

Northeast Michigan Regional Council on Aging
Annual Meeting
Monday, January 25, 2021 at 1:00 pm
Virtual Teams Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Chair C. Proulx at 1:00 pm

Roll Call

Mike Maturen, Jerry Broad, Darlene Huff, Roberta Matelski, Lorelei King, Carol Wilder, Cindy Fleming, Terry Dutcher, Corkie Proulx, David Burdine, Eileen Howell, Connie Messina, Mitzi Downs, Dennis Fay, Chuck Corwin, Madeline Hiller.

Excused: Elaine Ableidinger Unexcused: Cyndi Sabin

Guests: Victoria Purvis, Lisa Bolen, Emil Bellenbaum, Steve Betterly

AAA Staff: Laurie Sauer, Gina Bey, Yvette Smigelski, Vicki Goodburne, Kelly Robinette, Kitty Glomski, Connie McQuarrie

Approval of Agenda – A motion was made by C. Corwin with support from M. Hiller to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes – A motion was made by D. Huff with support from C. Wilder to approve the minutes of 11-16-2020. Motion carried.

Nominating Committee

D. Fay reported on the appointment of Cindy Fleming as Delegate by the Iosco COA. A motion was made by D. Fay with support from D. Huff to accept the appointment. Motion carried, welcome Cindy.

D. Fay also reported on the reappointment of Terry Dutcher as the Member-at-Large by the Iosco County Board of Commissioners. A motion was made D. Fay with support from C. Wilder to approve the reappointment. Motion carried.

Election of officers – A motion was made by D. Fay with support from D. Huff to close the meeting and open it up for the election of officers. Motion carried.

Chairperson – D. Fay reported Chuck Corwin would like to run for the position. D. Fay called three times for further nominations. There being no further nominations, D. Fay asked the Council for a motion to accept the nomination of Chuck Corwin as Chair by acclamation of the Council and close the nominations for Chair. A motion was made by D. Huff with support from T. Dutcher to accept the nomination of Chuck Corwin as Chair and close the nominations for Chair. All ayes, no opposed. Motion carried.

Vice Chairperson – C. Proulx reported D. Fay has agreed to run for a second term as Vice Chair. She called three times for further nominations. There being no further nominations she asked for a motion to accept the nomination of Dennis Fay as Vice Chair by acclamation of the Council and close the nominations for Vice Chair. A motion was made by T. Dutcher with support from M. Downs to accept the nomination and close the election for Vice Chair. All ayes, no opposed. Motion carried. A motion was made by D. Fay with support from M. Hiller to close the election of officers and open the meeting. All ayes, no opposed. Motion carried. The meeting was turned over to Chair C. Corwin.

Appointment of a Nominating Committee for 2021 – C. Corwin reported the following members volunteered to continue to serve on the committee: D. Fay, C. Proulx, and M. Hiller. There being no further interest expressed by the Council members, a motion was made by T. Dutcher with support from M. Downs to accept the appointment of the 2021 Nominating Committee. Motion carried.

Appointment of a By-Law Review Committee for 2021 – The current members of the By-Law Review Committee are C. Proulx, D. Fay, C. Corwin, and D. Burdine. There being no further interest expressed by the Council members, a motion was made by T. Dutcher with support from D. Huff to reappoint the current By-Law Review Committee for another year. Motion carried.

Speaker – Victoria Purvis, Director NEMCSA Homeless and Prevention Services

Victoria gave a PowerPoint presentation. A copy will be provided. The purpose of the Homeless Prevention Program is to ensure that individuals and families experiencing housing instability have access to safe, decent, affordable housing with supportive services designed to keep them housed. Their mission is to work collaboratively to positively impact housing and homelessness issues in our region and their vision is the belief that having a safe, permanent home is a basic human right. Their vision is to end homelessness in our region.

NEMCSA Homeless Prevention covers 11 counties. Roscommon is covered under another community action agency. They have a housing intake line at 989-358-4700, email at housingintake@nemcsa.org, or on the NEMCSA website at www.nemcsa.org. Staff are considered essential employees, case managers continue to visit elderly residents to help with paperwork, understanding lease agreements, etc. If you call on behalf of a participant, we ask that you report where they are sleeping; car, tent, camper, friend's house, etc. We want to be sure we get them into a safe place by the end of the day. Staff help locate housing, provide financial assistance, support, and advocacy. In order to locate housing the individual can afford, the case manager will conduct an in-person inspection of the house or apartment to ensure it is safe and clean before an individual is placed. We want it to be their home not just a place of transition. We negotiate leasing terms between the tenant and landlord. We are also able to pay the security deposit and first month's rent. Currently, there is an eviction moratorium to provide support to the landlord and tenants which pays up to six months of back rent and court fees. We have teamed up with legal and mediation services through a new grant which allows our case managers to attend court with the client.

C. Corwin – Are you accessible through 2-1-1 as well? Victoria – Yes we are, but we prefer to receive calls directly. We advertise our direct phone number and continuously conduct community outreach to get the word about our programs out there in the community. Staff have provided presentations to many of the city and county boards in the region.

Our case management support works with the client to develop a case plan and continues to offer support up to 21 months. Counseling is provided to seniors exiting homelessness and is done in person if the client does not have access to or is unable to use technology. We want to make sure they have a personalized budget and consumer protection information. We help clients set goals for their finances. We want to be sure they know how to pay bills, write checks, how to call the fire department, all the responsibilities that come with a home.

Seniors 55+ Subpopulation – In our region, there were 150 seniors in 2019 who were homeless either living in vehicles, tents, campers, or any other place not meant for humans to live. The state is getting better at collecting data on the homeless and reporting results. The goal is to increase the medical support for those experiencing homelessness. We want them to have access to services they deserve.

The average monthly income in our region is \$1,027. The average monthly rent is \$780. This leaves very little money for other bills and food.

Emergency Placements – NEMCSA doesn't own any shelters but we do have emergency motel vouchers where individuals can stay between 7 to 30 days prior to a placement. A list of emergency placement shelters was provided. You can stay up to three months in the larger shelters.

Please visit the Invisible People website at <https://invisiblepeople.tv/> for an idea of what homelessness looks like. We encourage anyone to contact us for help if you encounter anyone experiencing homelessness and visit our website for program information.

C. Proulx – Can we get a copy of the PowerPoint? Victoria – Yes, Connie will email it with the minutes.

L. King – How is this information communicated out to the community? How do people know this help exists? Victoria – We took a map of our region and divided it into quadrants for outreach. Staff have been visiting various agencies, human services collaborative meetings, city council meetings, etc. I am available for presentations as well. Wherever we're invited, we will go. Homelessness is not illegal. We have partnered with the DNR in one of our counties who are really supporting the homeless individuals they find living in tents by letting them use their phone to call us.

L. King - Do you have business cards? I'm thinking of some church groups I used to work with. Victoria – Yes, I will mail you cards and pamphlets.

D. Fay – Is Habitat for Humanity also helping to get homes ready for habitation? Victoria – Yes, we have a good relationship with Alpena and Cheboygan. Both are heavily involved in our Homeless Coalition.

C. Messina – How many homeless are in our area, 150? Are there enough homes for them or is there a shortage? Victoria – There is a shortage of available housing and it is a problem across the nation. We want to focus our effort on getting houses built along with public housing. There is more homeless than available housing. So, you see a lot of individuals up here who have to live with family and friends. They don't want to be homeless, there's just no place for them to live.

C. Messina – These are all ages we're talking about correct? Victoria – The 150 is age 55 and older.

Director's Report

Laurie welcomed Cindy Fleming our newest member. We appreciate you joining our group and look forward to your input. Also, a huge thank you to those who have agreed to serve as officers. Your time and effort, as well as that of the entire Council, are greatly appreciated.

Senior Centers – The COAs remain closed at this time. We are hoping with the governor's announcement for restaurants opening February 1st perhaps the centers can open for our meal programs. I sent a confirmation to AASA for an update.

Personal Care Bags – The process is going smoothly, and distribution of the bags have started. The COAs are joining us in the effort to get them distributed as well.

KN95 masks – We received a supply from the state. We conducted a survey of need with our partners and MI Choice providers and of the 28,000 masks received, all but 2,000 are going out. The remaining 2,000 will probably be distributed at drive-thru events in a few of our communities to get them out to seniors. This group of masks are individually wrapped. These came from China, so they are not approved for health care use, but they are basically the same as the N95 masks.

Vaccine Clinics – There was a very high response rate to get registered which is great. However, the health departments had problems with the amount of phone calls overwhelming their systems. Now

they are having problems with the supply of vaccines resulting in some clinic dates having to be cancelled. We, as the AAA, partnered with DHD #4 and some of the other health departments to assist in getting seniors registered for the vaccine. Many of the COA partners are doing the same which is great. If you know of someone who needs assistance getting registered, connect them with us for help.

Direct Care Premium Pay – The premium pay of \$2 per hour has been extended to the end of February for both the MI Choice programs and AASA funded services. Funds will go out to the COAs when we receive the SGA.

Educational Poverty Session – NEMCSA has partnered with Aha Processes to offer a workshop on Emotional Poverty. This event will be held on Friday, February 19th. Registration information is on the NEMCSA Facebook page and on the website under the events tab. Use the code “NEMCSA” when checking out to receive a \$5 discount and free shipping on the book. Registrations after January 31st will include the cost of shipping and handling and the book will not be guaranteed to arrive by the date of the workshop. We can get the flyer out to you if you’re interested.

LTC Ombudsman – As you know, Sara accepted a position in Lansing doing the same work. We’ve had difficulty in filling the position. We posted it a couple of times already and just closed on our recent posting. We’ve experienced challenges in recruiting staff. It’s the same scenario for a nurse position for our West Branch office. It has been very challenging lately to find folks to do this kind of work.

NEMCSA Board - The NEMCSA board approved recent updates to their bylaws. One of the changes requires only two members from this Council to serve on that board. We currently have three, so we need to reduce our current number by one. This will be addressed later in the agenda.

USDA Food Boxes – The USDA has announced they are funding a fifth round of food boxes. You may remember we were involved with that effort through AASA and VanErdan where we had some produce and dairy boxes, we were able to get distributed in our communities. This round is a variation of shelf stable, dairy and produce items. The box has about 30 lbs. of food and will need to be refrigerated. It is a new provider this time. Laurie made contact and is waiting for a response from them on details.

MDHHS Director - Robert Gordon, MDHHS Director has resigned. The governor announced Elizabeth Hertel, Chief Deputy Director for Administration will take over as director.

Program Reports

Legal Services Board – C. Proulx reported there were two grantee surveys conducted that indicated some difficulties in service throughout the year due to the pandemic. Business is being conducted remotely. They saw an increase in eligible clients of 18% and expect an increased need in legal services this year especially in areas of evictions, domestic violence, unemployment, consumer debt and income maintenance. They experienced funding cuts due to declines in state and federal appropriations and fundraising. Legal Services Corporation has asked congress for emergency funding to help alleviate this. They did receive \$50 million in Cares Act funds. They say that is not enough and are asking for over \$1 billion in additional federal funds. They hosted seven virtual events on a variety of issues including the impact of Covid-19 on domestic violence, evictions, and legal problems living in rural communities. Staff watched a Talk Justice podcast as well. It was a busy year. Board meetings will continue to be virtual.

Region 9 Directors Report – Laurie reported we have no new representative from this group to date. We hope to have one appointed soon. We did meet with the COA directors on January 14th. The

speaker was Cathy MacFalda from the NEMCSA HR division. She discussed pandemic resources as well as tips and resources for hiring issues, etc. We have requested another speaker from HR, Crystal Clark, who will speak about recruitment and retention of workers next month. All the COAs are experiencing staffing issues.

Long Term Care Ombudsman Report – No report. Calls are currently being handled through the state office. C. Corwin – Lansing is certainly gaining a good person in Sara. It's a loss to us.

Planning and Volunteer Coordinator Report – Kitty reported the MMAP just finished phase one of open enrollment in December. All meetings were conducted virtually or by phone which is a new state policy. Medicare launched a new Plan Finder on the first day of open enrollment October 15th. There were many issues and updates which slowed enrollment the first two weeks. We continue to find things that need updating. The statewide no face-to-face meeting policy will continue in 2021. Counselors reported that open enrollment went better than expected. The telephone meetings took less time per client. Clients were required to mail permission and access for account information. Four new counselors finished 18 hours of job shadowing via Zoom. All statewide trainings and monthly Region 9 planning meetings will be held virtually. This year we served 2,753 clients, down 406 from 2019 and saved \$3.151 million, also down slightly from 2019.

Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment – This enrollment period started January 1st and runs through March 31st. There are up to 32 Advantage plans available depending on the county you live in. There is also a new D-SNP (Dual Enrolled Special Needs Program) available for dual eligible enrollees only. MDHHS is sending notices to beneficiaries on Medicaid directing them to call their 800#.

Scams – As always, we educate people on any new Medicare and Covid scams. If someone is asking for your Medicare or Social Security numbers or for money to pay for the vaccine, it's a scam.

The MMAP state office in Lansing has hired a new MMAP Educator, Jennifer Therrien, to provide virtual trainings for new counselors. Initial trainings will start in April. We currently have five candidates in process. If you know of anyone who may be interested in becoming a MMAP counselor, contact Kitty at glomskic@nemcsa.org or call 989-358-4612.

Retiring Counselors: Region 9 extends its sincere appreciation to the following retiring counselors for their service to beneficiaries in our region: John Panci, Otsego volunteer, Barbara Villeneuve, Alpena volunteer, Joyce Shultz, Alcona Health Center, and Wendy Hoin, Iosco volunteer.

Special Projects Coordinator Report – Laurie reported Brooke is doing a CCC workshop today. The following workshops are scheduled: Powerful Tools for Caregivers – March 2, 2021 from 1 pm - 2:30 pm, April 26, 2021 from 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm, and July 15, 2021 from 10:30 am – Noon. A Creating Confident Caregivers (CCC) workshop series started January 11, 2021 from 1 pm - 3 pm. Matter of Balance (MOB) is scheduled for March 1, 2021 from 1 pm - 3pm. Kelly and Brooke completed their new virtual training last week which allows them to train lay leaders on how to conduct virtual sessions.

Brain Health Toolkits – The toolkits are designed to help alleviate stress due to the pandemic. It provides activities to stimulate the mind and keep clients active. There are two different toolkits: one for older adults and one for caregivers taking care of someone with dementia. The grants were received for Roscommon and Arenac counties. Roscommon's have been delivered. We are now working on getting the contents and putting together the boxes for Arenac.

Personal Care Bags – Staff and volunteers packed approximately 400 bags. They will be delivered to older adults who are unable or unwilling to leave their house due to Covid or those experiencing financial difficulties. AAA staff and the COAs will assist in distribution.

C. Corwin – I saw one of the brain health toolkits and was impressed by the items in them.

Services Coordinator Report – Kelly reported the new dietary guidelines for Americans was recently released. The only major change was in the amount of allowable sugar. She doesn't anticipate any required menu changes from AASA.

Advocacy Reports

MSAC – Pat Rondeau was not present, no report.

State Advisory Council – C. Corwin reported their research project for the year is "Aging in Place". They will be looking at what's needed by individuals to age at home. What changes do they need to make to their homes to make them more age friendly? We are also looking at transitional settings. There are some nice companies that you can contract with where you start out in a senior apartment with the ability to move into assisted living and then into a long-term care setting as needed. Dr. Travis spoke with us and gave a statistic that blew us away. 89% of the people that died of Covid in Michigan were age 60 and over. That's something to think about if you're considering the vaccine.

State Updates

Aging and Adult Services Agency (AASA) – Steve Betterly reported AASA is adjusting to the change in leadership. We continue to work on getting ready for this coming Annual Implementation Plan development year. We're wrapping up the books for last year and getting ready for the next. We're hopeful there will be some public health funding for this year coming to the AAAs. We don't know the amount or timing or anything yet, but at least there is talk about it.

Local Updates From Council Members

Roscommon COA – C. Corwin reported they received a grant to train their in-home care providers in BTBQ which is comparable to the CNA program.

Crawford COA – L. King reported on delays in their new building. They're finding that our projects are out of line with the budget so we're holding a special meeting to make cuts. Building supplies and lumber costs have increased. Alice is working very hard on this project and we're hopeful to start very soon.

Action Items

Approval of 2021 Meeting Schedule – A correction was made to the July meeting date and a new schedule was sent to all members. A motion was made by M. Maturen with support from D. Huff to approve the corrected version. Motion carried.

NEMCSA Board Appointments – With the policy change Laurie reported on above, this Council is charged annually to confirm two members for representation on the NEMCSA Board. Current members are Elaine Ableidinger, Corkie Proulx, and Chuck Corwin. Since Elaine was not present for the discussion, it was decided to table the motion until our March meeting. A motion was made by D. Fay with support from M. Maturen to table the decision until March. Motion carried.

Questions or Comments

Emil Bellenbaum – I have a comment regarding background checks. In an interview in the Houghton Lake Resorter in December with Tom Pettit, Tom stated per AASA, October 1, 2020 was the effective date for the change in policy and January 1, 2021 was the date for agencies to comply. Given that this policy is to protect adult seniors, what is Region 9's timeline to follow up and make sure the COAs are in compliance? Mr. Pettit said he has fallen under the radar and still maintains employment. He is still there. Is there a timeline for the follow-up? Steve Betterly – AASA has asked AAAs to review and recheck current staff, employees and providers within 90 days. AASA is aware of the situation and is meeting this week to discuss internally on how to proceed. It is our hope the AAA will follow up with coming into compliance with the update in policy.

Adjourn

A motion was made by J. Broad with support from D. Huff to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 2:28 pm by Chair C. Corwin. Our next meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 22, 2021.