

ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON AGING

WEBEX

TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 2021

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

ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON AGING (ICoA) MEMBERS PRESENT

Phyllis Mitzen, Anthony Frazier, Jane Angelis, Christine Goleman, Paulette Hamlin, Kim Hunt, Margaret Huyck, Talat Kahn, Britta Larsen, Susan Lawler, Patricia Marton, Mubarek Mirjat, Anna Oestreich, Steve Wolf

ICoA MEMBERS ABSENT

Julie Bobitt, Nancy Chen, Robert O'Connor, Senator Mattie Hunter, Representative Rita Mayfield, Representative Ann Moeller

VISITORS

None

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT ON AGING (IDoA) STAFF

Paula Basta, Director

Lora McCurdy, Deputy Director

Selma D'Souza, Chief of Staff

Latorya Simon, Administrative Assistant

Michael Dropka, Public Information Officer

Amy Lulich, Senior Policy Advisor

Katherine Ostrowski, Legislative Liaison

Desirey Ackerman, Division Manager, Home & Community Services

Mike Berkes, Division Manager, Planning, Training, Research, & Development

John Eckert, Deputy Manager, Planning, Training, Research & Development

Lisa Zuurbier, Division Manager, Community Relations & Outreach

Lynnette Martin, Deputy Division Manager, Community Relations & Outreach

Kelly Richards, State Ombudsman

Lee Moriarty, Deputy State Ombudsman

SUMMARY

Opening:

The meeting was called to order by Phyllis Mitzen at 10:04 am. The roll call was taken by Anthony Frazier and it was determined that a quorum was established.

Approval of Minutes:

Anthony Frazier entered a motion to approve the minutes from the ICoA meeting held on March 23, 2021. Susan Lawler seconded the motion; all members voted aye, and the minutes were approved.

## Medicaid & Nursing Homes:

Phyllis introduced Melissa Black and Kelly Cunningham from the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) to present regarding Medicaid and nursing home reform efforts. Kelly started the presentation outlining the HFS vision to serve Medicaid residents in nursing homes. She provided background information noting that HFS serves 45,000 Medicaid residents and that Medicaid is the largest payer of custodial care services in Illinois. She noted that COVID-19 had a devastating impact on nursing home residents and that it disproportionately impacted Black and Brown Medicaid customers in specific nursing homes due to the conditions at those facilities.

Kelly noted that HFS started working with the nursing home industry and legislative staff. Efforts have included more than 28 working sessions to review issues such as methodology, physical infrastructure and long-term care policy. She stated that HFS believes that new or additional funding should be to improve nursing home quality and performance.

Kelly provided an analysis of COVID-related deaths in nursing homes. She shared that 44 percent of COVID deaths occurred in facilities where at least 10 percent of the residents were in rooms with three or more people. She said that HFS found that at least 40 percent more Black and Brown Medicaid nursing home residents perished than would be expected based on COVID mortality among White Medicaid nursing home residents. It was noted that the HFS analysis mirrored results found in multiple peer-reviewed studies.

Melissa shared information regarding one-time pandemic response funding for Illinois nursing homes through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). She said that Illinois nursing homes received at least \$880 million in one-time dollars last year. She noted that HFS believed that any additional one-time COVID related funding should address specific safety and quality efforts that directly benefit residents.

Kelly noted that in national rankings, Illinois ranked last among states regarding nursing home staffing. She said that Illinois nursing homes are particularly reliant on facilities that include three to four persons per room. She noted all this is occurring while the nursing home industry has been successful at getting increased funding in recent years. She said that HFS did not see increased funding going towards staffing or facility improvements. She added that HFS found significant nursing home profits during this time. HFS found that higher-Medicaid, under-staffed facilities owners earn higher net incomes.

***Kelly shared that HFS has a moral imperative to ensure quality care and outlined a path forward. The path forward includes raising assessments to increase federal match; using all new funding for direct, measurable improvements for nursing home residents; and updating case mix methodology to more accurately direct funding to residents' needs.***

***Melissa said that HFS will continue to work with the General Assembly and the nursing home industry to make recommendations with support of sister agencies and advocates. She added that HFS would like to see initiatives regarding payments and accountability to benefit nursing home residents implemented as soon as 2021 and going forward.***

***Following additional questions regarding funding and regulation, Melissa shared the link to the HFS nursing home update at <https://www2.illinois.gov/hfs/NursingHomeUpdate/Pages/default.aspx>.***

***Melissa agreed to share her contact information with Council members who may have additional questions.***

Phyllis thanked Kelly and Melissa for their presentation and addressing nursing home reform as a moral imperative. She hopes that Council members can share the HFS presentation in their local advocacy efforts.

#### Campaign for Aging Equity:

Phyllis introduced Sandy Pastore with the Health & Medicine Policy Research Group to provide information regarding the Illinois Aging Together Campaign. Sandy shared information regarding Illinois's aging population noting that 11 counties have 30 percent or more of their population aged 60 and older. She said that 21 Illinois counties have areas with life expectancy of less than 70 years of age while individuals in other areas of the same county are awarded life expectancy of ten to thirty more years. In Chicago, she noted, there are neighborhoods with life expectancy of 90 years as compared to Englewood where residents have the lowest life expectancy of 59.9 years. Gaps in life expectancy are linked to racism and class inequities.

Sandy shared data linking poverty rate and life expectancy. She listed reasons why the Illinois population is shrinking: generations of low birthrates; decreased immigrant population; migration of people with means; and social and health inequities decreasing life expectancy.

Sandy said that the Illinois Aging Together Campaign will focus on aging equity, health equity, social equity, diversity and inclusion, as well as life course perspective and redress structural inequity. She mentioned that health equity is a process of assurance of the conditions for optimal health for all people.

Sandy noted that IDoA developed an ambitious State Plan on Aging as required by the Administration for Community Living (ACL). She explained that a Strategic Plan for Aging which is the focus of the campaign differs from the State Plan as it includes planning for 10 or more years; is generally led by a governor with other executive and legislative leaders; and is developed to guide restructuring geared toward aging well in a community. She highlighted similar efforts conducted in states including Massachusetts, Texas, California, Colorado and Minnesota.

Sandy said that the IAT Campaign is a people-powered movement that will engage legislators. She added that it will include a cross-sector approach impacting several systems to better support aging. Sandy provided an overview of strategies, including working with stakeholders and utilizing trained aging advocacy ambassadors to shift the narrative on aging.

***Deputy Director Lora McCurdy shared that the Department is happy to help with efforts. Director Basta suggested that Sandy present to the IDoA staff. Director Basta added that she hopes the State Plan on Aging once approved by ACL will complement these campaign efforts. Sandy encouraged interested Council members to contact her for more information or to participate in campaign efforts.***

#### Department Updates:

Director Basta thanked presenters and mentioned June 15 is World Elder Abuse Day. She reported that Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are airing around the state to highlight the Department's Adult Protective Services (APS) program. She also highlighted June as nationwide Pride Month and thanked Council members Kim Hunt and Britta Larsen for their efforts supporting LGBTQ elders. She shared that

IDoA will continue to work to be as inclusive as possible and improve the quality of life for all older adults across Illinois.

Katherine Ostrowski provided a legislative update. She mentioned the Department's initiative, House Bill 2566, to create a demonstration to expand minority outreach and address an audit finding was not called before the deadline so it will be on the legislative agenda for next year. She also mentioned that proposed legislation to require mandated reporters to report suspicious deaths and expand the definition of mandated reporters to include insurance adjustors and investment advisors met with some opposition. Although the opposition was removed, these bills were not called this session but movement on these initiatives is expected in the future.

She shared that legislation was passed to require information on older adult programs and services be included in home-delivered meals. She added that SB2137 that requires long term care facilities to allow for virtual visits to prevent social isolation passed and would be implemented soon.

Deputy Director McCurdy provided an overview of the budget. She said when drafting the budget proposal, the Department looked at lessons learned during the COVID pandemic noting food security. She reported that the Aging Network provided 10.4 million meals between March 30 and December of 2020. The Fiscal Year 22 budget includes \$30.1 million for home delivered meals, an increase of \$5 million from the previous year.

The budget also includes an additional \$2 million for assisted technology. This funding will build on the success of the Illinois Cares Connection program to bring assistive technology to older adults. She also mentioned that \$5 million will go towards Emergency Senior Services (ESS) to provide gap-filling services to vulnerable older adults and that \$31 million is included to address minimum wage pressures for in-home and adult day service providers. In addition, there is an additional \$135,000 for the foster grandparent program.

Deputy McCurdy said that an additional \$49 million of ARPA funding is coming to Illinois for issues including COVID vaccination assistance, Aging Disability Resource Center (ADRC) supplemental funding, social isolation, congregate and home delivered meals, preventive health, caregiver support, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program and the Elder Justice Act. She added that the Department will collaborate with the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) to strategically use this additional funding to further the State Plan on Aging objectives. Director Basta mentioned that in the future the Council might want to invite a representative from one of the AAAs to share how this increased funding will be used in their respective region to benefit older adults.

State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Kelly Richards provided an update on the Resident and Family Support Council. She mentioned that meetings are being held every two weeks to discuss issues relating to residents and families in long-term care facilities. The meetings to date have included presentations from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) on COVID-related matters and important information on issues such as discharges and the complaint process. Kelly shared that she is developing a Town Hall to focus on resident questions and priorities. Kelly said she would appreciate ICoA members helping to get the word out about the upcoming Town Hall and Resident Family Resident Council activities.

Deputy McCurdy reported that IDoA staff has been working with stakeholders to develop reopening guidance for provider agencies. The Department wants to be sure that there are face to face connections with older adults while still maintaining safety standards. Mike Berkes added that the Department is full speed ahead with reopening efforts noting the creation of several planning documents, including the finalization of Case Coordination Unit (CCU) guidance.

Amy Lulich shared that the Department received approximately \$886,000 for the ADRC No Wrong Door Vaccine Supplemental Opportunity. The funding is intended to address vaccine hesitancy and include a targeted marketing campaign using Medicaid data and the IDPH I-CARE immunization registry. She also added that the Department has several COVID-related resources on the website, including materials to educate caregivers about vaccinations.

Closing Remarks:

The meeting concluded with a tribute to Bernie Wong who served on the Council for more than a decade and was a tremendous advocate for older adults in Illinois. Sadly, Bernie passed away in April at the age of 77. Phyllis highlighted Bernie's education and career, noting that she was the co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of Chinese American Service League (CASL). Bernie had many accomplishments that included serving as the first Asian American appointed to the United Way of Chicago and the Chicago Public Library, as well as serving on the Mayor's Advisory Council on Asian Affairs. In 2012, Phyllis said that Bernie was honored by President Obama and recognized with the Chavez Champion of Change Award. Phyllis said that Bernie was also among 24 community leaders recognized by Mayor Lightfoot in March of 2021 during Women's History Month. Phyllis shared a few stories of working with Bernie on the Council and emphasized what an important role she played among the membership. Council members joined in acknowledging Bernie's profound impact on the Asian American community, as well as other individuals in Illinois.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 12:03 p.m.

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Phyllis Mitzen, Chair  
Illinois Council on Aging