



DEPARTMENT OF
**PUBLIC HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES**

Governor's Council on Aging

April 23, 2024, Meeting Minutes

SLTC – 1100 North Last Chance Gulch

In Attendance: Alex Ward, Audrey Finlayson, Bob Meyers, Susan Lubke, Lori Brengle, Jerry Thex, Jr., Roberta Big Back, Barb Smith, Trevor Tangen, Tessa Bailly, and Kerrie Reidelbach

Introductions: As part of the introduction, Bob Meyers acknowledged the emails some of the council members received regarding accusations against the Great Falls Senior Center. He just wanted to apologize to everyone as this person has not been professional in his communications and has lacked understanding around our limited funding.

Conference Update: Tessa gave an update on the conference planning. The conference planning committee has met twice via Zoom with local participation out of Billings and the Area II Agency on Aging. AARP is once again sponsoring a keynote speaker, Sarah Lenz Lock, Senior Vice President for Policy and Brain Health, AARP and Executive Director for Global Council on Brain Health, and Lisa Sheppard reached out regarding US Aging doing a presentation as well as an Area Agency on Aging panel. Other speaker topics include Medicaid 101 and 102, Intentional and Unintentional Neglect and Abuse, Menu Planning in a Time of Rising Costs, Adaptive Technology, BOLD Grant and Alzheimer's Dementia Programs, Estate Planning, Social Security Administration, and Preventing Caregiver Burnout. There will also be panels discussing the creativeness and challenges for Senior Centers and AAAs. The website is now up and ready for registrations and sponsorships/vendors. This was a huge overhaul and was well done by Nann Parrott and Tessa. The website address was changed to conferenceonaging.mt.gov for a cleaner look to promote the conference. Tessa is also working on a flyer she will share (see attached). Please feel free to share this link and the flyer with those who may be interested. Tessa shared the draft agenda with the group.

Announcement: Barb announced her retirement on June 28, 2024. She will be turning over leadership on May 13, 2024, to Trevor Tangen, currently the APS Bureau Chief, while she finishes up her last six weeks. Trevor will remain in this role during the hiring process with plans to apply for the position.

HB 922: Barb gave a brief background on the Olmstead Act and reported that on April 11, 2024, we hosted a kick-off meeting for the work of updating the state plan. The morning session was for state staff to learn and understand how to implement this within their programs, and the afternoon was open to providers and the general public. Becky Bird participated, representing the Governor's Council on Aging. The state is contracting with the Rural Institute to take the lead in working with stakeholders and writing the plan. Once the community focus groups are scheduled throughout the state, we will let you all know, since one may be hosted in or close to your community.

HB 264 Veterans Study: The survey has been open since January 8, 2024, and has been extended to July 15, 2024. We are two-thirds of the way to meeting our goal of 5,000 completed surveys. We also want to get the word out about upcoming focus groups. People can find a link to register for an online focus group on the survey webpage: veteransurvey.mt.gov. We would like to see more participation in Flathead, Missoula, Gallatin, Silver-Bow, and Yellowstone counties. We are aiming to have the percentage of response in each county to match the distribution of veterans living in each county across the state. (For example, if a county were to have 3% of the total veteran population, then we would like to have 3% of the survey respondents coming from that county.)

HJ 28: Representative Yakawich is working on a proposal focusing on the No Wrong Door model/single point of entry for people to get connected with needed services, caregiver support, and presumptive eligibility for Medicaid services.

Executive Planning Process (EPP) for the Upcoming Legislative Session: Two bills have been submitted, regarding financial eligibility for HCBS, and APS is adding self-neglect in the MCA language. Trevor noted that, typically, when self-abuse occurs, it is very likely other types of abuse are happening as well.

Other asks for the legislature:

- APS is asking to have five modified Social Work positions become permanent FTEs, which are currently funded by a grant ending September 30, 2024.
- APS currently has six intake staff, and three of them are modified positions under the same grant funding as mentioned above. Looking at permanent FTEs for the three positions.
- CSB is in need of three additional FTEs.
- Aging Services are in need of extra food funding due to rising costs.
- Aging Services needs an FTE to implement the new regulations for the Older Americans Act and lead the program and fiscal monitoring requirements.

Mini Grants:

- 1) Mission Valley Senior Center – Kitchen tools and silverware, \$500 grant award. It was reported they received a donation of silverware and still need to order the other needs on their list.
- 2) Sun River Valley Community Center – New forced-air gas furnace installed throughout the facility, with ducting through the attic and vents through the ceiling, \$1000 grant award. Project completed.
- 3) Culbertson Senior Citizens – Anti-fatigue mats, \$400 grant award. The mats were ordered and arrived. She will send more information and photos later this week.
- 4) Nashua School District – Bingo night supplies, \$1000 grant award. Their fundraising event was scheduled for April 28, 2024, and they will send a write-up with pictures.

Area X Relinquishment: The public hearing was held in Conrad on March 21, 2024. The public comment period ended April 10, 2024, and comments are housed on the SLTC website's Hearings page at dphhs.mt.gov/sltc/hearings.

We are working on the amendment phase for the State Plan on Aging. A draft was submitted on May 4, 2024, to the ACL Regional Administrator, along with a request for guidance on submission style. We are awaiting the final grant awards in order to complete the amendment.

Interstate Funding Formula: The interstate funding formula has been reworked since the public hearing, which caused us to cut back our legal contracts since we are required to support the legal program out of our administrative funds. Increasing the allowable amount to \$750,000 will provide more nutrition funds to the AAAs.

Nutrition Flexibilities: The OAA now allows states to complement the congregate meals program through an approved state plan amendment and area plan amendments. Updates to policy and procedures must be in place prior to participation.

The Area Agencies that choose to allow flexibility within their congregate programs shall identify in their area plan amendment the means by which the flexibility will occur. Their options are as follows:

- During disaster or emergency situations affecting the provision of nutrition services;
- To older individuals who have an occasional need for such meal; and/or
- To older individuals who have a regular need for such meal, based on an individualized assessment, when targeting services to those in greatest economic need and greatest social need.

Need to work with AAAs on these flexibilities.

GoGo Project:

GoGo Grandparents – Workforce Investment Public Health Grant Funds

Overview:

- Many Montana residents lack easy access to safe and convenient transportation services. For older adults, this can mean social isolation and inadequate access to health resources.
- This grant funding provides an opportunity to boost transportation options in specific geographic areas in Montana. The goal would be to increase the supply of transportation services available to older adults in a measurable way. We could also utilize this service for grocery and pharmacy delivery.
- The program would be based on similar efforts undertaken by New York State and GoGo Grandparent, a national on-demand transportation provider focused on older adults. For example, two years ago, New York's Aging Director launched a successful effort to substantially boost the supply of vetted drivers and transportation offerings in three

rural counties. This is now being followed with an initiative providing up to four free rides per year per older adult. All rides can be ordered in real time by talking to an actual person via any type of phone. To meet the grant requirements, the person on the line would send public health information via email.

- GoGo Grandparent is currently providing rides in areas such as Helena, Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, Kalispell, Laurel, and Missoula, leveraging specially screened and vetted drivers.

Respite Food Project:

This is a new project funded through the Lifespan Respite Grant. We are partnering with MSU Extension on this effort to provide food/nutrition to caregivers as a form of respite. The pilot project attempts to determine if food can be utilized as a form of respite by providing extra time through the elimination of food purchase and/or food prep. MSU will include researching the program's effectiveness and developing a process to administer it successfully. They are seeking 200 caregivers to participate in receiving food and answering a few questions on the quality of the food and if they received a break from a daily activity that helped to improve their well-being.

New OAA Regulations:

Hot topics:

- Conflicts of interest
- Contracts and commercial relationships: State requirement of reviewing and pre-approving all AAA Non-OAA and OAA Contracts (develop a streamlined process)

Advancing States Conference next week in Nashville, TN. Both Tessa and Kerrie will be attending.

Advancing States is leading workgroups and webinars on several topics we will need to address in our policy and procedures as well as contracts.

Compliance of the new regs is due by October 1, 2025; states are looking at corrective action plans to allow more time, which the ACL encourages. Montana plans to request an additional two years to meet the new compliance requirements.

Questions:

Jerry asked about Medicaid residents' personal resources creeping up and then losing waiver slots because of it. Barb is going to do some research on this. Jerry gave her a couple of administrators whom she could contact (Mike White and Jason George).

Al asked about losing Area X and if that would open the door for Yellowstone County to become their own AAA. The answer is no, as they are a service provider and are already covered under Area II.

55th Governor's Conference on Aging

Highlights

- Education by National, State, & Local Experts
- Resources for Caregivers
- Aging Network Vendors
- Centenarian Celebration



Oct
1-3, 2024

Billings Hotel &
Convention Center

Register by scanning the
QR code or visiting the website



<https://conferenceonaging.mt.gov>