

ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON AGING

VIRTUAL WEBEX

TUESDAY, MARCH 23, 2021

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA WEBEX AND TELECONFERENCE:

Phyllis Mitzen, Anthony Frazier, Jane Angelis, Julie Bobitt, Nancy S. Chen, Christie Goleman, Paulette M. Hamlin, Kim Hunt, Talat Khan, Britta M. Larson, Susan Lawler, Patricia Marton, Mubarak A. Mirjat, Robert J. O'Connor, Anna M. Oestreich

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Margaret Huyck, Steve Wolf, Senator Mattie Hunter, Representative Rita Mayfield, Representative Anna Moeller

VISITORS:

None

DEPARTMENT ON AGING STAFF PRESENT:

Paula A. Basta, Director

Lora McCurdy, Deputy Director

Sarah Harris, CFO

Amy Lulich, Senior Policy Advisor

Mike Berkes, Division Manager, Planning, Research, Development and Training

Lisa Zuurbier, Division Manager, Community Relations and Outreach

Lynnette Martin, Deputy Division Manager, Community Relations and Outreach

Kelly Richards, State Ombudsman

Lee Moriarty, Deputy State Ombudsman

Michael Dropka, PIO

Portia Riley, Administrative Assistant

SUMMARY

Opening:

The meeting was called to order by Phyllis Mitzen at 10:01 a.m.

Roll call was taken by Anthony Frazier and it was determined that a quorum was established.

Approval of Minutes:

Julie Bobbitt entered a motion to approve the minutes from the Illinois Council on Aging (ICoA) meeting held on December 15, 2020. Paulette M. Hamlin seconded the motion; all members voted aye, and the minutes were approved as presented.

Public Comment:

None

Covid-19 Vaccination Efforts – Amaal V.E. Tokars, Ed., Assistant Director, IDPH:

Dr. Tokars attended the Illinois Council on Aging Meeting (ICOA) to discuss efforts the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is taking to ensure an equitable rollout of the COVID vaccine in Illinois.

Dr. Tokars reported that vaccine supplies are still relatively modest in Illinois. Individuals are challenged to find open appointments. IDPH expects more appointments will be available over the next few weeks. IDPH continues to ask all Aging Network providers to pay very close attention to access for seniors. IDPH discussed asking brick and mortar pharmacy stores to offer an elder hour at each of their locations.

Dr. Tokars shared that IDPH is working with a home health agency that began administering the vaccine to their homebound clients last week. IDPH will receive a report this week on how they are doing and will look at duplicating that success with other home health agencies that feel its within their capacity to provide the vaccine. Council Members should contact either Director Basta or Deputy Director Lora McCurdy, if they know of any home health agency who is interested in vaccinating their clients. IDPH will also be working with Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) to see how they might assist with getting their members vaccinated.

The State is open for everyone to be eligible to receive the vaccine on May 1, 2021. However, Dr. Tokars said there will not be enough vaccine available on that date to vaccinate everyone who may be interested in receiving it. Dr. Tokars shared that only 60 percent of the adult population say they will get the vaccine. IDPH expects that the elderly population knows the vaccine is of great benefit to them and hopes the demand for it will only increase within the older adult population. She stated the importance of individuals who spend time around seniors, including family members and professionals, to get vaccinated.

Council Members were interested to learn more about the revised IDPH guidance regarding visitation within the long-term care communities and skilled nursing facilities. Dr. Tokars explained that during the winter months, IDPH lifted restrictions on visitation for the long-term care facilities due to the decrease in sickness and infection rates. Dr. Tokars said that it is up to the nursing homes individually to decide what restrictions they want to keep in place. If the nursing home is a place of no infection, they certainly can permit spaced visitations. Some individual nursing homes may decide that they are not yet comfortable to open fully.

Phyllis Mitzen and Director Basta thanked Dr. Tokars for educating the Council. Director Basta informed Dr. Tokars that the Department on Aging is always available to help in any way possible. The Department will continue to get the word out about the vaccine and help seniors get vaccinated.

Anti-Asian Hate Crimes Due to COVID:

Nancy Chen thanked Council Members and the Department for the opportunity to discuss anti-Asian hate crimes. Nancy said Asian Americans are facing hatred and violence that's occurring across the United States due to the COVID pandemic. Attacks against Asians have risen 150 percent across the nation due to COVID and divisive rhetoric by some national leaders who refer to COVID as the "China Virus" and "Kungfu Flu". A California group "Stop AAPI Hate", documented nearly 3,800 cases throughout the country since the start of the pandemic. In

Chicago, there were three killings in addition to racial harassment and attacks. Also, in Naperville where Nancy lives, there were two anti-Asian racial incidents documented last year.

Nancy said that last week, six Asian American women were killed by a gunman in Atlanta and it became a wakeup call for our nation. Asian Americans are afraid of going out for fear of being attacked. Nancy asked the Council to speak up against anti-Asian hate and racism, and to support Asian American elders in our state. Nancy shared that she is on the City Council in Naperville and asked them to introduce a Resolution to condemn racism and to support the Asian community. The Resolution passed unanimously. Nancy stated that there has been overwhelming support for the Asian community in Naperville.

Nancy does not think that there are enough language translators for non-English speaking people who want to report hate crimes, and most of these victims are often elderly non-English speaking people. Nancy does not know if there is a way for State agencies to coordinate and provide the necessary language assistance, but she feels that would be tremendously helpful for the Asian community.

Phyllis thanked Nancy for her report and said that Council stands with the Asian community. Phyllis informed Council members that her organization is going to participate in basic anti-racism training through AAPI. Phyllis will send training dates to ICoA members. She also mentioned that there is a rally to be held this upcoming Saturday at 2pm in Chinatown. Phyllis will forward the flyer to the Council membership. Nancy said that she will be speaking at the rally and hopes that AARP will participate at the event. Director Basta thanked Nancy and informed her that the Department stands with the Asian community. If the Council has other suggestions and actions to pursue, the Department will support those efforts as well.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

The Department has a Senate Hearing tomorrow at 5:00 p.m. with the Senate Appropriations Committee, and the House Appropriations Hearing is scheduled for Friday, April. 2, 2021. The Department is busy preparing the overview for the IDoA Fiscal Year 2022 Budget.

The Aging Network is helping older adults get vaccinated against COVID. A news article released today reported that 64 percent of older adults in the state of Illinois have been vaccinated and that number continues to increase.

The Department reported that the City of Chicago is conducting homebound vaccinations through the REDCap. The Department provided the REDCap survey link in the chat and asked Council members to share with homebound seniors who may need vaccinated.

The Department has great examples of local public health departments partnering with AAAs, CCUs and senior centers to vaccinate older adults. On February 15, IDoA awarded \$1.2 million to the AAAs to assist with direct outreach to people that are receiving home delivered meals or transportation services provided by the AAAs. The Department also awarded funding through the Emergency Senior Services to the Care Coordination Units to assist with efforts. The

Department has been very fortunate that it has resources to provide to the Aging Network to assist with vaccinating older adults.

The Council was interested in learning more about the Department's legislation priorities. It was noted that there are a couple of Adult Protective Service (APS) related bills that the Department supported. During the next Council meeting to be held in June, the Department will provide a legislative update.

The State Ombudsman started an Illinois Resident and Family Support Council (IRFSC) conducted virtually through Zoom to bring people together across the State. The goal of IRFSC is to educate and connect people about issues relating to residents and families in the long-term care system. The focus includes: addressing concerns and complaints affecting residents in long-term care facilities; serving as a sounding board for new ideas and improvements; advocating for positive change within the facilities; communicating with administrators and staff; and promoting activities that have benefit to all residents.

The first IRFSC meeting included 80 people in attendance from across the State. The meetings will be recorded and put on the Department's website and Facebook page, as well as the Illinois Pioneer Coalition website and the Compassionate Caregivers Facebook page. ICoA members are encouraged to attend the next IRFSC meeting scheduled for March 30, 2021, from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. If you are interested in attending or have any questions, please contact Lee Moriarty by email at Lee.Moriarty@Illinois.gov.

Lee announced that the City of Chicago will no longer be representing the State Ombudsman program. A Request for Proposals (RFP) will be going out soon. If Council members know of an organization who may potentially be interested, please contact Lee.

The second IDoA Virtual Conference is scheduled for March 30, 2021. IDoA Conference topics will continue to center around COVID and caregiving, vaccinations, and how to best meet the needs of older adults across the State. The platform is limited to 700 participants, but the recorded material will be available to others later. Lisa Zuurbier sent a Save-the-Date Notice to Council Members and will send additional information when it is available.

Director Basta informed the Council that there are a couple of important projects coming up soon. The Department will be examining social isolation data with the University of Illinois Champaign. Goals include identifying individuals who are at higher risk for social isolation and developing prevention strategies.

Mike Berkes shared that the Department is developing a more comprehensive case management system, Aging Cares, that will include assessment information and billing status. The Department is hopeful that the system will provide a more comprehensive view and valuable data to help improve services. Phase 1 will of the project will be completed at the end of 2021. The Department will keep the Council updated on the progress. The Council had a question about whether demographic data includes sexual orientation and gender identity. Mike Berkes confirmed that was the intent of the Department. Deputy Director Lora McCurdy said that the Department will coordinate with the Administration on Community Living (ACL) regarding capturing Older American Act (OAA) data. Director Basta suggested that it might be a good

idea to invite Amy Wider Rodriguez, ACL Regional Administrator, to speak to the Council at a later date.

Director Basta informed the Council that the Department expected to receive additional stimulus funding for older adult programs, especially for food, food security, and food security issues around home delivered meals. APS is expected to receive additional funds, as well as the State Ombudsman.

Director Basta invited Council members to attend the Disrupt Disparities: Advancing Racial Equity in Aging Summit to be held April 26-27, 2021. She shared that ICoA Member Kim Hunt is serving on the Summit Planning Committee. The Department is hosting the Summit, along with AARP Illinois and the Retirement Research Foundation.

Amy Lulich shared that the Department received funding from ACL to provide iPads, tablets, and WIFI hotspots to older adults and persons with disabilities who may be experiencing social isolation and loneliness as a result of COVID. This program is a partnership with the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities and Division of Rehabilitative Services. The Department is working with the Illinois Assistive Technology Program (IATP), which has a history of providing technical support to older adults and persons with disabilities for all types of technology. The Department has distributed over 1,100 devices since August 2020. Amy mentioned that IATP also has a variety of other programs to support individuals with assistive technology such as information and assistance, device training, assessments, education, and outreach.

Nancy Chen expressed concern regarding individuals over the age of 90 who live independently by themselves. Many of these individuals are not receiving aging services and are not technology savvy enough to connect with family and friends and receive pertinent information. Nancy shared her challenges when trying to get the vaccine and concerns regarding others who may have experienced similar frustrations. Director Basta agreed that there are many individuals frustrated with the vaccination process. She added that local public health departments each have their own vaccination process and there are areas where the vaccine supply is very limited.

Director Basta shared that IDPH now has a toll-free number that helps individuals secure vaccination appointments. The phone number for the IDPH Hotline is (833) 621-1284. She said that the City of Chicago also has phone number for people to call for assistance, and that Council members should utilize these resources to help family, friends, clients and others interested in being vaccinated.

OTHER BUSINESS

Nominating Committee

Due to COVID, there has been changes in the ICoA meeting cycle. The Annual Meeting, which is the time the Council selects officers, was postponed. Anna Ostrich, ICoA Nominating Chair, is putting together a Committee to prepare a slate of candidates for consideration at the upcoming June meeting. Positions to be considered are Chair; Vice Chair; Secretary; and

Nominating Chair. The candidate names will be distributed to the Council more than 15 days prior to the meeting. Council Members who are interested in serving, should contact Anna. The Nominating Committee will follow up with those interested.

Closing Remarks:

Anthany Frazier thanked Director Basta and Department staff for leadership during the COVID pandemic. Director Basta stated that the Department appreciates the ongoing support of the Council. Phyllis said if Council Members had any information they would like to share, to please contact her or Lisa Zuurbier. Phyllis echoed Anthany's statement and said that the Department has done an excellent job of serving older adults throughout pandemic.

Motion to Adjourn:

Meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Phyllis Mitzen, Chair
Illinois Council on Aging