



State Unit on Aging
Aging Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, October 14, 2021 – 9am-2pm
South Central Nebraska Area Agency on Aging
625 E. 25th St., #12, Kearney, NE 68847
Virtual meeting via WebEx

Attending:

At large members:

Colleen Claassen, Chair	Charlotte Dorwart, Aging Office of Western Nebraska	Danny DeLong, Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging
Luana Duennerman	Frank Herzog, Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging	Rod Hughes, Northeast Nebraska Area Agency on Aging
Ira Nathan		Sharon Busch, Lincoln Area Agency on Aging
Kathleen Kauth (virtual)		

Vacant service area representatives:

Midland Area Agency on Aging
West Central Nebraska Area Agency on Aging

Absent: South Central Nebraska Area Agency on Aging, Alicia Toczek

SUA Staff, in person:

Cynthia Brammeier, Administrator

Virtual:

Lance Balkus, Business Analyst
Antonio Carranza, JD, Program Coordinator
Erik White MS RDN LMNT, Nutrition Program Coordinator

Area Agency on Aging Directors, in person:

Rod Horsley - South Central Nebraska (SCNAAA)
Erin Arensdorf - West Central Nebraska (WCNAAA)

Virtual:

Casey Muzic - Midland (MAAA)
Randy Jones - Aging Partners (AP)
Carla Frase - Blue Rivers (BRAAA)
Trish Bergman – Eastern Nebraska Office (ENOA)
Connie Cooper – Northeast Nebraska (NENAAA)

Colleen Claassen, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 9:05am, took roll call, and welcomed everyone in attendance in person and online. Introductions included positive aspects of this stage of the pandemic - seeing faces and expressions, vaccinations, and socializing were highlighted.

Minutes:

Shari Bush moved, Luana Duennerman seconded, to approve the minutes. The motion passed.

New member introduction/s:

Kathleen Kauth, is a new member at large and lives in Omaha. Kathleen is an elder care mediator, and business consultant. Kathleen provides executive coaching for companies and teams. Kathleen has 3 children, ages 24, 20, and 18.

AAA Services during the COVID pandemic - Connie Cooper, Executive Director, NENAAA.

Each AAA is addressing needs locally and working through the pandemic with specific issues. It has been difficult to plan, with cases spiking, and then not. This week, 1/3 of the Norfolk fire department tested positive. There were Aged & Disabled (AD) Medicaid Waiver changes on 7/1, which changed in person visits with Waiver program clients. NENAAA used the same guidelines for care management clients. Staff are glad to see clients in person again. The Ombudsmen are able to get back into facilities, and residents are loving having them back. Also on 7/1, NENAAA and several other AAAs required staff to return to the office full time. There is some flexibility in the other offices. Carryout meals are still provided. Most senior centers are open and providing congregate meals. Congregate meals are not as well attended as before the COVID pandemic. There have been some recent COVID pandemic cases in senior centers. Open enrollment starts 10/15/21, and the SHIP programs will not have in person visits at most sites. Phone appointments worked last year. Federal funding for vaccine education, transportation, and activities (VAC5) was awarded to the AAAs. DHHS Division of Public Health is providing funding for vaccine work also. The AAAs are working together on how to best utilize these funds. ARPA funding is coming soon, with match required. DHHS is working on the match consideration. The AAAs are looking at ways to best utilize this funding. Some creative ideas are being considered. In general, the pool of applicants for jobs is smaller, and long-term care (LTC) facilities are having trouble hiring. At the last meeting, a committee discussed preparing a letter to support to go meals.

SUA Updates: Cynthia Brammeier

1. Fiscal: A handout of the SFY2021 grant expenditures by subgrantee was distributed. This report is also posted on the website. <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Aging-Program-Documents.aspx>
More than double the usual federal awards was received in the last 18 months. ACL has provided for a lot of flexibility with the pandemic funding. Vaccine funding is available for education, transportation, and related activities.
2. Elder Justice training—Antonio Carranza, JD, Program Coordinator provided a flyer for the training. Training is scheduled for November 5 in Lincoln. It is virtual again this year. Several excellent speakers will present, including Paul Greenwood, a retired prosecutor from San Diego & dynamic speaker. CLEs and CEUs are available for attorneys, nurses and social workers.
3. Legal Risk Detector software – The purchase of this software is in process. A pilot will be implemented in AOWN and ENOA, and expanded statewide. The software was developed through a grant from the Department of Justice. It is an online set of questions for a social worker or case manager to ask an older person. Based on answers from the client, the software determines the risk the person has for needing legal services, and for those with a high risk, a referral is made to an attorney. The pilot will partner with Legal Aid of Nebraska for those services.
4. State and Area plans FY2023-2027: The SUA met with UNO Gerontology & the Center for Public Research at UNO in September. The SUA will contract for help with surveys and data. The next state plan will be 2024-2027. It will be due in early 2023. The area plans will be due to the SUA from the AAAs in early 2023 also. This gives the AAAs and the SUA an opportunity to collaborate, and utilize similar data to determine the most effective programs for the state moving into the next decade.
5. COVID pandemic updates – Brittany Herrington, SUA Program Coordinator, provided State vaccine information: the State is in Phase 2B (Nebraskans age 16+); 1.1 million Nebraskans are fully vaccinated. This is about 67.4% of Nebraska's 12+ population. Statistics of interest: 90% of adults 65+ have been vaccinated; 72.5% of Nebraska adults have received at least one shot; and about 900 Nebraskans vaccinated daily (7 day average), which is down 35% from the previous 7 days.

6. Legislative Updates 2021; 2022: The SUA is not asking for legislative changes this year. Rod Horsley, Executive Director at South Central Nebraska AAA reported the AAAs and ADRC partners are asking for a change to permit the SUA to fund the ADRCs directly, rather than contracting through an AAA. It has been cumbersome for the AAAs. Senator Day will sponsor the bill. This allows disability partners to receive funding directly, rather than route through the AAAs.
7. ADRC Report – The draft ADRC report was provided to the committee in meeting materials. It was coordinated with the AAAs in September. The draft is being edited within DHHS. The final version is due to the Legislature on 12/1. Ira Nathan offered to work on the ADRC report for 2022, to develop a dashboard, and present key performance indicators. Rod Horsley reported the ADRC is working well, as it provides a one-stop for services and supports. More diverse clients are coming in. Agencies are seeing a lot of housing related inquiries, plus Care Management, legal services, and waiver, offer a smooth transition to those services for clients. Two AAA offices are helping with Medicaid applications.
8. Ombudsman - No report.
9. GetSetUp software – The SUA is purchasing as a trial for online courses, and how to use devices. Courses are live, and limited to person's age 50+, taught by persons age 50+. Classes start with device education, and Zoom. There are over 300 classes offered, and they have a client base of 1 million adults. Michigan and New York have purchased statewide bundles for seniors to access. If the test is successful, an RFP will be issued for a longer term contract. There are other vendors with educational services online.

Danny Delong added that AARP met with the Governor regarding broadband and digital literacy, as it relates to LB388. AARP is using OATS, Senior Planet, for online training. Luana Duennerman asked about internet availability in rural areas. Danny described LB388 is an expansion of rural broadband. There is an extension of a pilot program through a CARES Act funding program through the Dept. of Economic Development. The effort may get more funding for the next 2 years from ARPA funds to expand internet availability. The committee is considering a proposal of \$20M for the next 2 years. Rural expansion is very expensive. Danny described that the public service commission is running the rural broadband grant program. The plan is for digital inclusion in new service areas. These are competitive grant programs for rural providers. The PSC is using 100 upload / download as a standard.

Data presentation – Ira Nathan, Advisory Committee Member, At Large – Meal analysis. Slides and the ADL / IADL (Activities of Daily Living / Instrumental ADL) questions from the Care Management assessment were provided.

In response to the April meeting, and the AAAs interest in making to-go meals as a permanent change, and in preparation for a letter to the ACL, Ira analyzed data from the SUA. Ira described the data process, state program reports sent to the ACL. AAAs send in data regarding programs, through the PeerPlace software system, and fiscal reports. Five years of data was presented, using NAMIS for 2017, 18, 19; and PeerPlace for 2020, 21 (9 months with projections for 2021) for expenditures and meals. Observations: fewer meals were served, senior centers are serving fewer clients; the number of participants living alone increased; congregate meal costs increased; and to go meals were easier and cheaper. Conclusions: Ira recognized the hard work of AAAs, and senior centers, during the pandemic. Ira thanked Amy & Lance from the SUA for the data and analysis. Data was well documented, and detailed. The process training has improved data reporting. The variance reports has helped improve data quality. This data can be utilized for the letter to ACL regarding making to-go meals permanent.

Questions were asked about

- The cost per meal for HDMs, and whether it included delivery expenses. All costs, including transportation are included.

- Inflation and quality maintenance. Meals must comply with the most recent Dietary Guidelines for America, the minimum of 33 1/3% of the Dietary Reference Intakes established by the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Senior Centers serving food in Nebraska to the public must also follow the Nebraska Food Code in regards to all food safety measures and standards for equipment and inspections. In regards to higher pricing of food items, AAA's are encouraged to work with their food vendors to find price breaks, alternatives to certain brands, potential splitting of cases, and new menu items that may include less expensive ingredients while as the same time, not sacrificing nutrition. Supply chain concerns remain, there are challenges still with this across the country. This is another challenge that is effecting prices and availability of items overall.
- HDM's and to-go meals are losing out on social connections compared to congregate meals. Is there something else happening to help them connect? Agencies offered creative ways to connect with people – HDM Bingo, puzzles, word games, and other activities were included with HDMs and to-go meals.
It was discussed that there is a need for all 3 types of meals. Some don't have capability, but don't meet criteria for HDM and would benefit from to-go meals. Voucher programs with restaurants have grown in popularity.
While senior centers were not open, senior centers directors were paid to make wellness calls to clients. Senior centers participated at varying levels of frequency. Now that centers are open, they can receive to-go or congregate meals. There is still a decrease in congregate attendance in most areas.
Supportive services are decreasing at centers also – exercise classes, etc. The biggest concern has been the Delta variant increase in cases. Several seniors are still working, and find it easier to get a to-go meal and return to work.
- Food quality and RDA guidelines must still be followed. During the pandemic, ACL provided flexibility to waive RDAs, however, NENAAA did not offer that option, and continued to require the 1/3 RDA.
- Action item: Advisory committee volunteers will draft a letter for consideration to be sent to the ACL. At the April, 2022 meeting, volunteers were Connie Cooper, Rod Horsley, Frank Herzog, Charlotte Dorwart, and Alicia Toczek.

Intercultural Senior Center (ISC) – Omaha - Carolina Padilla, Executive Director – materials were provided.

The ISC is 13 years old, and initially started with support from ENOA for serving elderly Latinos a meal. Participation increased rapidly, and ISC became a 501(c)(3). The center caters to the different backgrounds of participants, and has a multi-generational impact. Starting in South Omaha, the program moved 4 times. In 2018, a capital campaign raised \$6.5M to purchase and remodel a building, located at 5545 Center Street. The ISC has 22 staff.

ISC Programs include:

- Transportation –includes 5 drivers, and 9 vehicles, 2 are for pantry & meal distribution. 95% of seniors participating need transportation, and are picked up from home for programs that run 8am – 2pm.
- Case management;
- Interpretation
- Advocacy
- Oral health
- Education
- Medical
- Legal services
- Nutrition / food security
- Housing
- Mental health
- Socialization

Discussion with the committee included:

- An increased number of families reaching out, due to a lack of places to take their parents, and those who cannot pay out of pocket for in-home help
- More caregiving from grandparents of young children is causing problems.

- About 85% of participants receive SSA. Requests are made for double pantry allotments; medication expenses; living expenses exceed their income.
- There are 5-7 languages spoken in the center per day; & 30 nationalities are represented.
- The average # of participants runs 60-70/day now, all are vaccinated. Expect to return to regular 100+ in center now.
- Interpreters are in person; most are part-time employees.
- The center is NCOA accredited this year! This is the only accredited senior center in Nebraska. Only one like this in the US, with this diversity.

Area Agency on Aging Reports:

AOWN –Charlotte D. for Cheryl Brunz – The Panhandle is in the 'red' on COVID pandemic cases. Congregate meal sites are running the same. Vaccinated participants are attending in person, and unvaccinated are picking up to go meals. HDM Bingo is being used. Dominoes are popular. There is a concern for people dropping through the cracks due to the move of Medicaid Waiver Level of Care (LOC) assessments now handled by DDD. On 7/1 DDD took over assessments for all waiver clients. There is also concern about the kind of assessment being conducted; where the assessor is asking but not observing the functionality (ambulating, etc.). Families are putting folks into assisted living without knowing how they will pay for it. There is concern for the panhandle clients, services, and driving distances.

Blue Rivers – Carla Frase – Two centers are not open yet. One with a site manager out, and one with gas repair in process. In the next 2 weeks, all should be open. Numbers have increased. Have expanded to 4 locations for central kitchens. Two centers have kitchen upgrades. Games are open, and flu clinics are being organized. One was held in Beatrice already. BRAAA is participating in health fairs, and the Big Give Gage event. Raised \$2,200 for meal delivery. Meal delivery was the most important service during the Pandemic. Transit - ridership is increasing. The Federal DOT, notified BRAAA that they will get new vans in 2023. All vans have are over 100k-180k miles. Repairs are needed. Senators Dorn and Brandt attended the last board meeting. Senator Slama will attend the next meeting.

ENOA – Trish Bergman – All centers are open, and seeing an increase in numbers slowly. Some are above. The biggest increase is the diner's choice program (voucher meal). This expanded to 11 additional Hy-Vee locations; and grew from 95 participants in April to 232 in September; and serving 1,026 meals last month. Meals on Wheels service is steady. Two new vans are expected, however there is no date yet. Paid Meals on Wheels drivers have been reduced due to retirements and health issues. They have increased the volunteer program for meal deliveries. ENOA will participate in an online caregiver event in November. ENOA has a new website, and will offer sessions – including a panel, physical therapy instructions for at home, telehealth UNMC, & legal. They participated in their First Health Fair since the COVID pandemic began.

NENAAA – Connie Cooper – Would like to see all 3 meal delivery options continue. The agency annual CPA audit is complete. The SUA funded a law clinic in Wayne, 9/17 with Mary Wilson, and students. They produced simple wills, living wills, and POAs. This is an excellent program. The Laurel senior center will be in a new space soon – including access to a conference center for 400. The annual health fair in Norfolk was held - lab work for persons age 60+ was offered, with a suggested contribution. Have done 600 in the past over 2 days. This year, they served 400 in 1 day. We continue to work with DHHS on the transition of level of care assessments. NENAAA is not getting the same level of referrals as in the past. NENAAA wants to make sure those who do not meet the level of care are given options for services. Budget revisions are in process and will help address to go meal over cost. Caregiver programs - November is National Caregiver Month. Funds were provided for caregiver recognition. There are 11 caregiver support groups in the service area.

Midland – Casey Muzic – Senior centers are providing to go, congregate, and HDMs. The numbers are increasing. MAAA is coordinating with local health departments for clinics, health fairs, and Go Big Give participation. The voucher program at Hy-Vee in Grand Island is popular; the MAAA office provides the vouchers. MAAA is working on getting a voucher/HDM program in Silver Creek. MAAA has also had trouble finding meal drivers. A Law clinic was held in August in Hastings and was very popular - filling all slots in 2 weeks. There is a high need for this, and MAAA would like to offer 2 Legal clinics per year. The Medicaid LOC assessment issues continue. MAAA is working with the state on adjustments. There is a need to track referrals for denied clients to refer for AAA service connections. The MAAA public transit program has contracted with all 3 Medicaid providers, however the client must request Midland's service. MAAA will go outside of the county and travel to Lincoln & Omaha for appointments. MAAA is also waiting on a DOT van.

South Central – Rod Horsley – All staff are onsite now, and all are vaccinated. The annual CPA audit is going on now. All senior centers are open. HDM, Congregate, and to go meals are offered. Medicare open enrollment starts 10/15. The SHIP staff person moved, and the new one starts 10/26. Staff will fill in until then. SCNAAA is not offering in person SHIP appointments again this year. The LTC ombudsman is back in facilities. The Ombudsman used iPads for family visits. SCNAAA is working on Waiver LOC assessments with DDD. Staff are now AIRS certified for Information & Referral.

West Central – Erin Arensdorf – Erin is the new director, and started 6/1, and previously worked at WCNAAA Waiver for 5 years. All staff are back in the office. About 85% are vaccinated. WCNAAA will host an Advance Directive law clinic in November with UNL law students on site. One (satellite) meal site did not reopen; they are unsure if it will reopen. WCNAAA had their audit with SUA/APA, and CPA this year. Plans are in the works for PR to get client numbers back up. Medicare open enrollment will begin 10/15. SHIP staff person is retiring in January, and WCNAAA is accepting applications now. All appointments will be by phone. They are working through the Medicaid LOC assessment issues. Numbers of referrals have decreased also.

Aging Partners – Randy Jones – AP is working with interested community members Fillmore County (Geneva), to re-establish a local program. A new not for profit is being established. The city ended their commitment to operate the Geneva Senior Center. AP is moving to Victory Park in Lincoln – this is a joint project between the VA, AP, and the Seniors Foundation. AP is moving the downtown senior center and offices to the VA property on 70th St. There will be a new center, a new fitness facility, and headquarters for offices. Completion is expected in late spring / early summer 2022. AP is working on vaccine innovation locally – with digital marketing, Facebook, targeting those age 60+, city/county, target for vaccine education. Staff are supporting vaccination clinics in Lincoln with escorts to vaccination appointments, answering questions, and supporting the local health department. AP received a grant to purchase pneumatic fitness equipment. Diner quality is measured with in-person surveys, and "food waste" measurements at the senior centers. By food product, AP can tell the amount of uneaten food on the item on the days surveyed. This is conducted at each site. In July, 3% waste of protein; and 12% vegetables. Surveys also include HDM with a rating for smell, taste, look, and variety. Discussion included: Clients are not asked at the time of the study WHY they are not eaten specific items. Tabitha is the contractor in Lincoln for Home Delivered Meals Clients are not surveyed. Randy reported same challenges as the other AAAs related to transition of Medicaid Waiver LOC and concerns for clients.

Advisory Member Reports (3-5 minutes each):

Colleen Claassen, Committee Chair – Still working 10-hour days with the COVID pandemic increased cases, and have been unable to attend local events. On vacation last week, I was the victim of credit card and Facebook fraud through messenger. A friend fell for the scam.

Luana Duennerman – Luana shared the Living Well magazine from AP, and an ad for Medicare enrollment. NE Association for the Deaf, has a task force for nursing home getting set up. Homestead Rehabilitation is now Brooke Rehabilitation Center, and are remodeling rooms; they also provided residents with booster shots. They have had to lock down due to COVID outbreaks. Families are using FaceTime for visits when they are locked down. Assisted livings are full in Lincoln, and are not taking referrals. Local pharmacies are providing flu shots. Lancaster County is back in “yellow.” Luana shared an article about when to apply for Medicare - people who don’t apply at 65 - are penalized later. The Deaf not socializing due to the COVID pandemic; and it is harder to get the news into the community.
April 2021 meeting follow up: the cochlear implant coverage with Medicaid was emailed to the committee.

Ira Nathan – Attended the 2021 NE Conference on Health Equity, which was informative. Lori Seibel, Community Health Endowment of Lincoln, presented data analysis, children’s nutrition and a food truck concept to educate through children about nutrition. A Native American speaker presented the importance of including Native Americans. Would like to see native members on the committee. Reviewed data and secondary sources used, including the US Census and American Community Survey, which is also used at the SUA. Hoping to work with the SUA on data quality. Discussion included: Colleen serves on the Diabetes education committee at Bryan, and Lori Seibel, brought the food truck, and introduced ways to make a healthy pizza at home. Nutrition education and counseling are funded through the SUA. Nutrition counseling must be provided by a registered dietitian, but nutrition education is flexible – such as UNL Extension materials, or other reputable sources.

Kathleen Kauth – Also experienced a T-Mobile hack recently. _____ in Omaha has a great lunch and learn elder scam presentation. Kathleen serves on the Foster Grandparents board in Omaha, and now getting back into the classrooms.

Aging Office of Western Nebraska - Charlotte Dorwart – The CPA and SUA audits are complete, and went well. The building in-kind determination is still an issue with the APA. Charlotte also experienced an attempted phone call scam pretending to be her brother.

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging - Danny DeLong – No report.

Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging - Frank Herzog – Met with Carolina Padilla and was very impressed with the program. Frank is a LTC Ombudsman in Omaha, at St. Joe’s Villa, and now can visit. Residents are very happy to see us. The attitude of residents and staff were supportive of each other. Several blips of lock downs have persisted due to infections. So far, 90% of the facility staff are vaccinated. Medicare / Medicaid funding requires staff to be vaccinated by 10/15. Nearly 100% of residents are vaccinated, which has reduced the incidents. For NH residents, this is a trying time – they are confined to the facility, and often to their own room. In house testing available. October is resident’s rights month. The NH is your home; you should be able do what you want in your own home (within reason).

Lincoln Area Agency on Aging - Sharon Busch – Shari hasn’t been out much due to the COVID pandemic. Lincoln has opened up again. The Aging Partners Advisory committee has increased their diversity. Havelock had repairs done and are open again. Shari is looking forward to the Victory Park exercise location.

Midland Area Agency on Aging, vacant – Casey Muzic, reporting. Nutrition information offered in smaller towns is a joint effort with hospitals and home health agencies providing nutrition or health

promotion information. Topics include: good carbs / bad carbs; healthy meal choices; and nutrition flyers. The LTC Ombudsman is also looking for additional volunteers. MAAA has a 15 hour/week ombudsman on staff. MAAA is offering SHIP at the agency, utilizing funds from DOI for every person they see. MAAA has 6 of 7 employees trained in SHIP; the secretary calls the clients; all appointments are by phone. Congregate meal participants would like to take leftovers home, and are taking to-go meals in order to do this.

Northeast Nebraska Area Agency on Aging - Rod Hughes – The COVID pandemic affected businesses, families, and nursing homes. A friend is using Meals on Wheels, at his assisted living. Most senior centers are open.

South Central Nebraska Area Agency on Aging – no report.

West Central Nebraska Area Agency on Aging – Vacant – no report.

Questions / Public Comment

Charlotte Dorwart, expressed an interest in a Native American representative, and programming presentation. The AOWN is just south of the Rose Bud Reservation in South Dakota.

Other Business

Colleen shared Charlotte's letter to the OWH.

Next Meeting Date

It was agreed that the next meeting will be held 4/14/2022. This will also serve as the annual meeting; including elections of officers.

Speaker suggestions for April

Native American presentation – reservation program. Winnebago senior centers would be good; NENAAA contracts with Santee & Winnebago. Also contract with Legal Aid on elder law on the reservations. Jonathan Seagrass, is the Nebraska Legal Aid Native American program liaison. It was also suggested to review speaker suggestions from earlier meetings. Asian center in Lincoln? LOC assessments – waiver. A motion was made to table the discussion. The discussion ended.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:18pm.