

Committee on Aging
Meeting Minutes
March 14, 2014

Members Present: Gene Hysjulien, Peter Belgarde, Dallas Knudson, Betty Keegan, Marsha Lembke

Ex-Officio: Jan Engan, Sheryl Pfliger

Guests: Nicole Delaplane, Burleigh County Social Services, Deloris Riedman, AARP; Jessica Tomasen, Lutheran Social Services, and Jane Strommen, NDSU Extension

The meeting was called to order by Gene H., Chairperson. There was no quorum.

The Budget Report was distributed; an overview was provided by Jan E. As of 2.28.2014, the Committee expended \$5,373; the remaining budget totals \$14,627.

A Committee member list was distributed. Jan E. received notice from the Governor's Office that there were four members whose term was up 6/30/2014 (Gene H., Delores R., Bonnie B. and Marty H.). Discussion was held on the need for committee members in Region I – Williston area, Trenton Indian Service Area, and Three Affiliated Tribes. Marsha L. will follow-up with a possible contact in Williston. It was suggested that Scott Davis, Indian Affairs Office be contacted for suggestions for tribal representation.

An application was received for Region II from Merry Green, a nutritionist from the Minot Commission on Aging. Discussion was held regarding having a rural and urban representative from each region – budget constraints may become an issue. Marsha L. recommended that the committee recommend Merry as a committee member from Region II. Jan E. was asked to contact other members of the Committee to get their approval so that the Committee can move forward with this application.

Jan E. will continue to send updates received from the Federal Government (via e-mail) to Committee members. The process of reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA) started over in 2014. Senate action included interest in requiring an assurance from states targeting of services is carried out; the House held a hearing that addressed how the funding 'trickles down' to the local provider. There is a push to get the OAA passed with little change to the existing law.

The allocations for FFY 2014 were received – funding was not restored at 100% of the pre-sequestration levels. This may require a change in how the funding is distributed for the provision of services.

Discussion was held regarding the Ombudsman Program and their role in advocating for residents in long-term care facilities. Volunteers continue to be a vital part of the program. If abuse is suspected, the Department of Health has the responsibility to investigate.

Vulnerable adult protective services (VAPS) have seen an increase in activity since mandatory reporting became law. Legislation included additional funding for adult

protective services staff; procurement requirements were followed resulting in new contracts in Region II with Mountrail County Social Services and Region VI with Hart Counseling, Inc.; additional funding was given to the existing contract entity Cass County. The Division continues to review staffing and plans to increase coverage in Region III. Quarterly reports are generated by the data system used by the Division. Data indicates that cases are more intense and more difficult to find workable solutions.

During the past Legislative session, additional dollars were also received for guardianships. To date, expenditures have already exceeded funding for this time period. Approximately 60% of the referrals (for guardianships) come from the VAPS workers.

Discussion was held on steps the Committee can take in advocating for needed services. A request was made to Aging Services Division that data reports on VAPS be forwarded to the Committee members. Marsha L. stated that data can be studied by Committee members so that recommendations can be made to the Governor. Betty K. concurred with the request. Pete requested that the numbers identify reports from tribal areas. Gene H. appointed the following Committee members to review the data on an ongoing basis and make recommendations to the Committee for approval to forward to the Governor (if determined necessary): Gene H., Betty K., Marsha L., and Peter B.

Jan E. reported that the OAA FFY 2013 State Program Report was completed. The unduplicated count of persons served was 23,202. The report shows a decline in the number of 60+ accessing services. The challenge is how to attract people to participate in services.

Sheryl P. provided an update on the State Plan on Aging input process. The Department developed press releases regarding the opportunity to provide input through public meetings as well as through an online survey. In addition, paper surveys were distributed to congregate and home-delivered meal participants, and individuals receiving home and community-based services through the Medical Services Division. Public hearings are scheduled from March 26 – May 2; a handout on the upcoming State Plan on Aging hearings was distributed. Data obtained from the survey documents and the hearings will be compiled by the Department's Decision Support Unit and be considered in the development of the State Plan which is due in Denver by July 1, 2014.

Jessica T., Lutheran Social Services (LSS) provided the following information: LSS has been serving North Dakotans for almost 100 years. About six years ago, work began in the area of affordable housing. LSS has renovated properties, built new properties, and owns and manages properties. Having a personal relationship with tenants allows them to see firsthand the challenges they face. Their challenge is 'how do you bring services to people who need them, when they need them, and where they need them'. They need to work with partners to serve older adults.

To facilitate independent living, apartments must be affordable, accessible, and safe. The units have a mix of tenants – 2/3 are income restricted, 1/3 are not. Approximately 40-45% are over age 62; 30% are under age 18. In Williston, a 44 unit restricted

income apartment complex (former school that was renovated) will open soon. LSS hopes to partner with the Senior Center for meal service.

LSS is also looking at the concept of service hubs in housing projects. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid funded an evidence-based project in Vermont – LSS hopes to replicate that model. They hope to work with partners to provide ‘wrap around’ services. Food banks, senior companion services, pharmacists, mental health specialists, health maintenance services, and senior centers are a few entities that could assist in making the project successful.

There is a need to get creative with existing resources. LSS extended an open invitation to participate.

Jane Strommen, NDSU Extension Service, provided an overview of their organization that is a part of the College of Human Development and Family Science. She highlighted information on the Stepping On Program – an evidenced –based falls prevention program. The program was a joint effort between Aging Services Division and the Department of Health. Currently, there are 64 leaders trained in providing exercise classes in 24 counties. Another program focuses on chronic disease prevention and addresses nutrition – access to quality food, nutrition education, nutrition safety, the benefits of not smoking, and physical activity. ‘Nourishing Boomers and Beyond’ focuses on positive changes for healthy behavior and prevention of chronic diseases. The program has been used to address common factors of obesity including increased blood pressure, increased cholesterol, and diabetes. Since the program began in January, monthly classes have been held in 24 counties, focusing on rural areas. Senior centers have been tapped to assist with the program. Newsletters are distributed to 525 individuals. The website also provides information on making positive changes for better health. Jane provided a handout on ‘North Dakota’s Aging Population: Profile and Trends of Seniors Age 65 and Older’.

Doreen Riedman is new to her position at AARP; her focus area is working with volunteers. Packets of information on AARP were provided. Doreen would like to collaborate with groups in any way possible, as we are all working towards the same goals.

Discussion was held regarding the structure of the statewide ‘Graying of North Dakota Coalition’ that found common ground on issues of concern for a number of agencies providing services in ND. Betty K., Jane Strommen, Doreen Riedman, and Sheryl P. will meet via conference call to discuss the feasibility of reinstating a similar group.

The next Committee on Aging meeting is scheduled for June 13, 2014. Marsh L. moved to adjourn; seconded by Dallas K. Meeting adjourned at 2:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Sheryl Pfliger, Assistant Director
Aging Services Division