

ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON AGING

MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2024

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

COUNCIL ON AGING (ICoA) MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sue Vega, Kim Hunt, Julie Bobitt, Anthony Frazier, Melvin Grimes, Paulette Hamlin, Talat Khan, Susan Lawler, Sylvia Mahle, Patricia Marton, Mubarak Mirjat, Phyllis Mitzen, Crystal Odom-McKinney, Edgar Ramirez, Kate Schwartz, Meijan Linda Yu, Representative Rita Mayfield represented by Dylan Olthoff

ICoA MEMBERS ABSENT:

Britta Larson, Christina Hardin-Weiss, Senator Mattie Hunter, Senator Laura Fine, Senator David Syverson, Representative Maura Hirschauer

VISITORS and GUESTS:

Stacey Parr, National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA), SCSEP Project Director

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT ON AGING (IDoA) STAFF PRESENT:

Mary Killough, Director
Becky Dragoo, Deputy Director
Liz Vogt, Chief of Staff
Rhonda Armstead, General Counsel
Lisa Dupoy, Administrative Assistant, Division of Community Relations & Outreach
John Eckert, Deputy Division Manager of Planning, Research & Development
Jennifer Hebel, Special Research Assistant to the Executive Office
Sandy Leith, Senior Health Insurance Program Director
Lee Moriarty, Deputy State Long Term Care Ombudsman
Brian Pastor, Division Manager of Advocacy & Prevention Services
Sandy Pastore, Division Manager of Home & Community Services
Kelly Richards, State Long Term Care Ombudsman
Gloria Simmons, Legislative Liaison
Iris Schweier, Public Information Officer
Roberta Vojas, Legislative Administrative Assistant
Lisa Zuurbier, Division Manager of Community Relations & Outreach

SUMMARY

OPENING:

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 a.m. by Council Chair Susan Vega. Roll call was taken by Secretary Julie Bobitt and it was determined that a quorum was established.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The Chair asked Council members for a motion to approve the minutes from the June 25, 2024 meeting. Melvin Grimes entered a motion and Phyllis Mitzen seconded the motion; all members voted aye, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SCSEP) PRESENTATION :

ICoA member Crystal Odom-McKinney serves as the Easterseals National Director of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). Crystal provided an overview of SCSEP, sharing that it began in 1965 as a pilot program under the Johnson Administration. SCSEP was designed by Congress to support older job seekers through training and enhancing their employment skills. In 2016, SCSEP was reauthorized under Title V of the Older Americans Act. The SCSEP program is a federally funded program falling under the United States Department of Labor (DOL). There are 19 national SCSEP grantee organizations, including AARP, Goodwill and Easterseals. Funding is split between national organizations who receive 75 percent of the funding with the other 25 percent of the funding going to state organizations. To be eligible for SCSEP, individuals must be 55 or older, unemployed, reside in a county that the program serves, and meet the qualifying level of income. Job seekers train for an average of 20 hours per week to obtain skills, gain confidence and successfully become employed. Crystal went on to explain how important it is to talk to lawmakers about how crucial funding this program is to the older workforce and the positive impact it has on their lives, and to dispel myths such as older workers cannot be trained or are not tech-savvy.

Stacey Parr, SCSEP Project Director for the National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA), continued with more information about SCSEP. NAPCA operates the set aside program for the SCSEP American Asian, Hispanic, Philippine, and Indian populations. They also serve the general grant, which encompasses all seniors aged 55 and older. She added that SCSEP works with non-profit state and local agencies to provide the training needed to become a successful employee, improve self-sufficiency, and find employment opportunities. NAPCA began in 1976 when the DOL set aside funds to be spent on underserved populations within the SCSEP program. NAPCA also has a national helpline that operates in eight different languages, linking callers to help with many different topics including Social Security, Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The website is located at <https://www.napca.org>. Stacey also shared that National Employee Older Worker week is September 22 through 28 and is focused on embracing experience and empowering futures.

The Council members asked Stacey and Crystal about the availability of training and outreach, as well as limits to individual participants in these programs. Additional conversation evolved concerning participant training, wages and the impact of benefits received, and how SCSEP works with the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs).

STATE PLAN ON AGING DEVELOPMENT:

Sandy Pastore, Division Manager of Home and Community Services, updated the Council on Fiscal Year (FY) 26-28 Illinois State Plan on Aging. Currently, stakeholder meetings are being held to gather input for the State Plan. Sandy shared that the three statewide initiatives that will be the basis of this State Plan are statewide visibility of the aging network, continuous quality assurance, and awareness and knowledge of caregiver needs. Sandy added that every three years the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) do their own three-year plans that help to inform IDoA's State Plan on Aging. Sandy presented statistics by each Planning and Service Area (PSA) regarding data collected on housing, poverty, living alone, and caregivers. Additional considerations for the FY26-28 State Plan are Illinois' growing aging population, increasing diversity, current volunteer and workforce shortages resulting in limited resources, as well as the impact of ageism, ableism, racism, sexism and other stereotypes. Sandy said that age-friendly communities will also be encouraged and supported statewide.

The Council discussed ways to address all these issues and others including isolation, long term care facilities, affordable housing, rural communities, transportation and healthcare. It was noted that incorporating meaningful actions into the State Plan will allow more older Illinoisians to age in their communities with independence, dignity, and quality of life.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

IDoA Director Mary Killough shared that Governor Pritzker signed an executive order that creates a Multi-Sector Plan for Aging. She explained that a special committee is being established and that anyone who is interested in applying can do so on the Governor's website. There will only be 25 members so the process will be very selective based upon adequate coverage of the issues. Formation of the committee is expected within the next few months, as the plan is due to the General Assembly by December 2025. Director Killough added that the Multi-Sector Plan is giving Illinois a chance to look outside the box and into the future as to what the aging population will need and how those needs may be met.

Sandy Leith, Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) Director, updated the Council on Medicare Open Enrollment that begins on October 15 and ends on December 7. Sandy reminded the Council that during Open Enrollment, beneficiaries may switch healthcare plans including Medicare Part D prescription coverage. Any changes to plans during this time will go into on January 1, 2025. She noted that starting in 2025 due to the Inflation Reduction Act, all Medicare plans will include a \$2,000 cap on what beneficiaries pay out-of-pocket for prescription drugs covered. If out-of-pocket spending on covered drugs reaches \$2,000 beneficiaries will not have to pay out-of-pocket for covered Part D drugs for the rest of the calendar year. Beneficiaries can seek assistance by calling *1-800 Medicare* 24 hours a day, by logging online at <https://shiphelp.org> , or by calling the IDoA Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966.

NEW BUSINESS:

Kim Hunt shared information about a free summit in Chicago hosted by Pride Action Tank. The summit will be held on October 1-2, 2024, with the theme “*De-Siloing Aging, HIV and LGBTQ+ Services: A Summit on New Possibilities*”. To register, go to the website www.aidschicago.org/outaging.

Lisa Zuurbier, Division Manager of Community Relations and Outreach, reminded the Council members that their annual trainings are due by the end of December. An email to ICoA members will follow with a list of the trainings and the OneNet access link.

AJOURNMENT:

Vice Chair Kim Hunt asked for a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Chair Sue Vega and seconded by Paulette Hamlin.

The meeting adjourned at 11:59 a.m.

Julie Bobitt, Secretary

Illinois Council on Aging