

ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON AGING

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2025

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

ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON AGING (ICoA) MEMBERS PRESENT:

Susan Vega, Kim Hunt, Julie Bobitt, Britta Larson, Anthany Frazier, Paulette Hamlin, Christina Hardin-Weiss, Talat Khan, Susan Lawler, Steven Lord, Sylvia Mahle, Patricia Marton, Mubarak Mirjat, Phyllis Mitzen, Kate Schwartz, Sherry Sparks, Meijian Linda Yu, Senator Mattie Hunter represented by Angela McLemore, Representative Rita Mayfield represented by Ruben Sanchez, Maura Hirschauer represented by Matthew Hurtado

ICoA MEMBERS ABSENT:

Melvin Grimes, Crystal Odom-McKinney, Edgar Ramirez, Senator Laura Fine, Senator Dave Syverson

VISITORS and GUESTS:

Edward Perry, Executive Director, 211 Illinois

Diane Slezak, President and Chief Executive Officer, AgeOptions

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT ON AGING (IDoA) STAFF PRESENT:

Mary Killough, IDoA Director
Liz Vogt, Chief of Staff
Rhonda Armstead, General Counsel
Michelle Hoersch, Chief Planning Officer, Multisector Plan on Aging
Bresha Brewer, Legislative Director
Sandy Pastore, Senior Policy Advisor
T’Kira Siler-Wilkerson, Deputy Division Manager of Home & Community Services
Derek Hedges, Division Manager of Planning, Research, Development and Training
John Eckert, Deputy Division Manager of Planning, Research, Development and Training
Kelly Richards, State Long-Term Care Ombudsman
Lee Moriarty, Deputy State Long-Term Care Ombudsman
Iris Huber, Public Information Officer
Emily Howerton, Budget Director
Roberta Vojas, Legislative Liaison
Lisa Zuurbier, Division Manager of Community Relations & Outreach
Lisa Dupoy, Administrative Assistant, Division of Community Relations & Outreach

SUMMARY

OPENING:

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m. by Council Chair Susan Vega. Roll call was taken by Council 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 March 25, 2025 meeting. Mubarak Mirjat entered a motion and Sherry Sparks seconded the motion; all members voted aye, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

211 Illinois Update:

Edward Perry, Executive Director of 211 Illinois, provided an update on current expansion efforts of the 211 system in Illinois. He stated that 211 Illinois has been in existence for 15 years, starting with mostly volunteers leading up to today with executive leadership and grant funding to enable growth. 211's mission is to connect residents to vital health and human services information and referral services nationwide. It is available 24 hours a day in more than 200 languages. Nationally, 211 began in Atlanta, Georgia in 1999 and has expanded throughout the United States to all 50 states. 211 information can be obtained by simply dialing 211 from your phone, texting your zip code to 898211, or by using resources on the website at www.211illinois.org.

211 Illinois is the lead entity for 211 services throughout the State of Illinois and has been in existence since 2009 with the Illinois legislature passing the *211 Illinois Service Act* in 2010. The *211 Illinois Service Act* tasks 211 Illinois as the lead agency for 211 services in Illinois with government oversight over the design, implementation, and statewide coordination of the 211 system. 211 Illinois advocates for increased funding to allow for further expansion of the 211 system and to gather statewide data. Data shows that there was a 31 percent increase in contacts totaling 176,464 in 2024 from 2023; 23 percent increase in needs being identified totaling 189,907 in 2024 from 2023; and an increase of 20 percent in referrals totaling 304,415 in 2024 from 2023. In the last 18 months, 211 statewide coverage has increased from 91 percent to 97 percent, with 100 percent coverage expected later this year. For more information regarding 211 Illinois, visit the website at www.211illinois.org.

Illinois Area Agencies on Aging Advocacy:

Diane Slezak, President and Chief Executive Officer of AgeOptions, shared information about *The Day of Advocacy* that was held on May 28 in 46 locations throughout Illinois to focus on the importance of the Older Americans Act (OAA). A campaign was initiated, *Don't Blow Out the Candles on the Older Americans Act*, to advocate for the retention and full federal funding of OAA which turns 60 this year. The Act has allowed the United States to develop an intertwined nationwide aging network and provides funding for invaluable services that older adults need to

stay in their homes as they age. The Act established by legislation on July 14, 1965, created the Administration on Aging (AoA), the State Units on Aging (SUA), as well as the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). Diane said that OAA funding is the financial backbone of aging services provided in Illinois. Diane also shared that the federal government has announced the elimination of the Administration for Community Living (ACL) that manages and coordinates OAA services and programs for older adults and people with disabilities who live at home. The programs are to be integrated into other federal agencies, including the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Diane also shared that the upcoming USAgeing Conference will be held in Chicago from July 20 to 23, 2025. USAgeing is the national association representing and supporting the national network of AAAs. Diane said that there are more than 600 AAAs in the U.S., with 13 AAAs existing in Illinois. Detailed information and the registration form can be found at <https://www.usagingconference.org>.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Director Mary Killough shared that she was recently confirmed as the Illinois Department on Aging Director after serving as Acting Director for a year. She introduced the new Multisector Plan on Aging (MPA) Chief Planning Officer, Michelle Hoersch. Michelle provided an update on the progress of the MPA. She reported that the formation of the MPA Task Force and Community Advisory Council was complete and that research is being conducted to compile accurate information for the success of the MPA. She added that ICOA will be asked to provide feedback on the goals of MPA in the near future.

Emily Howerton, Budget Director, updated ICoA members on the IDoA Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) enacted budget of nearly \$2.1 billion. She said that the FY26 budget represents an increase of 10.2 percent from the FY25 budget. Director Killough expressed gratitude for the IDoA funding increase received from the Governor. Discussion regarding federal funding followed with an acknowledgment that a decrease would have a significant negative impact on older adults and persons with disabilities in Illinois. Members were encouraged to advocate for federal funding by making legislators aware of older adult needs and the negative consequences that decreases in funding would have on vulnerable populations in Illinois.

NEW BUSINESS:

New Council member Steven Lord was introduced. He spoke of his previous experience and shared his interest in helping the older adult population through his ICoA appointment.

Director Killough announced that the Illinois Fair would be held soon, with Senior Day on Monday, August 11. She invited ICoA members to join IDoA in celebrating older adults in the Illinois Building during the State Fair. She also mentioned that IDoA will be hosting a conference in October. More information will be shared as plans are finalized.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

The meeting adjourned at 11:43 a.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Bobitt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a horizontal line.

Julie Bobitt, Secretary

Illinois Council on Aging