

**AREA AGENCY ON AGING
LUZERNE & WYOMING COUNTIES
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
(Microsoft Teams Meeting)
February 18, 2021**

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Present – Dr. Liza Behrens, Dr. Steve Broskoske, Joanne Corey, Noah Davis, Laura Allport Dickson, Charlotte Kitler, William Lewis, Phyllis Mundy, Robert Nealon, Henry Pennoni, William Runner, James Sernak, Nancy Thaler, Dominick Trombetta, Don Warren, David Yonki, Joseph Yozviak

Absent

Patricia Besermin, Angel Mathis, Deborah Walsh

Staff Attendance

Sandy Acornley, John Alunni, Jim Cease, Brian McAdarra, Mary Roselle, Sheila Rothenbecker

CALL TO ORDER – Noah Davis, Chair

Noah Davis, Chair, called the AAA Advisory Board Meeting to order at 12:02 p.m. on Thursday, February 18, 2021 by joining into the Microsoft Teams Meeting.

ROLL CALL – Sheila Rothenbecker

Sheila Rothenbecker, Administrative Assistant to Mary Roselle, conducted roll call of the AAA Advisory Board members who had joined the Teams Meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Noah Davis asked for approval of the December 17, 2020 meeting minutes. All members were in favor and the minutes were approved.

WELCOME NANCY THALER – New Wyoming County AAA Advisory Board Member

Noah Davis welcomed new AAA Advisory Board member Nancy Thaler and asked her to say a few words. Nancy told the board members she is a native of Wyoming County and is returning after living away for a few years. Nancy graduated from Misericordia and she has a graduate degree from Villanova University. Her career background is almost exclusively in developmental disabilities and she was part of the de-institutionalization and development of a community system. Her experience has been as a developmental disabilities provider in the private sector for 16 years. Nancy then worked in the state government for 10 years as the Deputy Secretary for the office, which was known at the time, as Mental Retardation. She was an appointee under Governors Casey and Ridge. Next Nancy worked for the Federal Government in the Medicaid Waiver Program. Then Nancy was the Executive Director of Developmental Disability Directors for 8 years and on her way to retirement, she was contacted by Governor Wolf's office and asked to return as the State Deputy Secretary, serving in that position for 4 years. Nancy retired from that job and still does work for the Commonwealth as a retiree. Working for the Secretary of Human Services, she helps to develop community services for children who are medically complex. Nancy also works for the Department of Justice on litigation relating to the ADA.

WELCOME BRIAN MCADARRA – AAA Protective Services Unit Supervisor

Mary Roselle introduced Brian McAdarra who is the AAA Protective Services Unit Supervisor. She told the board members Brian has been the Protective Services Supervisor for close to 10 years and does an outstanding job. Brian thanked Mary and everyone for the opportunity to share information about the Protective Services program. He said he is always happy to help educate people in any setting and through community outreach.

Brian gave an overview of Protective Services and discussed two programs in the state of Pennsylvania. The first program is Adult Protective Services called Act 70 of 2010. That act includes protective services for individuals between the ages of 18 and 59 years old who are legally disabled and require advocacy to investigate abuse towards them. The program was funded in 2013 through the Department of Human Services and the Department of Aging. They now serve as the administrative oversight entity for APS Act 70. Those investigations are covered in the state of Pennsylvania by a private company called Liberty Health Care. However, AAA's in the Commonwealth have a memorandum of understanding with Liberty Health Care and the Department of Human Services and local agencies take the calls from reporters of the community or facility settings. At the time of intake, important and pertinent information is gathered and a report of need is sent to Liberty Health Care. After receiving the report, Liberty Health Care will categorize and decide what investigative activities should occur.

Brian explained the second program falls under the Older Adult Protective Service Act (OPSA) created in 1987 to insure investigation, protection and advocacy for older Pennsylvanians over the age of sixty who were very vulnerable and at risk because of abuse, neglect, exploitation or

abandonment. Anyone suspecting elder abuse can call and make a report to the AAA office and the same process as the under 60 report of needs Intake information will be followed. The OPSA criteria states the older adult must be over 60, in Pennsylvania at the time of the report (does not have to be a resident), unable to access goods or services to address risks to their person or property, lack a responsible caregiver to access goods and services on their behalf and at imminent risk during the time of incident. Even if reports come days or months later, what happened at the actual time of incident is the consideration. There are 2 types of reporters; voluntary are those individuals in the community who have a concern or suspicion about an older adult (mail carrier, hair stylist, doctor, law enforcement, etc.) and the mandatory reporters who are employees of Long Term Facilities, Personal Care Homes, Dom Care, Adult Day Care, Service Coordinators of the Waiver Program and are required to immediately file an oral report with AAA if abuse is suspected. According to PA Statute, a written report must follow the oral report within 48 hours. When a report is received, all potential forms of abuse are considered such as physical, emotional, verbal, financial, sexual, abandonment, self-neglect, caregiver neglect. The District Attorney, local law enforcement and the Coroner will be notified of suspicious or wrongful death reports. Cases are categorized by Emergency (immediate face to face with older adult within 24 hours), Priority (face to face with older adult within 24 hours), Non Priority (initiated within 72 hours) and No Need (Criteria was not met for investigation). If the claim is substantiated, the older adult has capacity and is able to make decisions, the PS team members work with the older adult to develop a service plan and address, reduce or eliminate the risk. According to regulations, the older adult must be part of the care plan process. Older adults cannot refuse an investigation under law, however, they may refuse any offered interventions. In dealing with an older adult who lacks physical or mental capacity or a responsible care giver, involuntary orders may be needed from the court. In situations where the alleged perpetrator resides with the reported individual and becomes a barrier to interviewing the older adult, an access to person court order may be used. If the alleged perpetrator continues to be a barrier, an enjoining interference court order may be used. Incapacitated older adults with alleged perpetrators who are a legal guardian or power of attorney may require an emergency court order for temporary guardianship and a permanency hearing within seventy-two hours. AAA subcontracts the guardianship and power of attorney to Family Services of Northeastern Pennsylvania. Legal guardians are held accountable for decisions and purchases for the older adult.

Brian concluded by telling the board members that although the pandemic brought challenges, the AAA Protective Service Unit continued to investigate report of need allegations as needed 24 hours a day and seven days a week, following the PA Department of Aging protocol. Calls are taken by Luzerne and Wyoming County Area Agency on Aging at 570-822-1158 and the Elder Abuse toll free hotline at 1-800-490-8505. The board members expressed their appreciation to Brian for joining the meeting and sharing such valuable and important information.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT – Mary Roselle

COVID-19 Vaccinations

The AAA team members have been contacting the older adults from the Active Adult Centers and those on the Care Management caseloads to find out if they are in need of a COVID-19 Vaccination. Those that are interested in receiving a vaccination are asked pre-qualifying questions and their information is forwarded to Magellan Health Care to schedule the vaccination. The PA Department of Aging has contracted with Magellan to help facilitate the vaccination process for older adults across the Commonwealth. A County Council member has organized individuals who have volunteered to transport older adults to a site, when the vaccination becomes available. Mary has been joining weekly meeting with the other area AAA's and the PA Department of Aging Secretary Robert Torres, about vaccination updates. AAA Protective Services workers who agreed have been vaccinated. Vaccinating the PS workers protects both our team member and the older adult.

Active Adult Centers

The Active Adult Centers had been closed in November due to COVID-19 cases rising. Some of the center workers were furloughed, however, one manager was kept at each site. The furloughs expire on February 25th and it was decided to bring the workers back then to help prepare the sites for re-opening on March 8th. Center members will once again have the option of either coming into the center for meals following regulations and social distancing with a limited amount of older adults, or the members who don't feel quite comfortable going into the centers at this point can continue to pick up their meals every Monday at the centers as they have been.

Zoom Exercise Classes

Zoom exercise classes will continue to be offered and more classes are being added. Many seniors have been participating and are very happy to stay active. The seniors have embraced the technology and look forward to the weekly exercise classes. In the future when times are safer and classes are offered again at the centers, virtual classes will continue for those who choose and as an option for those receiving in-home services. Arthritis Classes and a Matter of Balance classes can be beneficial to in-home seniors especially.

Rotating Staff

The agency Care Management Staff continues to rotate on a three day, two-day schedule and team members come into the office every other day. The schedule was created to maintain social distancing since Care Managers share offices and it has worked out nicely.

Advertising Campaign

The advertising campaign has been working very well and we have received great feedback and comments from other AAA's and Advisory Board members. The idea was to reach older adults who may be in need of services especially during these difficult and challenging times. Mary is glad to report additional consumers have been contacting the agency for meals and personal care.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES REPORT – Mary Roselle

Foster Grandparent Program Budget

The Budget for the Foster Grandparent Program for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 is due to Americorp Seniors (formerly the Corporation for National and Community Services) in March. Robin Muth is working with the Director of the Program, Mary Lou Zerfoss, to prepare the budget. Americorp Seniors is continuing to pay the stipend to the Foster Grandparents even though they cannot serve in the schools. At this point they have committed to paying the stipends through March and the hope is that they will extend it to May to finish the school year. There are a few volunteers serving in Back Mountain schools. Many volunteers are participating in Pen Pal Programs with various organizations to reach out to children and establish a fostering relationship. Unfortunately, with the current school situation, there are not enough volunteer avenues for all of the participants. Mary Lou continues to provide bi-weekly in-service meetings to keep the participants engaged.

Mature Workers Program

Most of the participants of the Mature Worker Program are training at home because their training sites are closed or the participant and/or training site does not feel comfortable with in-person training. Denise Stalica, Director of the Mature Worker Program, provides training materials to the participants on a regular basis as well as organizing periodic virtual trainings through Skill Path and Penn State.

Agency Ad Campaign

AAA has contracted with Rooster Creative marketing to launch a massive campaign for all services including in-home services, family caregiver, protective services, the active adult centers, the health and wellness programs, the foster grandparent program and the mature worker program. Although we do advertise our programs periodically throughout the year, we are increasing the intensity and frequency of the advertisement, so that the senior population knows AAA is here to help them through this Pandemic.

Provider Contracts

The current contract with all providers expires on June 30, 2021. AAA will be putting all of the services out for bid in March for a four-year contract beginning July 1, 2021 and running through June 30, 2025. All bidders will be asked to provide rates for four 12 month periods to correspond with AAA fiscal years. The RFP process will begin Monday, March 8th and run through Friday, March 26th. AAA will host a pre-bidders conference via TEAMS on March 18th for any provider that has questions or needs more information. The bids will be reviewed, proposed contracts presented to the Ways and Means committee the week of April 5th and then proposed contracts will be presented at the next advisory council meeting on April 15th.

Vacant Positions:

10 Full-time positions:

- Accountant 1 – posted twice with no viable candidates – reposting
- Aging Care Manager 3 – posted several times with no viable candidates – reposting
- County Fiscal Officer 3 – posted twice with no viable candidates – current posting expired 2/15/21 and waiting for civil service to inform about candidates to interview
- Program Analyst 2 – posted several times with no viable candidates – current posting expired 2/15/21, waiting for civil service to inform about any candidates to interview
- Aging Care Manager 2 – one position which is on hold
- Senior Center Operator 1 (Pittston Active Adult Center) – requested to be posted
- Clerk Typist 2 – two open positions – one was posted and a candidate will be interviewed and we are waiting for civil service to post the second one
- Aging Care Manager 2 – two open positions, one will be filled on 2/26/21, the second may be filled by an internal candidate which will leave us with a vacant position as an Aging Care Manager 2

1 Part-Time Position:

- Aging Case Aide 2 – Health and Wellness program – candidate was interviewed.

2 Alternates:

- Food Service Worker (Wyoming County)
- Senior Center Manager (Mountain Top)

SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT – Mary Roselle

Intake/Assessment

The Intake Unit has been very busy fielding phone calls from seniors who are interested in receiving a vaccine. There is an extensive list of interested older adults who do not have access to technology and are therefore, not able to register at the local hospital or pharmacy sites that require email registration.

The Assessors have continued to perform assessments by phone and have taken advantage of several LMS trainings offered by the Pa Department of Aging. Some Care Managers in our Assessment unit perform Functional Eligibility Determinations for Aging Well of Pennsylvania. On a recent call, the Compliance Director for Aging Well shared that all units in her region were above 85% for accuracy in November and December, needing no compliance plan to address issues. Our AAA does internal reviews which result in greater accuracy of assessments.

Care Management

Cindy Sutton has been hired as Supervisor 1 in the Family Caregiver Unit, where she had been working as a Care Manager. Maria Scotto DiMarco is a new Care Manager in that unit and she started with the agency on January 8th. Cindy's promotion vacated another position, which the agency hopes to fill internally. Cindy and Mary Schell attended the PA Family Caregiver Quarterly Meeting on January 20th and the Ready Seniors Virtual Workshop on January 27th, which FEMA coordinated to help seniors prepare for disasters.

The Care Management Unit has been reaching out to their consumers via phone to help determine COVID Vaccine interest.

Protective Services

The Protective Services Unit continues to be very busy investigating abuse and neglect allegations targeting seniors. The unit currently has one open position, which will be reposted this month.

The Unit Supervisor and Investigators participated in a monthly webinar on February 2, 2020, which focused on Domestic Violence and Seniors. They will also be participating in monthly 'Best Practice' webinars. The next one will be held on February 25th.

On January 27th, Brian McAdarra PS Supervisor, gave a presentation regarding Protective Services for the PA Link to Aging Disability Network Meeting.

On February 1st, the newly updated ISA (investigation summary assessment form) was released – many of the changes to the form were adding questions distinguishing Adult Protective Service Needs from Older Adult Protective Services, more specific questions regarding Financial Exploitation cases and clarification/re-wording on other questions.

Legislative and Advocacy Report

A Joint Task Force has been created with the legislature to improve vaccination distribution and administration. To further assist, Representative Tim O'Neal has sponsored a bill (HB 326) to have the National Guard assist in getting shots to those who need them. The bill was approved unanimously in the house and is awaiting consideration in the Senate.

In Washington, Senator Robert Casey has been named as the Chairman of the Special Committee on Aging. The committee has a public hearing scheduled on February 25th regarding Seniors and COVID-19 Vaccine accessibility.

ACTIVE ADULT CENTER REPORT - Sandy Acornley

Active Adult Centers Re-Opening

Sandy and the staff of the AAA Active Adult Centers are excited about the re-opening in March. The seniors are happy to have the opportunity to return to the centers.

Exercise Classes

Currently AAA is hosting 23 exercise classes for older adults via Zoom. There are also 4 aquatic classes being offered at the Pittston YMCA and Wilkes-Barre YMCA. The classes have been very well attended virtually and will continue for seniors. In January, staff master trainers attended a virtual conference for the exercise program A Matter of Balance. Now AAA will begin to offer those classes virtually with the trained staff.

COVID- 19 Vaccination Calls

Active Adult staff is assisting in calling older adults in the community about their interest in receiving the COVID-19 vaccination. The callers were impressed with the amount of seniors who have already been scheduled or who had received the vaccination.

Wilkes University Pharmacy Program

AAA has partnered once again with Wilkes University Pharmacy Program in conjunction with Cedar Crest College dietetic interns to offer Wellness Wednesdays to senior center members. The members may call in or Zoom every Wednesday at 11:00 a.m. to participate. Health issues and nutrition topics will be discussed through the end of June.

Active Adult Center Grants

Bobbie Shendock (AAA Nutrition Program Director) and Sandy have visited each active adult center and are working with the center directors to come up with ideas for using Grant money received. It will take several months to go through all the requests and information gathered. However, the center members will be glad to see new items such as a pool table, shuffle board, new furniture, a juke box and several other types of items they can enjoy.

North Eastern PA Arts for Life

Sandy has been in touch with the director and assistant director of NEPA Arts for Life, who will partner with AAA to bring classes to the active adult centers. Demonstrations and classes will be offered at no cost when the centers are open and safe again. NEPA Arts for Life knows that arts have an effect of creativity and cognitive stimulation on older adults. Music, poetry, painting and dance will be taught by professional artists who donate their time. All those involved with the program have been vetted by the Governor's office. One of the teachers had appeared on Broadway and the senior participants will be offered free tickets to shows at the Cultural Center in Lackawanna County.

State Street Office


Rhonda Adams, AAA State Street Administrative Assistant for the active adult centers and a team member for 40 years, will retire on March 1st. Karen Pietraccini has been hired for the position and has been shadowing Rhonda to learn the duties involved. Sandy and the staff will be sorry to see Rhonda leave, she has been an amazing asset in every aspect. One of Rhonda's most significant responsibilities was the Farmers Market Voucher Program. She impressively organized all the details of the program each year. The past year was a large challenge due to COVID-19 and the Farmers Market voucher distribution process was re-structured to offer vouchers safely to seniors through the mail. Sandy and the AAA team wish Rhonda the best in her retirement and always.

ADJOURNMENT

Noah Davis asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Phyllis Mundy made the motion and Bill Runner seconded the motion. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next AAA Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for April 15, 2021 and members will be informed about possibly using Microsoft Teams Meeting.



Phyllis Mundy, AAA Advisory Board Secretary

Respectfully Submitted by: Sheila Rothenbecker
Administrative Assistant
Luzerne-Wyoming Counties Area Agency on Aging