

ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON AGING

WEBEX MEETING FINAL MINUTES

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2023

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

ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON AGING (ICoA) MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kim Hunt, Julie Bobitt, Anthony Frazier, Melvin Grimes, Paulette Hamlin, Talat Khan, Britta Larson, Susan Lawler, Sylvia Mahle, Patricia Marton, Mubarak Mirjat, Phyllis Mitzen, Edgar Ramirez, Senator Laura Fine, Representative Maura Hirschauer, Dylan Olthoff (on behalf of Representative Rita Mayfield)

ICoA MEMBERS ABSENT:

Susan Vega, Senator Mattie Hunter, Senator David Syverson

VISITORS and GUESTS:

Erin Rife, Asst. Bureau Chief, Health Care Regulation, Illinois Dept. of Public Health
Aneta Thomas Lee, Assistant Director, Illinois Broadband Lab
Matt Schmit, Illinois Office of Broadband
Lauren Polite, Medicaid Eligibility & Managed Care, Illinois Dept. of Healthcare & Family Services

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT ON AGING (IDoA) STAFF:

Becky Dragoo, Deputy Director
Selma D'Souza, Chief of Staff
Rhonda Armstead, General Counsel
Jennifer Hebel, Special Research Assistant, Executive Office
Mike Berkes, Division Manager of Planning, Research, Development & Training
Brian Pastor, Division Manager of Advocacy & Prevention Services
Sandra Pastore, Division Manager of Home & Community Services
Chelsey Peters, Deputy Division Manager of Home & Community Services
Joe Danner, Deputy State Home Care Ombudsman
Glenda Corbett, Special Assistant to the Director on Community Engagement & Equity
Iris Schweier, Public Information Officer
Emily Howerton, Budget & Finance Manager
Lisa Zuurbier, Division Manager of Community Relations & Outreach
Lisa Dupoy, Administrative Assistant, Community Relations & Outreach

SUMMARY

OPENING:

The meeting was called to order by ICoA Vice Chair Kim Hunt at 10:03 a.m. Kim announced that Christie Goleman, ICoA Chair, is no longer serving on the Council and that more discussion on vacancies will be upcoming in the New Business segment of this meeting. Roll call was then taken by Council Secretary Julie Bobitt and it was determined that a quorum was established.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Kim asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the June 20, 2023 meeting. Britta Larson entered a motion. Sylvia Mahle seconded the motion. All members voted aye, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

BROADBAND EXPANSION AND DIGITAL EQUITY:

Aneta Thomas Lee, Visiting Assistant Director for Digital Equity, Inclusion and Navigation to the Illinois Broadband Lab, spoke to the Council about broadband equity. Aneta went on to explain that in 2021 a one trillion-dollar infrastructure bill was passed, dubbed The Green New Deal, which was designed to enhance economic development including job creation. One of the items funded in this bill was \$65 billion for broadband expansion. The United States Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Department of the Treasury are the agencies leading the effort to connect everyone in the United States to affordable, reliable, high-speed internet. These government funds will add to existing internet programs that expand internet access including planning, infrastructure and adoption. The process of 'broadband access for everyone' is compared with the electrification of the United States and is considered a down-payment for the eventual evolution of the internet becoming a basic utility. Aneta went on to discuss the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment program (BEAD) that has been allotted \$42 billion dollars of the \$65 billion designated for high-speed internet access that is funded by the bipartisan infrastructure law. BEAD is a federal grant program aimed at providing internet access to all Americans, while prioritizing unserved and underserved locations. Their goal is to provide reliable, robust, affordable high-speed internet across the country. The State of Illinois was granted a little over \$1 billion dollars to create new internet infrastructure. This funding is being rolled into an existing program called Connect Illinois that is already providing funds for internet projects around the state. Approximately \$2.75 billion in federal funding will also be used for training and internet equipment, including tablets and hardware with training provided on how to connect to and use the internet. Federal funds have already begun to be distributed to the States and are being used to do feasibility studies and create broadband offices. Funding to be distributed in 2024 will go out to non-profits, governmental organizations, and community-based type of organizations to prepare communities for the arrival of highspeed internet service.

Aneta went on to explain that the Digital Equity Act focuses on addressing the needs of covered populations, as defined by statute, who are disproportionately impacted by digital inequity. Those covered populations are low-income households, aging populations, incarcerated individuals, veterans, people with disabilities, people with language barriers, racial and ethnic minorities, as well as rural inhabitants.

Aneta encouraged all Council members to give input through public comment periods as to needs they may be seeing in the aging community, as well as suggestions moving forward through the roll-out of this program. The Illinois Broadband Lab has a website found at <https://broadband.uillinois.edu> that contains much more information and resources. Additional resources are located at the Illinois Office of Broadband's website of <https://dceo.illinois.gov/connectillinois/ilofficeofbroadband.html> and the NTIA's website at <https://internetforall.gov> and <https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov>. Aneta T. Lee can be reached at atl@illinois.edu.

MEDICAID REDETERMINATION UPDATE:

Lauren Polite, representing the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) on Medicaid Eligibility and Managed Care issues, provided an update on the year-to-date Medicaid redetermination efforts. Continuous enrollment in Medicaid is no longer tied to the Covid Public Health Emergency (PHE) and eligibility redeterminations began in Illinois with the mailing of redetermination letters on May 1, 2023. Lauren went on to explain that Illinois has two types of redetermination forms, Form A (also known as Ex Parte) and Form B. Form A is used when the Medicaid recipients' income can be verified electronically or they have no income. Form A Ex Parte redeterminations average 50 percent of Illinois recipients. Form B is for recipients whose income cannot be verified electronically, including the self-employed and those without social security numbers. Form B requires the recipient to attach proof of income and submit the form back by the due date on their form. If they do not, their coverage will end. Therefore, all focus is currently on the Form B recipients to ensure they return their paperwork to give them the best chance of continued Medicaid coverage if they are still eligible. There is a 90-day reinstatement period after coverage loss for failure to respond if it is found they are eligible for reinstatement. If the recipient does not submit within that 90-day window, they must then reapply. The goals during this time of redetermination are to maximize the number of eligible Medicaid recipients as well as ensuring those no longer eligible maintain health coverage through the Marketplace, employer-based coverage or Medicare. More information regarding the Medicaid Redetermination is available at medicaid.illinois.gov.

DIRECTORS REPORT AND DEPARTMENT UPDATES:

IDO Deputy Director Becky Dragoo provided a staff update. She informed members of the Caregiver Roundtable meetings that have been taking place across the State. The roundtable meeting goals are to garner feedback and input from caregivers as to their needs and the gaps in services for themselves and the older adults for whom they provide care.

Sandy Pastore, Division Manager of Home & Community Services, shared that IDoA plans to review the feedback collected at the caregiver roundtables as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The feedback will allow the Aging Network to see and assess what is taking place and become better equipped to make service improvements.

Mike Berkes, Division Manager of Planning, Research, Development & Training, spoke on the Emergency Home Response Service (EHRS) and the upcoming IDoA Conference. Mike was excited to announce that federal approval has been granted for the enhanced service definition of EHRS to include global positioning technology (GPS), as well as fall detection enhancements. The new GPS enhanced bracelets or pendants will allow coverage outside of the home to those wearing the devices. These enhancements will allow older adults to stay in their communities longer and be safer there as well. Mike said the tentative date to start this new enhancement will be soon and will follow up once everything has been finalized.

Mike also spoke about the upcoming annual Aging Conference to be held at the University of Illinois Springfield campus on October 3 - 4. Many great speakers will be presenting on a variety of topics such as diversity, equity and inclusion, the Inflation Reduction Act, and workforce issues. There will be approximately 30 breakout sessions. There is also an IDoA 50th year anniversary celebration planned during the conference to recognize all of the outstanding work that has been accomplished by the IDoA and the Aging Network.

NEW BUSINESS and CLOSING REMARKS:

Council Vice Chair Kim Hunt discussed filling current vacancies in the Chair and Nominating Chair positions as well as needing executive member nominations for the upcoming March 2024 annual Council election. Lisa Zuurbier made the Council aware of four potential new members that the Governor's office is currently working on getting appointed. She hopes to have them attend the next Council meeting on December 19, 2023 and looks forward to their appointments.

ADJOURNMENT:

Vice Chair Kim Hunt asked for a motion to adjourn. Talat Khan made a motion; Patricia Marton seconded the motion; all members voted aye and the meeting was adjourned at 11:44 a.m.

Julie Bobitt, Secretary

Illinois Council on Aging