

**AREA AGENCY ON AGING
LUZERNE & WYOMING COUNTIES
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
(Microsoft Teams Meeting)
April 15, 2021**

MEETING ATTENDANCE

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

Absent

William Lewis, Joseph Yozviak

Staff Attendance

Sandy Acornley, John Alunni, Jim Cease, Timothy Farrell, Joseph Gallo, Mary Roselle, Sheila Rothenbecker

CALL TO ORDER – Noah Davis, Chair

Noah Davis, Chair, called the AAA Advisory Board Meeting to order at 12:03 p.m. on Thursday, April 15, 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 February 18, 2021 meeting minutes. All members were in favor and the minutes were approved.

WELCOME TIM FARRELL – AAA Fiscal Officer 3

Mary Roselle introduced Tim Farrell, who began working with the agency on April 12th as the Fiscal Officer 3, replacing Robin Muth who retired in February. Tim told the board members he had worked as a financial analyst and accounts receivable manager for ten years. When he saw the opportunity for the Fiscal Officer position with the Aging Agency, he decided to go for it. Tim is being trained by Robin and learning the duties of the position. He believes he fits in well and looks forward to working with everyone.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT – Mary Roselle

Staff Vaccinations

The agency is working to get AAA Team Members vaccinated. All of the staff that want to be vaccinated have been. Presently, approximately 60 percent of the staff is vaccinated. Two-week post vaccination, the Care Managers are going into the field. Protective Services workers began going out to see older adults on April 5th and the rest of the staff will be going out of the office to conduct in person assessments starting on Monday, April 19th. The COVID questionnaire will still be used and information can be taken by phone when necessary.

Active Adult Centers

The Active Adult Centers have re-opened. More people have been coming to the centers for meals and there is a slow movement towards getting back to activities. The centers will continue to follow the guidelines from the PA Department of Aging.

Funding Formula

Mary has been in conversations with the PA Department of Aging Secretary, Robert Torres regarding funding going forward. An interstate funding formula exists in which AAA receives federal funding that flows through Aging Block Grant, Title III and Title V money. PDA Secretary Torres will be updating the formula which has not been changed in many years. Added categories will cause weighting to be adjusted and may mean loss of some funding. The agency is looking to the enrollment opportunity as an additional funding source.

Facebook Page

Updates regarding vaccinations and Farmer's Market Voucher Program will be posted on the AAA Facebook page. The page is a great tool for sharing agency events and information.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES REPORT – Mary Roselle

Foster Grandparents Program

Americorp Seniors has committed to pay the stipend for the Foster Grandparent participants through the end of September. Thirty-four volunteers have returned to the schools, twenty-one are participating in Pen Pal programs and forty-eight are inactive, but will continue to receive the stipend. Mary Lou Zerfoss, FGP Director, provides bi-weekly in-service meetings to keep the participants engaged.

Mature Workers Program

Twenty-eight participants of the Mature Workers Program are back at their training sites. The remaining thirty-nine are still training at home due to closed training sites or the participants level of comfort with in-person training. Mature Worker Program Director Denise Stalica, provides training materials to those participants on a regular basis as well as organizing periodic virtual trainings through Skill Path and Penn State.

PDA Revised Budget

A revised budget was submitted to PA Department of Aging in the beginning of April. Additional COVID funds have been used to provide emergency meals to all consumers each month, home delivered meals have been increased, renovations are being made at the main office, an agency vehicle was purchased and numerous items have been ordered for Active Adult Centers to promote greater socialization. On the other hand, the consumer base has decreased because some older adults are hesitant to let anyone into their homes at this time. There have been numerous agency resignations and retirements which take time to replace and some positions will be on hold until the base increases. The agency continues looking for ways of spending money directly on the consumers and programs, which will be of benefit to them.

RFP (Request for Proposal)

On March 8, 2021, AAA put all provider services out for bid with a four-year period beginning on July 1, 2021 and ending on June 30, 2021. Each respondent had to provide their rates for a one-year period. Initial contracts with each provider will begin on July 1, 2021 ending on December 31, 2021 and renewing for seven month periods through June 30, 2025. Excel files were provided to all board members including a summary of each provider, their rates for the next four years and the proposed contract amount for the first six-month period. There was no response for the Ombudsman contract and AAA will be looking into a regional contract for that service. A proposed list of contracts for the next four years was sent to the Ways and Means Committee several days before the scheduled board meeting. The Ways and Means committee had approved and recommended that the Advisory Board vote on the contract list. Robert Nealon made a motion to approve the contracts and Angel Mathis seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Vacant Positions:

8 Full-time positions:

- Accountant 1 – candidate was recommended
- Aging Care Manager 3 – will be reposted on 4/16/2021
- Aging Care Manager 2 – posted on 4/6/2021
- Aging Care Manager 2 positions (3) – on hold due to decrease of consumer volume
- Clerk Typist 2 positions (2) – candidate recommended for one of the positions, other position was posted on 4/8/2021

1 Part-Time Position:

- Senior Center Manager 1 (Lee Park Active Adult Center) – posted on 4/6/2021

2 Alternates:

- Food Service Worker (Wyoming County) – recommended candidate
- Senior Center Manager 1 (Mountain Top) – interview scheduled

SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT – Mary Schell

Intake Unit

AAA Intake workers were fielding phone calls from seniors and assisting them in scheduling vaccination appointments. Over 1,000 calls were received in March. Due to the large volume, many AAA staff including Foster Grandparent, Mature Worker Program, Active Adult Center and Assessment Unit workers helped with the calls. Intake Supervisor Rich Ursiak coordinated transportation requests with Matt Vough, making sure those without a ride could get to their vaccination appointments.

In-Person Visits

Beginning on April 9th, the Assessment and Care Management Units will be returning to in-person appointments. The care managers will continue social distance measures along with using personal protection equipment. In-person visits with older adults makes a big difference in assessing their needs.

Family Caregiver Program

The Family Caregiver Program submitted their annual plan in March. The plan was approved to provide another year of Family Caregiver services.

Protective Services Unit

The care managers of the AAA Protective Services Unit had returned to in-person visits on April 5th and the feedback has been very positive. Some hospitals have COVID protocols in place and the Protective Services care managers have been working with hospital personnel to gather needed information.

Protective Services Enrichment Training

Protective Services and On-Call staff have been taking the Protective Services Enrichment Training this month. The required annual course is conducted through Temple University. Topics include self-neglect, financial exploitation and domestic violence with seniors. These trainings are beneficial in learning the most updated and researched information.

Skill Path Trainings

All staff have been participating in virtual Skill Path seminars beginning in March and continuing through May. Leadership, collaboration and time management are some of the topics covered through the Skill Path trainings.

Quarterly Social Services Meeting

The Quarterly Social Services meeting will be held on April 29, 2021. Lisa Wolk registered dietician and certified mindfulness/stress reduction instructor will give a presentation and demonstrate mindfulness and stress relieving techniques.

Legislative/Advocacy Update

Representative Karen Boback had introduced legislation amending the Family Care Giver Act. The amendment would give additional funding to expand caregiver assistance with respite services particularly for those living with chronic dementia. The legislation has unanimously passed the House of Representatives and will head to the Senate for review.

Special Committee on Aging

Senator Bob Casey is now the majority member of the Special Committee on Aging. He has introduced a bi-partisan bill entitled Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act. This bill would amend the Age Discrimination and Employment Act to protect older workers trying to find employment and get back into the work force. The bill is presently under consideration.

Elder Abuse Task Force

Mary Schell and Brian McAdarra will be taking over as co-chairs for the Elder Abuse Task Force. A meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, May 13th for those wanting to participate. Mary will be sending out Teams meeting invites.

WELCOME JOE GALLO – Program Analyst 2

Mary Roselle introduced Joe Gallo, who began working with the agency on April 12th as Program Analyst 2. Joe told the board members he had received his Master's Degree in Public Policy in 2017. He previously worked for the Institute of Public Policy and Economic Development at Wilkes University. Joe will be evaluating and analyzing programs and policies of the Area Agency on Aging and he is excited to be part of the team.

ACTIVE ADULT CENTER REPORT - Sandy Acornley

Active Adult Centers

The Active Adult Centers have returned to serving on site meals and continue to do well. Sandy is hoping to add activities for the seniors very soon also. Many members have expressed their wishes to play shuffleboard and join in other fun activities at the centers again. There will be a slow return to those activities.

Exercise Programs

Exercise Program Classes for older adults continue via Zoom with great participation. A few instructors who had previously taught classes at the community sites, returned in April to teach classes in person.

Virtual Workshop

Two of the Active Adult Center directors will be hosting a virtual workshop called Healthy Steps for Older Adults. The program was popular for years with the center members and will be offered virtually this year for those wanting to participate.

AAC Staff

Sandy wanted to again thank the Active Adult Center staff members for their assistance with the COVID vaccination calls. They were answering a great number of calls and it seems to be slowing now, which may indicate that most seniors have been vaccinated.

Farmer's Market Voucher Distribution

Preparations are beginning for the distribution of the annual Farmer's Market Vouchers. Last year the vouchers were requested and sent by mail. The agency is waiting to hear if the process will be the same this year or returning to in-person distribution. A decision should be made by the Department of Agriculture before the beginning of May.

Active Adult Center Grant Money

Active Adult Centers have received grant money and will be spending it on items the seniors will enjoy. New furniture, steam tables, shuffle board, foosball tables, televisions, karaoke and juke boxes are some of the new items to be used at the centers. When sites fully open, Sandy believes the center members will be happy to see the new look and be thrilled to participate in the new activities.

Pittston Active Adult Center

Maria Linso will be moving to the Pittston Active Adult Center to take the Assistant Center Director position. She had previously worked as the part-time manager of the Lee Park Active Adult Center.

Emergency Meal Boxes

Distributions of the Emergency meal boxes will continue until the end of June. Seniors including the Mature Worker and Foster Grandparent Program participants receive 2 emergency meal boxes (14 shelf stable meals).

New Business

Bill Runner wanted to take a moment to let everyone know he and his wife Joanne, have been participating for several months in the Zoom Chair Yoga classes offered by the Area Agency on Aging. He notes that many decided to participate after seeing the advertisements in local newspapers. The classes are held 2 times a week with approximately 30 participants. Bill gives credit to the instructor, Donna Fetzko and feels she is an expert who is always patient and makes the classes a lot of fun. He highly recommends the class and shared the information for free registration. Anyone interested should call 570-836-1022, Extension 3 at the Dietrich Theatre.

Nancy Thaler asked about the agency workers observations when conducting phone appointments with seniors during the pandemic. She is concerned about depression issues for older adults during these difficult times. Sandy Acornley shared that members of the senior centers had been missing the daily visits with their friends at the sites. They have expressed their loneliness and desire to socialize again. However, there were no significant issues observed. Most seniors took the time to call and check on each other daily when the centers were closed. The AAA Social Services Care Managers were conducting appointments by phone and noticed

many older adults were sad and lonely, especially those without families. The Care Managers took extra time with the calls, reported any major changes or made referrals to the Mental Health and Disabilities agency. Noah Davis serves on the Pennsylvania Council on Aging and told the board there was a Social Isolation Task Force report he would like to share. He will forward the report to Sheila and she will then e-mail it to all of the Advisory Board members.

ADJOURNMENT

Noah Davis asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Angel Mathis made the motion and Bill Runner seconded the motion. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 12:56 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next AAA Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for June 17, 2021 and members will be joining by using Microsoft Teams Meeting.



Phyllis Mundy, AAA Advisory Board Secretary

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