

**Northeast Michigan Regional Council on Aging**  
**April 27, 2020 at 1:00 pm**  
**Virtual Zoom Meeting**

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

**Roll Call**

Darlene Huff, Roberta Matelski, Terry Dutcher, Carol Wilder, Barbara Kaye, Merianne Tappan, Elaine Ableidinger, Corleen Proulx, David Burdine, Eileen Howell, Mitzi Downs, Dennis Fay, Chuck Corwin and Madeline Hiller

Excused: Roger Schulte, Virginia Zygiel, Violet Ward

Unexcused: Terry Dutcher, Jim Mathis

Guests: Lisa Bolen (NEMCSA Ex. Director), Steve Betterly (AASA)

AAA Staff: Laurie Sauer, Gina Bey, Yvette Smigelski, Connie McQuarrie, Kelly Robinette, Kitty Glomski, Brooke Mainville, Sara Gusler

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

**Approval of Minutes** – A motion was made by C. Corwin with support from M. Hiller to approve the minutes of January 27, 2020. Motion carried.

**Nominating Committee** - D. Fay had nothing to report.

**Director's Report**

Greetings to all of our Advisory Council members! We are hopeful you all are healthy and safe. Since it has been a while since our last meeting and with Governor Whitmer's Executive Order to "Stay Home, Stay Safe", I thought it might be prudent to update you on what Region 9 is doing during these unprecedented times. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but I am sure many of you have been wondering how and what staff and our partners have been doing since the order went into effect. I offer the following bulleted quick bites on the current status:

1. All AAA staff transitioned to remote office work to minimize risk of exposure to not only staff, but most importantly risk to program participants and direct care workers who need to come in the homes.
2. Volunteer staff are also working remotely. Renewal grants for all three programs have been submitted. With April being Volunteer Appreciation month, staff are getting creative in finding ways to recognize volunteers during a pandemic.
3. The agency has fast tracked the implementation and utilization of Microsoft TEAMS software to facilitate remote work. We will implement Zoom technology where appropriate such as today's meeting. This may be a good option for future meetings where travel is difficult due to bad weather. There have been some challenges, but we're getting used to the new system.
4. Care managers are conducting assessments, reassessments, care place development and program enrollments remotely.
5. Community-based Care staff have worked with participants, their families and community partners to sort through care plans in an effort to prioritize needed services that could not be met with other supports such as family members.

6. Increased communication with contractors and many community partners to work through challenges that have presented themselves.
7. Many Councils/Commissions on Aging have transitioned congregate meal service to a drive thru option. Some have transitioned congregate meals to be delivered to participants. The issue with delivering congregate to the participants' homes is that it is not reimbursable under the traditional funding. It is reimbursable under disaster funding and we are waiting for that grant notice.
8. Home delivered meals are still going out; however, some sites have reduced the number of deliveries. Recipients are still receiving all the meals, just not as frequently. More are frozen in some counties. Requests for HDM are reportedly increasing.
9. All adult day service programs have ceased offering the service during this time.
10. The state has developed a website specific to Covid-19. It has many resources and a lot of information on it. If you haven't seen it yet, it is [www.michigan.gov/coronavirus](http://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus).
11. AASA, our state funding source, has also built a website for people to sign up for a home delivered meal, reassurance calls, and for people to sign up to volunteer. Unfortunately, COAs have not had the need for more volunteers and the one county that did request some names, we had none to offer for that county. The volunteer sign up will now be handled through the MI Community Service Commission (MCSC).
12. AASA has also purchased 10,000 Quarantine food boxes to be distributed throughout the state. Our region has received 350 Q boxes. A person must be 60 or older and not receiving other food programs to qualify. People can sign up at [www.nemcsa.org](http://www.nemcsa.org). If the person is not tech savvy, a friend or loved one can sign them up. As you can imagine, 350 boxes is not a lot for 12 counties so we will see how this goes and what the demand may be. The state has also started an online food drive in hopes of purchasing more Q boxes. To date, there have been just over 200 Q boxes requested and 71 delivered. Today is an Alpena drive thru pick-up date.
13. Our partners have been experiencing extreme challenges in acquiring personal protection equipment for their staff and we have been helping by seeking out vendors and donations, dropping off gloves, sewn masks and hand sanitizer where requested. We also organized a bulk purchase of masks. Quantities of supplies have been provided by AASA and I will be going to Lansing tomorrow to pick up a larger shipment. Q box deliveries will be made on the way.
14. The state has set up a hotline for Covid questions/information 888-535-6136, a website at [www.michigan.gov/coronavirus](http://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus), and hotlines for mental health assistance. Several resources and guidance can be found on the state's website. There is a lot of information on NEMCSA's website as well that explains what the agency is doing through the pandemic.
15. There are five Covid testing sites in the region: Alpena—on Oxbow Drive, Atlanta—Thunder Bay Community Health Services on M-32, Gaylord—McLaren Family Practice on M-32, Houghton Lake—Mid MI Health on Lake City Road, West Branch—Mid MI Health on Court Street.
16. Number of active cases continue to grow in northeast Michigan: Alcona 4; Alpena 60 2 deaths; Arenac 16 1 death; Cheboygan 17 1 death; Crawford 46 3 deaths; Iosco 33 4 deaths; Montmorency 5; Ogemaw 9; Oscoda 4; Otsego 87 8 deaths; Presque Isle 10; Roscommon 13. Totals = 304 active with 19 deaths.

17. The Small Businesses Administration [announced](#) it will **resume processing PPP applications at 10:30 a.m. this coming Monday, April 27th** now that this latest allocation of funding has been signed into law. The PPP has provided forgivable loans to 1.6 million small businesses, nonprofits, Veterans' organizations, tribal businesses, sole proprietors, and independent contractors in all 50 states.
18. The Elder Abuse Prevention effort will be a little different this year. We cannot wait to share it with you. Sara and/or Brooke will discuss more in their reports.
19. The Caregiver Conference has been cancelled. Brooke will share more on this effort.
20. Region 9 will be looking to provide some evidence-based classes remotely rather than in person. More information to come.
21. MMAP is conducting its assistance remotely. Kitty will elaborate in her report.
22. It is time for the Annual Implementation Plan to be developed. AASA may delay submission deadlines. Until that is determined, the Public Hearing for Region 9's plan will be May 18<sup>th</sup> at 1 p.m. via Zoom. We will need a quorum so please plan to attend.
23. The Pre-Bidders Conference for the Fiscal Year 2021 Request for Proposal process is scheduled for May 8<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m. via Zoom.
24. Good news—direct care workers will be getting a \$2 per hour increase for those working in Medicaid-funded behavioral health or long term care services for the months of April, May and June per the governor's recent order.
25. Dan Doezema retired mid-April and Steve Betterly is our interim field rep. with AASA. They do plan to hire but have a hiring freeze in place currently. Steve is also the TASC division supervisor. He has been with AASA for 22 years.

These are some of the highlights that have been going on these last few weeks. There will be more to share in the coming weeks.

C. Corwin – I spoke with a provider last week who with the increase gets \$900 every two weeks but will get \$962 per week on unemployment. Corky – That \$2 increase is only temporary.

C. Corwin – Unemployment is for 36 weeks. Laurie – The \$2 an hour increase is only for the months of April – June.

## **Program Reports**

**Legal Services Board** – Jim Mathis - No report

**Region 9 Directors Report** – Merianne reported an AAA/COA Director's meeting was held in February. Cathy Macfalda from NEMCSA Human Resources reported on the hiring process and reviewed all the legal requirements, etc. involved when hiring staff. That was really helpful and informative. She also sent us tools we can utilize in our hiring process. There was also a presentation on the census and the importance of completing it. Most of the seniors in Oscoda County have not received anything from the census. Many do not have the means to complete the online census. Corky – They should get something in the mail. Merianne – Yes, but not if they have a P.O. Box. Those will get an at home visit. COVID-19 has been very challenging, but we're all hanging in there.

**Long Term Care Ombudsman Program Report** – Sara reported on the use of the Elder Abuse Prevention Grant this year. She and Brooke have been working on developing a 5-minute and

one 30-second video with Olive Animation on social isolation in the senior population. They will be used as public service announcements, on various websites, at conferences, etc. These will be white board videos. A simple format that the COAs can also add to their websites. The 30 second spot will be used as public service announcements for local TV stations. The videos should be good to use for a number of years.

Nursing Home Updates – Sara reported on the spread of COVID-19 in our region’s nursing homes. Ongoing policy changes are significantly impacting resident rights. She continues to receive ongoing general calls regarding resident and community complaints. Nursing homes now have the option to apply to become a hub for Covid-19 patients. A couple homes in our region applied, but none have been approved. The closest ones to us are in Traverse City and Frankenmuth. We have a few homes in our region reporting they have the virus. Medilodge of Gaylord has a number of residents with the virus. Transfer rights for residents has been an issue whether going to a hub or a psychiatric unit downstate for treatment. Those cases have been resolved. Residents have been taken back by the home when treatment is completed. Personal Protective Equipment is an issue in nursing homes along with complaints regarding shortages in general supplies and food. We’re working to find solutions. Level of Care determinations and probate court issues such as guardianships have been put on hold for now. Sara has weekly calls with the state long term care ombudsman. We are fortunate that our region has been hit the least so far. Visitation has been restricted but the residents are handling it well.

PREVNT – Trainings for Dementia Awareness for Law Enforcement are being rescheduled for July going forward. COAs are still able to send her a video for inclusion in the training.

Corky – What makes a nursing home a hub? Sara – They will be a specialty home for Covid residents or for Covid patients who are released from a hospital but need extended care. Residents have the right to request to go to another home but it’s questionable if a home will take someone coming from a hub who could have been exposed to the virus. There will be specific areas in the nursing homes, separate for the other residents. They may have the option to ship out those who want to leave.

**Planning and Volunteer Coordinator Report** – Kitty reported All COAs have counselors assisting clients by telephone. The counselors remain very active. Please put in your COA newsletters they are still available to assist clients. Some have a reduced weekly schedule and are helping in other COA service areas such as home delivered meals or are called in as needed for MMAP appointments held by phone (no face to face). The volume of calls, in some cases, are very reduced and most cases are more complex to solve or are time sensitive. Examples:

- Clients that have already started Medicare or have only days to start.
- Clients that need appeals to get pain medications.
- Scams and scam Medicare charges found on Explanation of Benefits.
- Medicaid applications; especially the transition from Medicaid to Medicare/Medicaid (applying for subsidies).

16 MMAP counselors attended the March 4th Chalgian & Tripp Medicaid Conference held in Roscommon. Starting April 1<sup>st</sup>, and continuing through June 30, all Counselors now have access to the online recertification ORS test. To maintain their MMAP certification, upon achieving initial training requirements, each year counselors: Must attend a minimum of 2 trainings/webinars, Counsel/record a minimum of 60 client hours in SHIPtools, and Pass the annual ORS test with a score of 80% or higher.

Region 9 is actively recruiting volunteers in all Region 9 counties. We have 10 potential recruits scheduled for the July 29-31 training from the following counties: Presque Isle – 2, Alcona – 2,

Otsego – 1, Alpena – 3, Iosco – 1, Ogemaw – 1 (in process). The training may be virtual if necessary.

Up until Covid-19 effectively shut down public programming, counselors scheduled and held regular "New to Medicare" presentations for beneficiaries. Those programs included: Alpena - 50 clients (3 presentations), Montmorency – 73 clients (3 presentations), Iosco - 18 clients (1 presentation). \*From Oct 2019 - Mar 2020: 7 presentations held; 141 clients attended. We are currently reviewing ways to hold internet webinars for New to Medicare beneficiaries in each county. A client sign-in would provide a contact record of attendees for follow-up counseling. MMAP counselors at Mid-Michigan Health, Thunder Bay Health, Alcona Health and HUD housing have expressed interest in holding future presentations – many of these counselors are currently in lay-off.

We want to express our deep appreciation to retiring MMAP counselors in Montmorency County volunteer counselor Barbara Whalen who retired earlier this year, Otsego County Site Coordinator John Panci who will retire on May 1 and we welcome (former Emmet County) MMAP counselor Jake Rossow who will fill John's role in Otsego. Thank you to the COAs for your dedication and service to Region 9 MMAP.

**Special Projects Coordinator Report** – Handouts were distributed previously. Brooke reported the Adult Day Care Best Practice Meeting has been rescheduled for June 5, 2020 and the Caregiver Empowerment and Wellness Conference has been rescheduled for Friday, July 31, 2020. The Best Practices for Adult Day Services has been rescheduled for June 5, 2020.

Caregiver Quarterly Newsletter – Brooke reviewed the front page of the first newsletter. This will be emailed to caregivers directly. COA Directors also received the information for caregivers to sign up with them or go online at [www.nemcsa.org](http://www.nemcsa.org) as well.

Evidence-Based Disease Prevention Programs - Many programs have been rescheduled. Watch for future dates.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers – The AAA will conduct its first online workshop starting on May 4<sup>th</sup>. We may continue online workshops in the future as well, especially during the winter months.

Kinship Handbook – Brooke created one for each county. COAs will receive a copy by email soon. It will also be available on our website under the Education tab. The handbook includes local information, resources, etc. You are encouraged to go online and take a look. Feedback is always appreciated.

Upcoming Workshops – An updated flyer was reviewed. Please reach out to Brooke if know anyone who may be interested in any of the workshops.

### **Advocacy Reports**

**Michigan Senior Advocates (MSAC)** – No report.

**State Advisory Council** – C. Corwin reported the Council last met face to face. March – May meetings have been cancelled. There are four group looking into the causes, effects and correction for senior loneliness. They hope to put all of their resources together and present their finished document to the state and legislators in July and then out statewide to everyone else after that.

## **State Updates**

**State Commission on Aging** – No report.

**Aging and Adult Services Agency (AASA)** – Steve Betterly reported the State Commission on Aging continues to meet remotely. The May meeting has been cancelled. They have been doing limited work and have given AASA the authority to approve policy waivers to make grant adjustments on a case by case basis. AASA has issued over 40 waivers so far.

AIP 2021 Process – AASA is preparing some recommendations to extend the 2020 plan into 2021. The AIP will not be as big a process this year. The state is working on guidance to the field on how this will work.

## **Local Updates From Council Members**

Corky – The MCCOA board has been meeting by phone. We received good news from a Lewiston board member who reported 80 handmade masks will be donated. I believe they are also having a pop-up food pantry on May 6<sup>th</sup>. A local business in Hillman is also making masks with shields and donating to various organizations. Today the board gave permission to apply for the PPE grant. The COA also bought 5 gallons of hand sanitizer from Traverse City and received 1 gallon from Montmorency County Emergency Management.

D. Fay – Due to difficulty with his audio, Laurie reported that he wanted to report that their COA Director, Denise Parrott is retiring the end of May. Christine Schleben, Assistant Director has been promoted to Director and a new Assistant Director has been hired.

C. Corwin – It has been an interesting couple of months. We are seeing to the basic needs of our seniors, but not as much as we'd like. We have received tremendous support from NEMCSA and the Region 9 AAA during this time. It would have been too daunting to find our way through this virus process without them. Corky – I believe that's true for all of us.

Laurie – A big shout out to all of our network partners in the region as well who have done some tremendous work. We have all worked to pull together to help each other out.

## **Action Items**

**MSAC Appointment** – Laurie reported that she met someone at the AASA Listening Session held in March at the Alpena Senior Center who expressed interest in MSAC. Her name is Bonnie Altman. I want to have her attend one of our Regional Council meetings before enrolling in MSAC so she has an idea of what we do.

## **Question or Comments**

No further questions.

## **Adjourn**

A motion was made by M. Downs with support from M. Hiller to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned by Chair C. Proulx at 2:22 pm.

Our next meeting is scheduled for May 18<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm in conjunction with a public hearing on the FY 2021 AIP.