

**Northeast Michigan Regional Council on Aging**  
**Monday, March 22, 2021 at 1:00 pm**  
**Virtual Teams Meeting**

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The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair D. Fay at 1:26 pm. We had difficulty with the Teams invite. Several members were unable to connect and will be marked excused.

**Roll Call**

Jerry Broad, Darlene Huff, Roberta Matelski, Lorelei King, Carol Wilder, Cindy Fleming, Terry Dutcher, David Burdine, Connie Messina, Mitzi Downs, Dennis Fay, Madeline Hiller.

Excused: Mike Maturen, Cyndi Sabin, Elaine Ableidinger, Eileen Howell, Corkie Proulx, Chuck Corwin

Guests: Lisa Bolen, Steve Betterly

AAA Staff: Gina Bey, Yvette Smigelski, Vicki Goodburne, Kitty Glomski, Connie McQuarrie

**Approval of Agenda** – A motion was made by D. Huff with support from J. Broad to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

**Approval of Minutes** – A motion was made by M. Hiller with support from D. Huff to approve the minutes of 1-25-2020. Motion carried.

**Nominating Committee**

D. Fay had no information to report this month.

**Speaker – Mike Maturin, Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist at Catholic Human Services**

Mike was not able to attend today's meeting and will reschedule his presentation for a future date.

**Director's Report**

Laurie is on vacation this week. Gina reported on the following:

COA Reopening – Good news, some of the COAs are reopening for congregate meals. Currently, Alcona opened on March 15<sup>th</sup>, Iosco Hale site on March 15<sup>th</sup> and Oscoda and Tawas will open April 5<sup>th</sup>. Sand Lake will open at a later date. Montmorency Atlanta and Hillman sites opened March 15<sup>th</sup>. The Lewiston site remains closed. Ogemaw also opened on March 15<sup>th</sup> along with their adult day center, and Presque Isle will open on April 6<sup>th</sup>.

Direct Care Premium Pay – The premium pay will continue through September 30, 2021 and it may increase to \$2.25 per hour. We have not received our official grant notice to date, but this is something the governor spoke about at a recent press conference and our funders have indicated it will be moving forward. This will help us to retain the workers acquired during this time for much needed services.

L. King – The funders are saying that they will help support this increase? Gina – Yes. We anticipate receiving additional funds from AASA to support that increase through the end of the fiscal year.

Covid-19 Vaccines - Vaccines are currently available to individuals age 50 and older and additional guidance released on Friday for individuals age 16 and older with certain health conditions. We have been posting the newest guidance on our Facebook page, or people can contact their local health departments for more information. AAA staff are also assisting callers with technology challenges to register them for the vaccine. We are currently in talks with District Health Department #4 to help

them vaccinate homebound individuals. We will provide more information as this agenda item progresses.

M. Hiller – What counties does DHD4 cover? Gina - Alpena, Cheboygan, Montmorency, and Presque Isle. That doesn't mean we aren't in contact with the other health departments in the region to do the same.

Older Michiganians Day – This will be a virtual advocacy week event again this year scheduled for May 10-14. Last year our region had no participation aside from Laurie. Legislators really want to hear from their constituents especially those impacted by our programs so please mark your calendars to make an effort to reach out this year and let our voices be heard.

Provider Relief Funds – We talked about the funds granted to the AAA. Thanks to that award, most of the aging staff have received new computers and equipment to help function better in the remote work environment. There have been a lot of changes and new mandates this year and the need for technology grew significantly.

American Rescue Plan – The president signed the \$1.9 trillion plan on March 11<sup>th</sup>. Aside from the \$1,400 stimulus checks for qualifying individuals and money for vaccinations, there will be additional funding for programs important to the aging population including \$47.8 billion for coronavirus testing and mitigation, \$12.5 billion for Medicaid Home and Community Based Long Term Care \$4.5 billion for Liheap, the federally funded program that keeps low income seniors homes heated and cooled, \$1.4 billion to strengthen critical programs for older adults including nutrition assistance, vaccination support and caregiver support under the Older Americans Act and Elder Justice Act.

Training Opportunity – Impart Alliance is offering two free training opportunities for staff has been shared with our vendors and community partners. They are Infection Control and Refresher Training. Each is a one-hour course that can be provided to staff. Your COAs should have received an email. If not, they can visit their website at: [www.impartalliance.org](http://www.impartalliance.org) for more information.

AAA Staff – We have hired a new nurse for the Alpena office and interviews have been conducted for the nurse position in West Branch. We hope to fill that position shortly. The LTC Ombudsman position continues to be vacant. We are also hiring two part-time temporary staff to help with scanning as we transition to a paperless system. The positions are currently posted on our website.

J. Broad – The areas that are open for congregate meals, what's driving that, the health department or is that a board decision? Yvette – That is a board decision based on guidance sent to the COA directors from AASA.

L. King – In Crawford, because we have space within another facility, they have asked if the COA would wait for all of their staff to be vaccinated so we're looking at the end of April or May.

## **Program Reports**

**Legal Services Board** – No report.

**Region 9 Directors Report** – No report.

**Long Term Care Ombudsman Report** – No report. Calls continue to be handled through the state office.

**Planning and Volunteer Coordinator Report** – Kitty reported counselors have been busy assisting clients during the open enrollment for Medicare Advantage Plans which ends on March 31<sup>st</sup>. The last six months have been busy assisting with Part D or Medicare Advantage Plans. This time of year, we

have an increased need for assistance with. Heavy demand for assistance with problem medications and additional costs that people discover they have with the turn of the new year. We will end with a 6-month total savings of over \$3 million. We also had a heavy demand for information for new advantage plans for dual enrolled individuals, those on both Medicare and Medicaid. I also want to add that all of our counselors are providing vaccination information and encouraging clients they are working with to get vaccinated.

Annual MMAP Counselor Recertification – This will start April 1<sup>st</sup>. Topics are diversity, equality, and inclusion. We have 33 counselors to be recertified which is really great news.

Client Savings Audit - This is the first year CMS is conducting a savings audit using the national SHIPtools database software. We will have to provide supporting proof by April 8<sup>th</sup>.

New Counselor Initial Training – A virtual new counselor orientation meeting was held last week. We have four candidates: one AAA staff, and one from Oscoda, Presque Isle, and Roscommon county. Additional candidates are needed in all of our counties, but particularly in Cheboygan and Iosco.

Zoom Meetings - Counselors have been very active. We have a planning meeting the first Wednesday of the month. New to Medicare presentations will be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month beginning on April 14<sup>th</sup> from 10am – 11am. There will also be a national New to Medicare event on April 7<sup>th</sup>.

D. Fay – I just want to say thank you. Over \$3 million in savings by your counselors is no small task.

**Special Projects Coordinator Report** – Yvette reported Brooke and Kelly are conducting a Matter of Balance workshop this afternoon. She has the following workshops scheduled: Powerful Tools for Caregivers April 26<sup>th</sup> from 5:30–7:00 pm and July 15<sup>th</sup> from 10-11:30 am. and Creating Confident Caregivers on June 22<sup>nd</sup> from 3-5 pm and October 19<sup>th</sup> from 1-3 pm. She and Kara completed their first virtual workshop CCC workshop with 8 of the 9 participants completing.

Annual Caregiver Conference – This year the conference will be a webinar series on the second Friday of each month. You can attend however many you would like. Topics are as follows:

April: Relatives Raising Relatives Children

May: Caring for the Caregiver

June: Understanding and Responding to Dementia

July: Dealing with Difficult Emotions

August: Assistive Devices

September: Preparing for the Future

Caregiver Newsletter – The 4<sup>th</sup> newsletter topics include: Communication, Nursing Home Checklist, Important Documents, and Reading List for Self-Care.

**Services Coordinator Report** – No report.

### **Advocacy Reports**

**MSAC** – Pat Rondeau was not present - no report.

**State Advisory Council** – C. Corwin reported to Connie that their new charge for the year is Aging in Place. The Council is scheduled to meet in May. He will have more to report at our next meeting.

### **State Updates**

**Aging and Adult Services Agency (AASA)** – Steve Betterly reported the guidance for the premium pay for direct care workers is being developed at the state office and will be coming soon to the AAA.

Also, additional funding is coming from the nutrition supplement grant that was part of this recent stimulus package. The state legislature has not authorized spending of the entire amount available, but the amount they have authorized will come through as a statement of grant award to the AAA very soon. Annual Implementation Plan guidance has been approved by the State Commission on Aging and instructions will be out the end of this month or early April. AASA has hired a new field representative to fill the position left vacant by Dan Doezenia. There will probably be some shuffling of positions and assignments. Steve has accepted a permanent position of Section Manager and at some point, will no longer be our field representative and we will have someone new. He has been the acting manager since last March.

### **Local Updates From Council Members**

L. King – We are going to be able to have our first board meeting in person. We've had problems with technology similar to what happened with you today. We want to get back to providing services but the housing commission that holds the building wants us to wait until all of their staff are vaccinated. We hope our numbers for home delivered meals is going up.

C. Fleming – We are facing a few challenges with reopening for congregate meals, but we're working through them. We are discussing having a roving center host, so we'll have someone to go into those sites that are struggling and cover vacations, etc. We are looking forward to getting back to normal, whatever that will look like.

### **Action Items**

**NEMCSA Board Appointments** – This item was tabled at our last meeting until Elaine Ableidinger was able to participate. Laurie spoke with Elaine and she was willing to give up her position on the NEMCSA board. Both Corkie Proulx, and Chuck Corwin agreed to represent this council previously. A motion was made by T. Dutcher with support from L. King to appoint Corkie and Chuck as representatives from this board to the NEMCSA Policy Board. Motion carried.

### **Questions or Comments**

J. Broad – I think a number of people couldn't sign in, so they probably just gave up. That may explain some of the absences today. Yvette – Yes, we will work on that.

J. Broad – All the dates that were mentioned for the seminars coming up, will those be in the minutes so I can print them off for our next board meeting? Yvette – Yes, we will get a publication to your COAs shortly. If you want a copy of the dates, we can get those to you.

### **Adjourn**

A motion was made by D. Huff with support by L. King to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 2:02 pm by Vice Chair D. Fay. Our next meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 24<sup>th</sup>.