

ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON AGING

WEBEX MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2022

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

ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON AGING (ICoA) MEMBERS PRESENT:

Christine Goleman, Kim Hunt, Julie Bobitt, Nancy Chen, Anthony Frazier, Paulette Hamlin, Talat Khan, Britta Larson, Susan Lawler, Mubarak Mirjat, Robert Mueller, Susan Vega, Dylan Olthoff (on behalf of Representative Rita Mayfield)

ICoA MEMBERS ABSENT:

Melvin Grimes, Sylvia Mahle, Patricia Marton, Phyllis Mitzen, Senator Mattie Hunter, Representative Anna Moeller, Senator Brian Stewart, Senator Dave Syverson

VISITORS/GUESTS:

Evan Ponder, Senior Policy & Planning Officer, Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA)
Marlene Corral, Assistant Director of Community Affairs, IHDA
Michael Wieczorek, Senior Program Officer, Team Lead of Community Affairs, IHDA
Aimee Robinson, Detective, Sangamon County Sheriff's Office
Carolyn Yuroff, Sangamon County States Attorney's Office
Becky Dragoo, Deputy Director, Office of Health Care Regulation, Illinois Department of Public Health

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT ON AGING (IDoA) STAFF:

Paula Basta, Director
Lora McCurdy, Deputy Director
Selma D'Souza, Chief of Staff
Rhonda Armstead, General Counsel
Glenda Corbett, Special Assistant to the Director on Community Engagement & Equity
Jennifer Hebel, Special Research Assistant
Mike Berkes, Division Manager of Planning, Research, Development & Training
John Eckert, Deputy Division Manager of Planning, Research, Development & Training
Amy Brown, Division Manager of Advocacy & Prevention Services
Dana Wilkerson, Deputy Division Manager of Advocacy & Prevention Services
Sandra Pastore, Division Manager of Home & Community Services
Sandy Leith, Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) Director
Amy Lulich, Senior Policy Advisor
Emily Howerton, Budget & Finance Manager
Kelly Richards, State Ombudsman
Tiffany Askew, Home Care Ombudsman

Iris Schweier, Public Information Officer
Bonnie Williams, Administrative Assistant II, Office of General Counsel
Gloria Simmons, Legislative Liaison
Lisa Zuurbier, Division Manager of Community Relations & Outreach
Lisa Dupoy, Administrative Assistant, Community Relations & Outreach

SUMMARY

OPENING:

The meeting was called to order by Council Chair Christie Goleman at 10:02 a.m. Roll call was taken by Council Secretary Julie Bobitt and it was determined that a quorum was established.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Christie asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the September 20, 2022 meeting. Paulette Hamlin entered a motion. Kim Hunt seconded the motion; all members voted aye, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) Director Paula Basta greeted everyone and provided staff announcements. She announced the upcoming retirement of Deputy Director Lora McCurdy. She shared that Becky Dragoo will be joining IDoA as the new Deputy Director in January. Becky comes from the Illinois Department of Public Health and previously served as a Division Manager for IDoA. Becky spoke with excitement about joining IDoA and is looking forward to the opportunity to work on the many challenges affecting seniors. Lora thanked everyone for the support she has received during last eight years while serving with IDoA. It was also announced that Amy Lulich, Senior Policy Advisor, is leaving to accept an opportunity outside the State of Illinois. Both Lora and Director Basta thanked Amy for all she has done for the aging community for the last few years. The Director also announced that Gloria Simmons would be IDoA's new Legislative Liaison, as Katherine Ostrowski the previous Legislative Liaison has also left State employment.

ILLINOIS HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (IHDA) PRESENTATION:

Evan Ponder, Senior Policy & Planning Officer with IHDA, provided an overview of a few specific programs that IHDA has available that may be of interest to seniors. Those programs are the housing locator (<https://ilhousingsearch.org>), the recently re-launched Emergency Homeowner Assistance Fund, and the newly reorganized Home Repair and Accessibility Program.

Evan said that IHDA was created in 1967 with the mission to finance the creation and preservation of affordable housing in the State of Illinois. Over the last 50 years, IHDA has financed over 250,000 affordable housing units spending over \$20 billion dollars. One of the primary activities of IHDA is to manage the State's Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program (LIHTC), as well as the Illinois Housing Trust Fund. Their current portfolio has over 500 buildings that have dedicated senior units or are senior developments that receive financing or have

oversight from IHDA resources. IHDA has permanent, dedicated funding available to support housing development programs to meet the needs of Illinois' most vulnerable residents.

Evan continued to describe the state funded housing search inventory website, <https://ilhousingsearch.org>, which is a partnership between IHDA, the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, Illinois Department of Human Services, and IDoA. Features allow you to search by various criteria, save searches, or be notified when a unit matching your criteria becomes available. Search criteria include senior housing units and the availability of accessibility features in the unit. Evan shared that as of the current time, there are 146,000 total units listed with 4,000 units available.

He also discussed the Illinois Emergency Homeowner Assistance Fund (ILHAF), which is in its second round of funding. It uses American Rescue Plan Act funding to help homeowners pay delinquent mortgage payments and other related expenses such as mortgage reinstatements or forbearance, delinquent property taxes, flood insurance, homeowners association fees, or mobile home lot rent. Details of the program, including eligibility, can be found at <https://www.illinoishousinghelp.org/>. The application period is currently open but will close on January 31, 2023.

Mike Wieczorek, IHDA Senior Program Officer Team Lead of Community Affairs, continued with information on their Home Repair and Accessibility Program (HRAP). Grantees, who consist of local governments and non-profits, were approved last week and will be starting in March. This program is a merger of the Single-Family Rehabilitation Program and the Home Accessibility Program and is designed to assist low-income homeowners with their need for repairs and accessibility improvements. Repairs covered address health and safety, energy efficiency, and accessibility improvements. The goals of this program are to improve the health and well-being of the homeowners and help low-income and disabled or mobility impaired persons remain in their homes as they age in place. Preservation of existing affordable housing in Illinois is an additional goal, as well as investment in disadvantaged communities. This program has a \$16 million allocation and is funded for two years through Illinois Housing Trust Fund, running from March 2023 through March 2025.

TRIAD OVERVIEW:

Aimee Robinson, Detective, Sangamon County Sheriff's Office and Carolyn Yuroff with the Sangamon County States Attorney's Office presented on the TRIAD program. Aimee explained the origins of the national TRIAD program, which began in 1988 when the Police Chiefs Association and social services got together to figure out how they could combine efforts to better serve the older adult community. They formed TRIAD, which isn't an acronym, but is representative of the triangle formed by law enforcement, supportive and protective services, and older adults. TRIAD came to Illinois in 1990. Sangamon County had TRIAD many years ago, but it fell to the wayside and Aimee and Carolyn have revived it in the last three years. It is now an active program in Sangamon County with the goal of decreasing crimes against seniors by getting resources and education to seniors to help keep them safe and informed. Examples of TRIAD's educational topics are how to avoid scams and fraud, how to identify members of law enforcement, how to avoid being victimized, as well as how to file a police report. TRIAD has a Facebook page, Sangamon County TRIAD, that is used to promote events and keep the public informed. They can also be reached through email at sangamontriad@gmail.com.

HEMOCARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM UPDATE:

Tiffany Askew presented on the Home Care Ombudsman Program. The Home Care Ombudsman Program's main purpose is to keep older adults and adults with disabilities in their homes and receiving quality services for as long as possible, thus allowing them to live a dignified life at the highest practical level. In August of 2013, the State amended a section of the Illinois Act on Aging to expand the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program to include seniors and adults with disabilities living in the community. In 2014, the Home Care Ombudsman Program began providing statewide advocacy to the community for help with issues they were having related to specific home care waiver services or managed care services. Service components consist of identifying, investigating and working to resolve complaints on behalf of participants. The Ombudsmen also respond to inquiries, provide information and referrals to those seeking information about services. They also conduct community education and outreach. The Ombudsman Program engages in participant directed advocacy, meaning that the participant gives the direction to how the complaint is handled. The Ombudsman will educate the participant on services they may be eligible for and advocate for additional services based on need, but they do not take action without the permission of the participant to do so. The Home Care Ombudsman Program may be reached via the IDoA Senior Helpline at 800-252-8966, or by the email at aging.HCOProgram@illinois.gov.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES:

Gloria Simmons provided the legislative update. The Department has initiatives around the expanded definition of the mandated reporter, suspicious deaths, and a clarified definition of abuser. This legislation is expected to pass this session and will amend the Adult Protective Services Act. Other recently passed legislation includes the reduction of the Secretary of State's standard \$151 license plate fee from \$24 to \$10 for all eligible participants in the Benefits Access Program, beginning January 1, 2023. Division Manager Lisa Zuurbier added that IDoA processed approximately 127,000 Benefit Access Program applications last year, providing license plate discounts and free rides on fixed route public transit in the State of Illinois for older adults and disabled residents. A press release and social media communications are expected to be made to the public on December 28.

Deputy Director Lora McCurdy updated members on the Money Follows the Person (MFP) initiative. There will be a year long planning phase of the re-launch of this program with the goal is to assist elderly nursing home residents interested in transitioning back into their community. The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services is responsible for planning and has asked IDoA to be a part of this planning phase. More information will be shared once meetings commence.

Amy Lulich provided a recap about recent activities of the *Long Live Illinois* education and outreach campaign. A press release was sent out yesterday about the importance of being vaccinated, boosted and getting a flu shot over the holiday season. There is also a holiday themed toolkit available with graphics and talking points that individuals can use and share with others, located on the IDoA website. In addition, to help get the word out to seniors, flyers are being sent out with home delivered meals as a reminder to remain diligent.

Glenda Corbett, Special Assistant to the Director on Community Engagement and Equity, provided an update on the Illinois LGBTQ Commission on Aging with their first meeting scheduled for January 18, 2023. This Commission will make recommendations to improve benefits, services, and supports for older adults and their caregivers. They will also formulate recommendations, as well as develop an annual report for submission to the Governor's Office. In addition, the Senior Housing Residents Council is tentatively scheduled on January 16, 2023. This Council was created as a response to seniors in assisted living or congregate living facilities who are feeling overlooked and forgotten, suffering sickness, isolation and lack of support. This Council will also submit an annual report with recommendations to the General Assembly and the Governor's Office.

Sandy Leith, IDoA Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) Director, spoke about the wrap up of Medicare Open Enrollment. IDoA SHIP staff conducted a survey of approximately 224 SHIP counselors with the biggest take-away being the time-consuming, often confusing process of selecting a Medicare plan. There are more and more Medicare choices every year and it is very time consuming to research and analyze the best plan for each beneficiary. Sandy also spoke about the increase in advertising being done by the Medicare Advantage Plan companies, often causing more confusion and unnecessary plan changes. Illinois SHIP, and SHIP programs nationwide, have given the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) feedback, testimony, and examples of the challenges this type of misleading advertising causes. As a result, the proposed 2024 Medicare Advantage Plan rules are out and CMS has added more safeguards and oversight concerning Advantage Plans marketing tactics and commercial content. SHIP is thrilled at the steps that CMS is taking to make this a better product but will still continue to provide training and be the watchdogs for CMS to prevent Advantage Plan companies from using misleading marketing to seniors. Survey results also show that 75 percent of the SHIP counselors were very happy with how the Medicare Plan Finder worked this year. Sandy also spoke about the end of the public health emergency and what that will look like once it is announced. There will be a 60 day notice to prepare for the end of the public health emergency, which will then mark the beginning of redetermining Medicaid cases. Redetermination has not occurred since the beginning of the pandemic. The reassessments will take place on a rolling monthly basis, depending on the recipients' regular annual review date, so it will take a full year to catch redeterminations up to be considered current. SHIP will be helping with those converting from Medicaid to Medicare where the recipient has aged out of Medicaid.

CLOSING REMARKS:

Lisa Zuurbier thanked Anthony Frazier for drafting a proclamation that was signed by the Governor honoring late ICoA member Robert O'Connor. On behalf of IDoA and the Council, the proclamation was sent to Mr. O'Connor's family, along with a Certificate of Lifetime Achievement.

Lisa Zuurbier reminded all Council members to complete all 2022 annual trainings on OneNet with the deadline being January 1. Certificates of completion for these mandatory trainings should be sent to Lisa Dupoy.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Christie Goleman then thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:57 a.m.

Julie Bobitt, Secretary

Illinois Council on Aging