



**State Unit on Aging
Aging Advisory Committee Meeting**

Thursday, April 13, 2023, – 9 am-2 pm
South Central Nebraska Area Agency on
Aging
625 E. 25th St., #12, Kearney, NE 68847
virtual meeting via WebEx.

Committee members present:

Colleen Claassen, Chairperson, at large
Kimberly Baumann, NENAAA
Sharon Busch, Aging Partners
Luana Duennerman, at large
Ira Nathan, at large
Charlotte Dorwart, Aging Office of Western NE
Danny DeLong, Blue Rivers AAA
Frank Herzog, Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging
Alicia Toczek, South Central NE AAA
Phil Lyons, West Central NE AAA

Absent: None

Vacancies: Midland AAA, at large

ASL interpreters:

Ben Sparks
Roxanne Petersen

State Staff Present:

Cynthia Brammeier, Administrator
Amy Hochstetler, Information Technology Business Analyst
Coordinator

Guests present:

Carla Frase, Director, Blue Rivers AAA
Trish Bergman, Director, Eastern NE Office on Aging
Rod Horsley, Executive Director, South Central NE AAA
Erin Arensdorf, Executive Director, West Central NE AAA
Connie Cooper, Northeast NE AAA
Casey Muzic, Midland AAA

Speaker, virtual:

Chris Kelly, UNO Gerontology Chair
Penny Clark, State Long-Term Care
Ombudsman

Guests virtual:

Randy Jones, Director, Aging Partners

State staff virtual:

Cheryl Kirby, Program Coordinator
Erik White, Nutrition Program
Coordinator
Antonio Carranza, Legal
Gene Hogan, Fiscal Program Manager
Ben Stromberg, Program Manager
Mary Prai, Federal Aid Administrator
Christy Wheeler, Federal Aid
Administrator

The meeting was called to order at 9:00am, Colleen Claassen, Chair, presiding.

Roll call was conducted.

Members, guests, and speakers were welcomed and introduced themselves.

Agenda: The agenda was approved. Alicia Toczec moved, Ira Nathan seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Minutes: The minutes were approved as presented. Luana Duennerman moved, Frank Herzog seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Presentations:

Role overview – Federal (ACL), State (SUA), Local (AAAs), Senior Centers – Amy Hochstetler presented a visual overview. Committee members expressed appreciation for the SUA support of the committee meetings. Clarifying questions were posed and answered - meetings are held daily within the SUA team. The SUA meets with federal staff at the Administration for Community Living. The SUA meets with Medicaid and Long-Term Care leadership. The AAA Directors meet monthly, and the SUA reports on current and ongoing issues. Most Senior Center directors meet as a group regularly. The AAAs also meet with Senior Centers regularly.

Next Steps – A summary of the SWOT analysis was discussed (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), led by Chris Kelly, PhD.

- Strengths – what we are doing well.
- Weakness – area for improvement.
- Opportunities – how can we improve?
- Threats – keep an eye on it.

The group expressed interest in continuing ‘listening sessions.’ The SUA included this in the State plan for even-numbered years. Discussion included using Zoom to facilitate meetings and lunch and learn with Senior Center Directors. Committee members expressed thanks for working with UNO and the team. The Midwest is aging faster than the rest of the country. There are more adults 65+, than children 5 and under. The workforce and aging in place are of high concern.

Energizing Committees - At the October meeting, during lunch, members discussed next steps from the UNO report. Interested volunteers participated from the Advisory Committee and AAA Directors. Three groups were formed: branding,

current, and future topics were discussed. Individual reports were made by each committee.

Branding-Connie Cooper

The Branding Committee consists of Alicia, Frank, and Connie. The committee members did research from survey results and resource centers. We had questions that we discussed: who are senior centers trying to attract? Is it those not attending now? If seniors are not interested in a senior center-what is it they want, why are they not attending? Some respond that they are not old enough, don't like the food, or are still working. We need to take this information and address what can be done. Identify what senior centers provide and build upon that-that is the work of the current services Committee. Previous studies, from 2007, indicated the public still does not know what senior centers offer. What services do we want senior center to provide, what is currently not being offered, this is the work of the Future services Committee. Statewide branding or marking of senior centers includes the positivity of aging, "our seniors, Nebraska's greatest asset". We need to modernize the senior centers, get away from clutter, and make them more inviting. The group discussed looking at how we provide services and moving away from the soup kitchen feel. They discussed offering programs that get people of all ages into the center. Suggestions such as offering "Welcome to Medicare, technology classes with internet availability, and training at the center to use technology. They identified a divide in participants – those who want to learn and utilize technology and those that do not. Social activities could be added that attract younger participants – like wine and painting, dance lessons, book clubs, etc. It was suggested a marketing firm be hired. We may need to explore a name change as senior center can be off-putting. Some names used in other states were – 'community center' or 'the club.' Funding is needed. Discussion included the importance of printing newsletters to let people know what's available, in addition to digital access. A copy of the questions gathered will be shared with the members. It was noted that a lot of technology is regularly forced on people - cell phones, TV remotes, electronic devices – older adults need help with all of it. The AAAs recognize that additional funding is needed for senior centers due to increases in food, staff, and other ongoing expenses. The AAAs will approach the legislature for more funding next session. There is a needed recognition to invest in older adults. Intergenerational programs and community centers are more successful by bringing in all ages. Danny indicated AARP is

supportive of additional funding for the aging network and will offer help with legislation.

Planning for the Future-Trish Bergman

The committee included Trish and Danny DeLong. It was mentioned changing the center atmosphere to a more coffee shop feeling is desirable. ENOA has the Intergenerational Center, which is very successful bringing in multiple ages and diverse members. Creighton students offer technology training in Omaha centers. Centers can tap into schools for interaction and programming. The Sarpy center is called the 55+ center and are marketing themselves differently. It was also mentioned that funding is crucial. It was noted that staffing is just as hard to fill in urban areas as in rural areas – especially when fast food is paying \$18/hour. Danny mentioned that information is available on re-evolving centers. The growth of adults aging is increasing. Funding is flat, and pandemic grants will end soon. Inflation is impacting all services and portions of the state. Danny will share economic development district contact information. The EDDs will need to know what situation requires more funding – they need a story on the situation to compel funding. BRAAA is interviewing for grant writers.

A senior center manual template is posted online and is updated regularly. The SUA will share the link to the manual. Updates for this are welcome and can be added easily. It is recognized that each center has individual needs, it's not a one-size-fits-all solution.

Emergency messaging is all electronic. Identifying what tools are needed, and what partnerships will help support aging in place will be beneficial.

Current Offerings-Colleen Claassen

The committee consisted of Angie Barkmeier, Ira Nathan, and Colleen Claassen. Nebraska is diverse – there are large centers in Omaha, Lincoln, Kearney, and small centers all over. Some meal sites are bars. The network is coming back from COVID. Some center directors are older than the participants, and some do not receive state/federal funding.

Chris used the 'duck' analogy – it looks like calm water while the duck is paddling like crazy under the surface. Center directors are wearing multiple hats in centers and their communities.

The committee looked at centers and services in West Central and ENOA - food service, etc. They also talked to the SUA, UNO, others. They collected input and summarized for energizing centers.

Ira noted that a 2002 SWOT analysis survey had many of the same issues as the listening sessions in 2022. He thanked Amy for the data during their analysis. The meals program serves 3% of Nebraska seniors overall.

Interested members and directors are invited to meet after this meeting, to set up action teams. Topics are funding, economic development, meals, programming, and marketing.

SFY24-27 State Plan Overview – Cynthia Brammeier, SUA

Slides covering the sections of the state plan were reviewed. References between sections and federal requirements were identified. Federal requirements by section were discussed. Additional requirements were added by ACL in 2021.

Goals, strategies, and measurements were identified. In 2022, the Intrastate Funding Formula (IFF) was approved and is incorporated into the plan.

The State is anticipating ACL input and edits for this draft. A final version will be sent in June, to meet the 90 day submission requirement ahead of the 10/1/23 effective date. An approval letter should arrive from ACL in August/September 2023. The plan will be in effect from 10/1/23 through 9/30/27.

There was a change in the definition for “rural.” The ACL is following the USDA definition. The demographic definition does not affect funding, just analysis of rural and urban at the federal level. The new software system does the calculation for the centers for federal reporting. Ira mentioned that the data visualization was good in the new state plan. The goals measurement tables are easy to read. The services table sorted by AAAs was very helpful. Amy was complimented for her formatting and other things.

Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program - Penny Clark, State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

The LTCOP Annual Report for 2022 was reviewed. In 2022, there was an increase in cases. The team has a goal to increase training next year.

The report will be posted online. [Long-Term Care Ombudsman \(ne.gov\)](https://www.ne.gov/long-term-care-ombudsman)

The LTCOP map will be updated with staffing changes -

- Western Nebraska – CJ Roberts is retiring in July. AOWN received a grant to hire a LTCO, Penne Classen. She has visited almost every facility since October 2022.
- South Central - Kearney added 11 counties to the LTCO area. Lisa McGuire is now a regional Ombudsman.

Frank asked if the federal investment of \$50M in facility recruitment training had resulted in positive results yet. The response was no, presumably because wages are still lower than fast food, and it is difficult to attract enough workers.

Frank has noticed more contract services, which are more expensive, and removes the direct workforce from resident interaction and familiarity.

An Office of the Inspector General (OIG) report, ACL is now asking how facilities are using the funding they are getting. They consistently complain about Medicaid reimbursement. The feds are now looking at spending at the facility level.

Luana noted that during COVID, families were not able to see anyone.

SUA Updates - Cynthia Brammeier, Administrator

- Funding reports for FY22, and the first half of FY23 were distributed.
- Grants, Funding Reports (handout, spending through 6/30/22 & 12/31/22)
- Fiscal testing will revert to the SUA beginning in FY24. The Auditor of Public Accounts (APA) is not renewing the contract for fiscal testing of subrecipients due to a lack of staff available. This work was not part of their core services, and they are trimming back.
- GetSetUp – The contract used all 20,000 classes from March 2022 to March 2023. These are digital skill-building classes. About 8,500 adults took 20,000 classes in 12 months. A request for proposals is being drafted to contract for a limited number of digital literacy and classes moving forward.
- Legal Risk Detector – The software pilot was successful, and a full roll-out to all AAAs began in January 2023. The next groups to be trained will be the Ombudsmen, and Adult Protective Services (APS). Beyond that, the Office of Public Guardian is expected to join. Individuals were identified through the tool that caseworkers had no idea they needed legal services.
- iServe – the launch of the Explore Benefits feature is underway. This is a tool that Nebraskans can use to anonymously determine which benefits for which they may qualify.

- LB 752, 2022, created an Alzheimer’s director in the Department of Health and Human Services. The SUA expects to work closely with this program.

Service Areas

Colleen Claassen, Chair (Lincoln) – reported with energizing committee.

Luana Duennerman (Lincoln) – Shared the Elderly Care Resource handbook, which provides good information. A caregiver task list is included. Colleen mentioned that Bryan Health receives and hands out thousands of these at the hospital. Using the ‘accessible’ feature on an iPhone, “live caption” is available. Luana shared this with a nurse helping clients. This helps the nurse communicate with clients, and it helps the deaf and hard of hearing to communicate. In Central City, the long-term care (LTC) facility was closing, and the community is now building a new one. There is a need to educate the public on communication with the hard of hearing and deaf.

Ira Nathan (Omaha) – Reported that he witnessed and was impressed with the assessment and services set up through ENOA. The Disrupt Aging class through AARP will be presented at the October meeting. “It’s not how old you are, it’s what you are. Fighting ageism.” Ira suggested we may want to disrupt aging in communities. Nebraska AARP asked to test the program.

Legislative Chair Danny DeLong (Beatrice)

This year, 808 bills were introduced. AARP is monitoring 300+ bills. The Broadband office is moving from the Public Service Commission (PSC) to the Department of Transportation (DOT). There is home equity theft legislation, where a missed tax payment could lose the house. There is a voter ID bill. Some very punitive voting legislation was written; however, amendments were made, and will still require ID. Medical legislation includes a cap on insulin at \$35/month, and no fees for colonoscopies.

Additionally, LB752 (2022) Created Alzheimer’s Committee & Report. The SUA expects to work on this program. And LB 41 prohibits state agencies from imposing annual filing and reporting requirements on charitable organizations, it was placed on General File 2/16/23:

Aging Partners (AP) - Sharon Busch, Vice-Chair (Lincoln) on behalf of Randy Jones (Lincoln)

AP closed the downtown center. The Victory Park move is in process. New equipment is being installed this week. April 27 is the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Opening the new center on May 3. Parking is free. The VA Service Officers will share a hall in the same building. This site will house the fitness center, with some new exercise equipment. The downtown members will be bussed to centers of their choice. AP will offer evidence-based classes, including Bingocize. (Video <https://youtu.be/cQ2YWH1lcuY>). This is a 10-week exercise program; participants are tested at the beginning and the end of the series. It is catching on in several centers.

AOWN - Charlotte Dorwart (Sidney) on behalf of Cheryl Brunz (Scottsbluff)
Staffing is difficult to keep up. Food prices are increasing. Several donations are coming in. ARPA funds were used for technology upgrades. The Missile update will affect the panhandle. It will be placed between Sidney and Kimball. Funding will be brought into the communities for revamping, a public pool is planned for Kimball.

BRAAA - Danny DeLong (Beatrice), and Carla Frase (Beatrice)
Nebraska Public Transit produced two videos on rural transit service, one is from Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging, video: <https://youtu.be/UTGH5QNYmM0>
During COVID, and now in recovery, lifelines have increased 40% and caregiver support has increased 50%. The area plan was submitted, and edits are in process. Older Americans Month is next month. Activities planned include T-Shirts for volunteers age 60+, "We don't do average, we do awesome." on the front and "Essential" on the back. ARPA funds will be used for 2 meal delivery vehicles, deep freezers, and tray sealers for emergency meal delivery. BRAAA is upgrading its accounting system and bringing back payroll in house. They are upgrading computers in the centers. All centers have Wi-Fi. They are exploring Bingocize. They are paying for a trainer to take Stepping On. They are also offering Tai Chi in Hebron. Legal service training will be provided to all staff. They are still waiting on vans that were ordered with DOT CARES funding that ended in September; they are unsure of what will happen with those vehicles and the funding. BRAAA sold 6 vans through auction because they could not keep up with the maintenance on them. They signed an addendum with NDOT for the end of the year. NDOT has been slow to reimburse, as they have only been paid through October, leaving \$350K unpaid at this point. It was suggested they speak with their senators to make contact on behalf of the agencies.

ENOA - Frank Herzog (Omaha), and Trish Bergman (Omaha)

Trish – ENOA submitted the area plan. Changes include adding a case management program, through OAA, with ARPA funds. The AAAs are hoping to see additional funding through the legislature next year. ENOA is reinstating grab-n-go meals at senior centers, using ARPA funds for providers. They raised the per meal rate for the caterer also. ENOA is still trying to buy new Home Delivered Meal vans. The first order was canceled with no notice to the agency. A lot of senior center upgrades are being made also. ENOA may give gas cards to volunteers. Leadership training for management staff is being scheduled. ENOA is building a shed/garage with a sister agency. This is currently out for bid. The agency has experienced a lot of catalytic converters being stolen. The agency's 50th anniversary is in 2024.

Frank – Shared the ADRC brochure and gave a program overview. AARP helped champion this several years ago as a demonstration project, and it is now permanently funded through general funds. Frank shared Medicaid unwind information from an article and DHHS information. Medicaid will conduct reassessments of 400,000 Nebraskans in the next 12 months. It is estimated that up to 80,000 will lose coverage, because they are no longer eligible. A 90-day look-back period should help with anyone dropped incorrectly. DHHS has to try reaching the client 3 ways before dropping someone from coverage. Frank suggested a central resource for senior centers would be a resource committee.

MAAA - Casey Muzic (Hastings)

The ADRC is busy with transitioning clients, including Medicare questions. Bingocize is offered in all but 2 centers. A new St. Paul participant came in just for Bingocize. His movement improved from when he walked in, to the end of the game. MAAA is applying for grants in several counties. They hired a new Ombudsman who starts 4/24. ARPA funds are helping fund delivery of meals, lifelines, and equipment in centers. Two locations increased in meal numbers tremendously. Cairo went from 4 to 40/day. Hastings increased from 640 to 3,000 meals, with 100 HDM / day in Hastings. This previously underserved area is really taking hold. The Vault in Cairo, and culinary school at Central Community College (CCC) are providing food. Wood River took over management of their center. Wood River food is cooked at the daycare center. They are working to amend the menu a little. Guide Rock did a senior center refresh, with new flooring, opened a wall for space, painted, made sidewalk renovations, added a handicap door, and added pantry door security, and will be making sidewalk renovations and adding a handicap door.

NENAAA - Kimberly Baumann (Pierce), and Connie Cooper (Norfolk)

Kim was a service coordinator for Medicaid Waiver at NENAAA before retiring. Connie – The Agency’s Four Year Plan and annual budget was submitted and is approved. The State worked with AAAs on taxonomy and services for this Four Year plan. We appreciated creating services such as the caregiver peer-to-peer support group. NENAAA has 11 contracted caregiver support groups at senior centers. The use of the legal risk detector is starting; some of the Agency staff will be trained on April 25th. The case management supervisor has used it and identified clients who needed services immediately. Clients like the legal team calling them after they’ve been identified. NENAAA’s annual monitoring was in March and it was good to have it in person. NENAAA appreciated the one-on-one time with SUA staff. ARPA funds were distributed to senior centers through raised reimbursement rates for 6 months of meals. This used over \$435K of ARPA funds. Additionally, centers keeping open hours received flat amounts. The Randolph Senior Center closed. This used to be a premier center, but they lost the cook and never recovered. Currently, the Boyd center in Spencer cannot find a cook and manager. They are considering temporarily closing until they can find the staff. In Tekamah, the Chatt center just celebrated their 50th anniversary. Kim – The Pierce center is looking for help. They need a rebrand or refresh. The Legion Club is next door and is offering music bingo with theme songs from different years. It is intergenerational and popular. Pierce lost its grocery store a few years ago. Another nearby town is losing its grocery. Local transportation issues continue in northeast Nebraska. Some transportation is restarting.

SCNAAA - Alicia Toczek (Loup City), and Rod Horsley (Kearney)

A video from the Nebraska rural transportation effort includes a cameo from Alicia. Video: <https://youtu.be/cQ2YWH1lcuY>

Rod – The AAAs are addressing funding through the legislature next session. Older Americans Month (OAM) is next month - May. The AAAs will pursue a change in Care Management funding through legislation next year. The 4-year plan was approved this week. The Public Health Emergency ends on 5/11/23. Flexibility with dietary guidelines will end, although centers were not using it. SCN received an American Heart Association \$5K grant to address high blood pressure, through screening and referrals in Buffalo County at two sites. The Grand Pad project with UNK will continue. They are pairing an adult with a student for training and interaction. Through the Economic Development office, Ravenna and Comstock

received ARPA funding updates and repairs at centers. The Medicaid unwind is causing an increase in calls for ADRC assistance. On February 22, the AAAs held a legislative reception with senators regarding aging services. SCN sponsored a shred event with Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) and shredded 5,000 lbs. of paper.

Alicia – There is an influx of change we have no control over. What it is, why are we here, what do we do, how are we going to do it. There is a change with education systems. Alicia is involved in an intergenerational class with the University. Through partnerships are in place with Loup Basin public health department, state marketing, tourism, and economic development, relating to weather and COVID. Centers used to be able to get food from a federal resource which is no longer available.

WCNAAA - Phil Lyons (McCook), Erin Arensdorf (North Platte)

Erin – WCN submitted the area plan and are working on updates. In July, WCN will join the ADRC network. The public benefits specialist is taking calls now for Medicaid applications. The state wants applications filled out online. Senior clients need more digital access or skills and are getting help with that. WCN is considering adding another position to help with data entry and assisting clients with benefits assistance. WCN is signing new contracts with centers for new fiscal year. Waiver staff coordinate in-home services and are receiving a lot of new referrals. Care Management is busy with cases. In-home care providers are hard to find. Most Medicaid Waiver applications are for new clients. Waiver clients who previously did not meet criteria are being rescreened for Medicaid Waiver with the unwind.

Phil – The local grocery is now honoring an 8 am-12 noon senior discount, up from one day per week. Local newspapers advertise center meals. The McCook center offers several exercise classes.

Public Comment

The staff were thanked for slides on the screen.

Other Business: None.

Next Meeting Date & Speaker suggestions

October 12, 2023, 9am-2pm, Kearney.

AARP Disrupt Aging presentation will be available.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 2:24 pm.