recharge while ensuring their loved ones continue to receive quality care.

As we celebrate Care Workers Recognition Month, let's take a moment to thank the caregivers in our lives and communities. Whether through a kind gesture, a note of appreciation, or simply acknowledging their hard work, small acts can make a big difference.

To all care workers: your dedication does not go unnoticed. You are the heart of Montana's care system, and we are deeply grateful for all that you do.



Lindsey Carter
SLTCD Administrator

Navigating the 69th Legislative Session

Updates and Priorities for Montana's Seniors

Greetings! As a new administrator, navigating Montana's 69th legislative session has been a steep learning curve. I am fortunate to have an experienced, dedicated, and enthusiastic leadership team and staff who support the additional work and opportunities the legislative session brings.

The SLTCD also benefits from a strong network of stakeholders, members, and providers who are ready to partner and advocate for the needs of older Montanans and individuals with disabilities.

Although the legislative session is not over, I wanted to share a couple of updates.

Montana's citizen legislators work on a condensed schedule, quickly learning about division programs to make informed budget decisions. This January, SLTCD presented to the Section B Joint Subcommittee, which ensures money is

spent wisely and supports key legislative priorities. You can find the materials from that presentation on the [DPHHS 2025 Legislative Session Information webpage](#).

Montana's population continues to age. By 2030, projections indicate our state will have one senior for every three working-age individuals, positioning Montana as one of the nation's most senior-dense regions. Attention and effort are increasingly directed toward issues affecting older Montanans.

Although many bills have been introduced this session, I will highlight a few key themes.

Addressing Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation

Several bills aim to combat abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older adults

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([HB 532](#), [SB 296](#), [HB 743](#)). These proposals seek to strengthen penalties against perpetrators and ensure county attorneys and the Department of Justice receive information about allegations of exploitation involving older adults and individuals with disabilities.

Guardianship and Conservatorship

Bills impacting guardianship and conservatorship in Montana have emerged as another key theme, including [HJ 26](#), which proposes a study on guardianship issues.

Improving Access to Services

Several bills aim to enhance services for older Montanans. [SB 72](#) proposes Medicaid presumptive eligibility, ensuring timely access to care during application

processing. Another bill, [SB 524](#), directs the Department to establish payment methods for category D assisted living facilities serving individuals with complex behavioral needs. [HB 341](#) seeks additional funding for brain injury services through an opt-out (rather than opt-in) fee through motor vehicle licensing.

This is just a snapshot of the legislation affecting the populations SLTCD serves. Look for our next issue, where we will provide a full overview of the legislation that becomes law by the end of the session.

Once again, thank you to our dedicated network of advocates, stakeholders, and providers. The outlook for SLTCD is promising as the legislative session nears its end.

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Previously, most staff members had private offices, but the new setup features shared cubicles. Carter acknowledged the challenges of shared space.

"Change is hard," she said. "But people have adjusted really well and are being very creative with how to use the space."

Despite sacrifices, the move brought unexpected benefits. In the old building, staff were spread out, often going an entire day without seeing each other. The new space fosters more interaction and collaboration.

"One of the benefits is we see each other more regularly," said Carter.

The new location also houses other state agencies, including DPHHS programs such as the Office of Inspector General (OIG), Information Technology (IT), and Disability Determination Services. According to Carter, this proximity provides opportunities for greater connection and shared resources.

The SLTCD team has demonstrated resilience and adaptability throughout the transition. "This move has shown how creative and collaborative our team can be," said Carter.

Scammers in 2025

Protecting Seniors from Evolving Threats

As our world grows more interconnected, fraud risks have become increasingly sophisticated. Older adults are targeted for their financial stability and trustworthiness, making awareness crucial. Here are some scams emerging in 2025 and strategies to combat them.

Emerging Scams

DEEPFAKE IMPERSONATIONS:

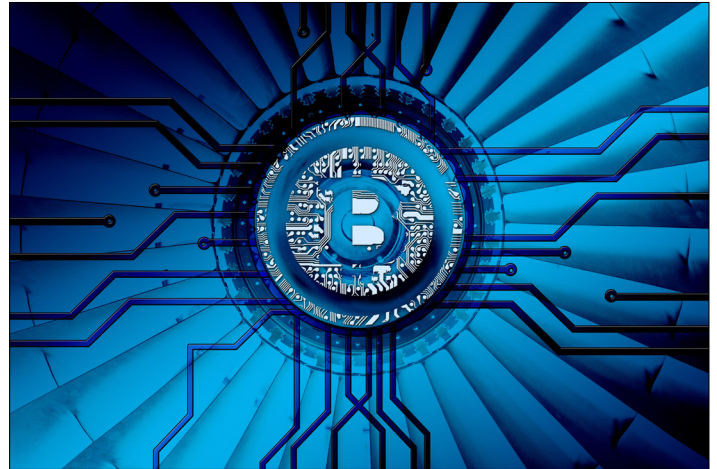
Scammers use advanced fake audio or video imitating loved ones, urging victims into quick financial actions.

AI-DRIVEN PHISHING: Artificial intelligence creates highly personalized phishing attempts using details from public profiles, making them harder to spot.

CRYPTOCURRENCY FRAUD: Scammers offer fake investment opportunities with promises of guaranteed returns via convincing platforms.

SUBSCRIPTION SCAMS: Many elders unknowingly fall into the trap of hidden subscriptions, where fraudsters sneak recurring charges into what seems like a one-time service.

ENERGY BILL SCAMS: Fraudsters claim to represent utility companies, demanding immediate payments for fabricated “unpaid balances.”



Scammers offer fake cryptocurrency investment opportunities with promises of guaranteed returns via convincing platforms. © Geralt/Pixabay

Proactive Protection Strategies

LEVERAGE TRUSTED TECHNOLOGY:

Install fraud detection tools and keep devices updated to prevent exploitation.

AUTHENTICATE BEYOND WORDS: Use personal codes or questions with family members to verify identity, avoiding impersonation schemes.

PAUSE BEFORE ACTION: Take time to think when encountering unexpected financial requests. Speak with a trusted advisor before making any decisions.

EMBRACE COMMUNITY AWARENESS: Join senior-focused workshops or discussions to stay informed about the latest scam tactics.

By staying informed and proactive, we can collectively strengthen our defenses against evolving fraud tactics.

Area VI Agency on Aging Improving Lives Through Outreach

How a \$10,000 Grant Made a Difference



From health packets to rides, a \$10K grant has boosted outreach for older adults in Montana, ensuring better access to services. Photo courtesy Area VI Agency on Aging

The Western Montana Area VI Agency on Aging has made strides in improving public health awareness for older adults and individuals with disabilities, thanks to a \$10,000 Workforce grant. This funding enabled the hiring of a part-time emergency outreach support specialist to identify new clients and distribute tailored informational packets to the community.

The packets addressed critical health topics, such as Alzheimer's, vaccines, diabetes, smoking cessation, and heart

health. Materials were developed in partnership with organizations like the American Heart Association, the National Institutes of Health, the Alzheimer's Association, and Tribal Health's Diabetes Prevention and Identification program. The outreach specialist collaborated with community partners, including the Salish and Kootenai Tribal Elders Program and the Lake County Resource Roundtable, to enhance packet distribution and arrange referrals for transportation, helping clients access services.

Key Accomplishments

The project has delivered strong results, with staff developing and distributing health resource packets in several creative ways:

- The agency's transit coordinator and drivers shared packets with riders.
- SHIP cSounselors handed out packets during client appointments and visits to senior centers, adding small giveaways to boost engagement.
- The outreach support specialist distributed packets to local EMS workers, APS partners, and clinics. She also provided materials during client outreach appointments.
- At the Women for Wellness event on May 23, 2024, at Salish and Kootenai College, the agency engaged with more than 500 attendees. The team distributed 400 packets at this event.
- Staff mailed or emailed information to clients or their family members who contacted the agency.

Enhanced Access to Services

The initiative not only raised awareness about public health services, but also directly improved access.

A total of 1,180 packets were distributed during the project period, and the agency provided 24 rides to medical appointments and wellness events. These efforts empowered elders to participate in preventive health programs and make better use of available resources.

Looking ahead, the Western Montana Area VI Agency on Aging plans to continue building on the success of this project. By leveraging partnerships and exploring additional funding opportunities, the agency aims to sustain and expand its outreach efforts, ensuring older adults and individuals with disabilities remain informed and supported.



NEED HELP WITH SENIOR SERVICES?

Area Agencies on Aging offer guidance on health-care, Medicaid, Medicare, nutrition, and other essential services for elder adults. Contact your local agency for personalized support and resources.

Area I - Glendive Area
(406) 377-3564

Area II - Roundup Area
(406) 323-1320

Area III - Conrad Area
(406) 271-7553

Area IV - Helena Area
(406) 447-1680

Area V - Butte Area
(406) 782-5555

Area VI - Polson Area
(406) 883-7284

Area VII - Missoula Area
(406) 728-7682

Area VIII - Great Falls Area
(406) 454-6990

Area IV - Kalispell Area
(406) 758-5730

Spotlight on Advocacy

Susan Bivin's Fight Against Financial Exploitation

Susan Bivins, a retired registered nurse, embraced her retirement years with excitement. After 45 years of dedicated service in Northern California, she relocated to Montana in 2015 to be closer to her family, savoring her new role as a grandmother and immersing herself in fulfilling hobbies like quilting and travel. Life seemed idyllic—until a devastating scam upended her world.

It began innocuously in May of 2022, when Susan noticed unauthorized

Amazon purchases. Despite promptly securing her account and receiving a refund, she received a call weeks later from someone claiming to be from Amazon. This call marked the start of an elaborate scheme that spanned weeks. The scammer, posing as a federal agent, manipulated Susan through fear and



Susan Bivins, now an advocate for fraud prevention, has turned personal tragedy into a mission to protect others from financial exploitation. Photo courtesy Susan Bivins

false assurances, eventually coercing her into transferring over \$240,000 — her entire savings and retirement funds — under the pretense of protecting her finances.

The emotional toll was immense. Susan endured weeks of isolation, constant surveillance, and the shame of keeping

the ordeal secret. “I was terrified and embarrassed,” she admits. The scammer’s persistent instructions to “not tell anyone” amplified her sense of vulnerability. However, after the scam came to light, Susan’s family and friends rallied around her with unwavering support.

With determination, Susan turned anguish into action. She reported the crime to local and federal authorities, though investigations yielded limited progress. Recognizing the need for awareness, Susan bravely shared her story through local and national media, becoming an advocate for fraud prevention. Her efforts have extended to public speaking engagements, where she emphasizes important lessons:

- Amazon and other companies will not call you directly.
- If someone instructs you to “not tell anyone,” consider it a major red flag.
- Regularly monitor your credit reports and consider placing fraud alerts or security freezes on your accounts.

Susan also highlights practical steps

for safeguarding against financial exploitation. Contacting the three major credit bureaus — Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion — to activate “fraud alerts” and “security freezes” can prevent unauthorized accounts from being opened in your name. These services must be renewed annually.

- **Experian:** [experian.com](https://www.experian.com)
800-397-3742
- **Equifax:** [equifax.com](https://www.equifax.com)
800-525-6285
- **TransUnion:** [transunion.com](https://www.transunion.com)
800-680-7289

If you suspect financial exploitation, contact Adult Protective Services (APS) at 844-277-9300.

Susan’s courage in sharing her story serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of vigilance and community support. Through her advocacy, she hopes to empower others to recognize the warning signs and prevent similar tragedies.

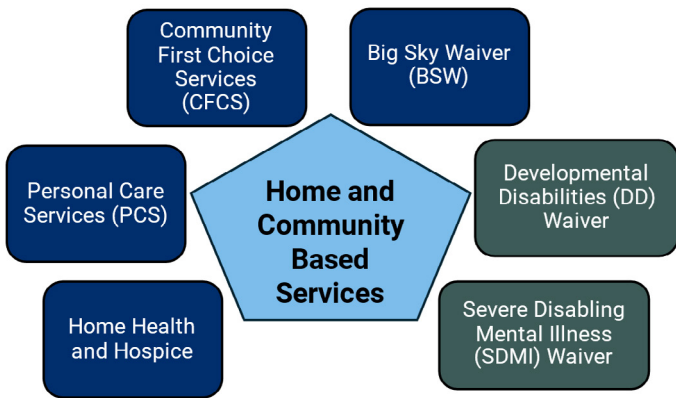
WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SUSPECT ABUSE OF A VULNERABLE ADULT?

APS specialists help protect vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. They help end abuse by matching the needs of the person with community partners in their area, such as mental health professionals, public health officials, law enforcement, the courts, the aging network, and other community groups.

- If you suspect harm is occurring right now, call 911
- If the concern is not life-threatening, you can call 1-844-277-9300 or contact APS online: dphhs.mt.gov/sltc/aps
- If you would like more info about APS, contact Senior and Long Term Care to get a brochure: 1-406-444-4077

Montana's Continuum of Care Part Two

Home and Community-Based Services



You may recall from Part One of this series, found in the Winter issue, we provided a broad overview of SLTCD continuum of care. This issue, we focus on **Home and Community-Based Services** (HCBS) — essential programs that help Montanans stay in their homes and communities, rather than needing to move to a facility.

HCBS helps individuals remain in familiar surroundings close to family and friends by providing tailored assistance with daily living. The Community Services Bureau (CSB) manages HCBS, enabling eligible members at risk of institutional care to stay in their homes and communities.

Personal Care Services

Think of this as getting a helping hand at home. These services can assist with everyday tasks like bathing, dressing, preparing meals, grocery shopping, and light housekeeping. They can also include

specialized support such as medication assistance, ambulation and exercising, and medical escort.

Community First Choice Services

This program expands on personal care, adding support for community integration. It's designed for individuals who require a level of care similar to what's provided in a nursing facility. Another great benefit is the program receives extra federal funding, allowing for more comprehensive support.

Home Health Services

These services bring skilled medical care right to your doorstep. Certified agencies provide skilled nursing care, as well as physical, occupational, and speech therapy in the comfort of your own home.

Hospice Care

For those facing a terminal illness, hospice care provides comfort and support. It focuses on palliative care, managing pain and symptoms, and also extends support to families during and after their loved one's illness.

Big Sky Waiver

This program is designed with flexibility in mind, adapting to the specific needs of older adults and/or individuals with

physical disabilities. It offers a wide array of services, including homemaker assistance, extended personal care, adult day care, respite care (giving family caregivers a break), habilitation, transportation, home modifications, nursing services, and adult residential care. Because funding is limited, there may be a waiting list for this program.

Montana's Money Follows the Person

This federally funded program helps individuals transition from facility-based care (like a nursing home) back into the community. It connects them with the HCBS they need to live successfully at home.

Support for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities or Mental Illness

The Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Division (BHDD) also plays an important role, offering specialized support through two key waivers:

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (DD) WAIVER (also known as the 0208 or Comprehensive Waiver):

This waiver funds vital support services for Montanans with intellectual and developmental disabilities, empowering them to live in their homes and communities.

SEVERE AND DISABLING MENTAL ILLNESS (SDMI) WAIVER: This waiver provides long-term support for individuals with severe and disabling mental illness, including supportive and independent

living arrangements, habilitation, and other crucial services within a community setting.

HCBS are a cornerstone of our continuum of care in Montana, helping our aging population and individuals with disabilities live full and meaningful lives in their communities. They offer an alternative to institutional care, promoting independence, dignity, and well-being.






For more information on HCSB, visit:

dphhs.mt.gov/hcbs

In the next issue, we'll explore the CSB grant programs in part three of our series on the SLTCD continuum of care.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MONTANA MEDICAID

HOME AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES

-  You have to be eligible for Medicaid to receive HCBS.
-  Each HCBS program has different eligibility rules.
-  Some of the programs may not be able to provide services right away, so you may be placed on a waitlist.
-  Not all HCBS programs offer the same services.
-  If eligible for a HCBS program, your plan of care will be based around your needs and choices.