

ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON AGING

WEBEX MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2023

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

ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON AGING (ICoA) MEMBERS PRESENT:

Christine Goleman, Julie Bobitt, Nancy Chen, Anthony Frazier, Paulette Hamlin, Talat Khan, Susan Lawler, Sylvia Mahle, Patricia Marton, Mubarak Mirjat, Phyllis Mitzen, Robert Mueller, Susan Vega, Dylan Olthoff (on behalf of Representative Rita Mayfield), Melissa Leuzinger (on behalf of Senator David Syverson)

ICoA MEMBERS ABSENT:

Melvin Grimes, Kim Hunt, Britta Larson, Senator Laura Fine, Senator Mattie Hunter, Representative Anna Moeller

VISITORS and GUESTS:

John Holton, Ph.D., Director Strategic Initiatives, Center for Social Policy & Research, Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois Chicago

Lee Ann Reinert, Deputy Director of Policy, Planning and Innovation, Division of Mental Health, Illinois Department of Human Services

Allison A. Brown, Director, Community Engagement and Communications, Jane Addams Center for Social Policy and Research, University of Illinois Chicago

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT ON AGING (IDoA) STAFF:

Paula Basta, Director

Becky Dragoo, Deputy Director

Selma D'Souza, Chief of Staff

Rhonda Armstead, General Counsel

Jennifer Hebel, Special Research Assistant, Executive Office

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

Liz Vogt, Senior Policy Advisor

Emily Howerton, Budget & Finance Manager

Kelly Richards, State Ombudsman

Iris Schweier, Public Information Officer

Bonnie Williams, Administrative Assistant II, Office of General Counsel

Latorya Simon, Private Secretary II, Executive Office

Lisa Zurbier, 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 10:03 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 December 20, 2022, meeting. Susan Vega entered a motion. Paulette Hamlin seconded the motion; all members voted aye, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

SERVING MINORITIES REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS:

John Holton, Ph.D., Director Strategic Initiatives, Jane Addams Center for Social Policy & Research, Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois Chicago spoke to the Council about findings from the recent study conducted evaluating services available to minorities in Illinois. There were two major concerns the study addressed. The first was regarding expanding and ensuring equitable access to programs that address social determinants of health with a focus on identifying and understanding the needs of underserved and diverse populations. The second is developing a program to identify the special needs and problems of minority senior citizens and evaluating the adequacy and accessibility of existing programs and information for minority senior citizens.

Survey questions were given to approximately 100 people of differing minority statuses, previously incarcerated older adults, and LGBTQ older adults. Findings of the survey included the need to make older adults more comfortable with contacting providers of aging services. Another survey finding was that ageism does exist within minority families and that IDoA should address ageism through its efforts. Minority older adults also felt a need for more IDoA staff with familiarity and understanding of their histories and culture.

According to survey takers, greater communication and information about IDoA's role as a state agency is needed. Consumers would like to know if the services they receive are funded by IDoA, as providers rarely convey information concerning funding they receive or the sources of that funding. Most survey takers were not aware of the vast number of programs and services that IDoA supports.

Service quality improvement, additional training development, and more supportive caregiving services were recommended. It was also suggested that IDoA conduct an assessment to better identify resources within minority communities, as well as implement evaluation and accountability tools to better measure the impact of services within a community.

The Council members discussed the survey results, possible future survey processes, and ways to better promote IDoA services to older adults.

988 SUICIDE AND CRISIS LIFELINE and COMMUNITY EMERGENCY SERVICES AND SUPPORT ACT (CESSA):

Lee Ann Reinert, Deputy Director of Policy, Planning and Innovation, Division of Mental Health, Illinois Department of Human Services spoke to the Council about the new 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and the Community Emergency Services and Support Act (CESSA). She explained that 988 is a three-digit dialing code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. It is a 24-hour service available anywhere in the United States that provides trained call center agents to assist callers with high quality and personalized support. An individual can call, text or chat through the lifeline.org website. The Lifeline has a network of over 200 participating call centers and the goal of 988 is to provide callers with “Crisis Care for Everyone, Everywhere, Every Time.” Additional resources are available on their webpage located at <https://988hotline.illinois.gov>.

Lee Ann also updated the Council on CESSA, also known as the Stephon Edward Watts Act. The Act was passed in 2021. The Department of Human Services (DHS) is implementing efforts including a statewide advisory council and regional committees. The purpose of CESSA is to reduce the dispatch of law enforcement when a mental health crisis is experienced. Specific training of emergency responders is underway to provide the coordinated medical response needed to implement the program. More information can be found on the CESSA website found at <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=145227>.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES:

Director Paula Basta introduced Becky Dragoo as Deputy Director, as well as Liz Vogt as Senior Policy Advisor and Brian Pastor as Division Manager of Advocacy and Prevention Services. Director Basta shared that the Fiscal Year (FY) 24 budget hearing was held on March 8 with the House of Representatives, and that the hearing in the Senate will be held on April 19.

Emily Howerton, IDoA Budget Manager, provided a budget update. She said that the proposed budget includes an investment of \$49.5 million dollars to increase the rate for in-home care workers. There is also \$8 million in the budget to maintain the current level of home delivered meals. Other highlights of the proposed budget include \$1.3 million to assist with gaps in senior services access throughout Illinois, \$1.2 million to expand outreach to historically underserved communities, and \$1 million to enhance support services to unpaid family caregivers.

Jennifer Hebel discussed the ending of both the federal and state public health emergencies (PHEs) on May 11, 2023. She noted that with the PHEs ending the Department would resume normal program operations. She shared that as of March 31, 2023, the Consolidated Appropriations Act unlinks the Medicaid continuous enrollment requirement from the PHE with states having 12 months to complete the Medicaid redetermination process. The process will be staggered in Illinois with letters beginning to be sent to current Medicaid recipients as of May 1. Individuals will have 30 days to complete the redetermination. An appeals process is also available if the recipient disagrees with the final status determination. For those no longer eligible for Medicaid, coverage may be available through Medicare or can be obtained through the Health Insurance Marketplace. Jennifer also said that a new automatic renewal program will

start in April of 2023 where households with zero income will be eligible for automatic renewals. Encouragement was given to talk with recipients to make sure they update their address with Medicaid to ensure that mailed correspondence makes it to them and they don't lose coverage due to an old address on file.

MEDICAID REDETERMINATION OUTREACH EFFORTS:

Sue Vega, Programs Manager at Alivio Medical Center and ICoA member, shared how the ending of the PHE is affecting clients in her facility. Alivio serves mostly Latino, Mexican and Mexican American clientele living on the southwest side of Chicago and the southwest suburbs. They assist individuals applying for Medicaid and serve as a Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) site. Sue mentioned that Alivio also has a robust community health worker team who reach 135,000 people virtually and an additional 88,000 people in person.

In preparation for the Medicaid unwinding, Alivio has put together a multi-disciplinary team to develop strategies to reach clients. Some ways in which they are doing this are through text messaging, conveying simple and consistent messaging to all clients that they have served in the last year to get the word out. They are also talking to the media as much as possible, as well as community organizations and public officials about the ending of the PHE and educating Medicaid recipients about the steps they need to take to ensure continued coverage.

CLOSING REMARKS:

Lisa Zuurbier reminded all Council members that have received emails about their Council term expiring to please submit their applications as soon as possible to renew their terms.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Christie Goleman thanked everyone for their participation. She asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Julie Bobitt made the motion to adjourn which was seconded by Susan Vega. All members were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:57 a.m.

Julie Bobitt, Secretary
Illinois Council on Aging