

**ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING
QUARTERLY MEETING**

October 3 – 6, 2022

Anchorage Meeting

Location

Anchorage Senior Center
1300 E. 19th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501

Commission Members:

Bob Sivertsen, Chair
Paula Pawlowski
Cheryl La Follette, *not present*
Nona Safra
Michael Coons
Bob Pawlowski
Janet Engan
Pam Samash
Darlene Supplee
Acting Director Anthony Newman
Lisa Von Bargen

Guests:

Kelda Barstad, The Trust
Rita Gray, MASST Program
Jim McCall, AHFC
Stephanie Wheeler, LTC Ombudsman
Director Duane Mayes, DVR
Marianne Mills, AgeNet
Ellen Hackenmueller, SDS, Grants Unit
Jeanne' Larson, SDS MIO
Brenda Shelden, APH Advisory Board
David Washburn, OPAG
Dana Norwood, SDS
Teresa Holt, AARP
Louise Ryan, ACL
Jessica Spurrier, SDS
A'isha Jackson, MASST Program
Alvin Ancheta
Michelle Humphrey-Bowlds, Agnew::Beck
Shanna Zuspan, Agnew::Beck
Kristin Cox, SDS

Staff

Jon Haghayeghi, Executive Director
Lesley Thompson, Planner

Monday, October 3, 2022
CALL TO ORDER – 9:00 a.m.
ROLL CALL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Due to technical difficulties, this portion of the meeting was not recorded.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Due to technical difficulties, the recording did not include the motion or second to approve the agenda.

An amendment was made to add an executive session for personnel reasons to the Thursday agenda. Chair Sivertsen stated that he will add that to the end of Thursday's meeting agenda.

Hearing no objection, the motion passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mike Coons **MOVED** to approve the minutes from the May 2022 meeting, **SECONDED** by Bob Pawlowski. Hearing no discussion nor objection, the motion **PASSED**.

CHAIR REPORT

Chair Sivertsen reminded Commissioners to complete their ethics disclosures and send them in to Lesley Thompson.

Chair Sivertsen highlighted the following activities:

- Responded to multiple calls and e-mails from board members regarding a variety of items and issues, none of which required action.
- Participated in and chaired public Zoom meetings and other committee meetings of the Commission.
- Submitted the necessary reports to the state Boards and Commissions for ethics reporting.
- Worked with the administrator answering questions and providing counseling and direction where needed.
- Met and promoted discussions in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.
- Discussions with the vice-chair to ensure they adhere to the bylaws and mission.
- Worked with Janet Engan as she continues to guide the Commission to meet the objectives and timelines in the Senior Plan. Thank you to Jan for all the work done in that regard.
- Participated in a visit to Juneau, Sitka, and Ketchikan in his position on the Pioneer Homes Advisory Board.
- Agreed to participate in an interview process for the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority.

Chair Sivertsen stated that a focus of this meeting will be to discuss language for the State Plan in terms of goals, objectives, measurable steps, and outcomes to benefit seniors in the state of Alaska.

VICE-CHAIR REPORT

Paula Pawlowski stated that after the passing of Rosemary Hagevig, she has moved into this vice-chair position, which is in charge of legislation. She shared the following suggestions:

- Review legislative priorities from last year and hold another Advocacy Day with AARP and AgeNet. Staff need to review the contract they had last year with Denali Daniels & Associates, the contractor that put the event together.
- Consider creating priorities for a two-year session.
- Consider holding another Lunch and Learn with the legislature in partnership with AgeNet and AARP as well as any other partners in line with ACoA's legislative priorities.
- Between now and the election, develop three questions for candidates to answer based on the Senior Snapshot and the State Plan Survey. This can be used as an educational tool as well as a survey.
- Would like to redo how they do their legislative watch. AgeNet has expressed that they would prefer not to spend two hours on a teleconference call reviewing legislation. Perhaps they can do legislative alerts instead.

Chair Sivertsen would like to have the Commission try to put together a list of pertinent State departments that can present to the Commission and the Commission's partners on issues of importance to them. He also noted that because this will be the start of a new two-year session, bills of interest last year are now dead, and they will need to be kept abreast of what is proposed this session.

Pam Samish likes the idea of surveying the candidates. She also asked for clarification on the redo of the legislative watch because she's worried they might miss a bill that they should be discussing. Paula Pawlowski clarified that they would look at the bills that are scheduled in committees and are moving. There is less need to review bills that aren't scheduled for hearing by a committee.

Mike Coons stated that the Commission has been adamant in the past about not talking about the PFD because it's too political; yet they are now talking about putting out a survey to candidates. The PFD is an issue that greatly impacts seniors, and he feels it's wrong for the Commission to pick and choose and avoid political hot potatoes. Issues that affect seniors include the budget, senior benefits, the PFD, and different bills that may indirectly impact them, and the Commission needs to talk about these. He suggested they discuss a smaller number of bills during the legislative teleconferences instead of going through the whole list like they have been. Paula Pawlowski stated that they will definitely review all of the bills at the beginning of the session as they come out, and then they will determine bills of importance to the board.

Lesley Thompson appreciated AARP for holding forums where they question legislators and then publicize the information. The Commission should work with AARP to ensure they are posing different questions.

Janet Engan recommended basing their legislative advocacy goals on their State Plan goals and outcomes. Darlene Supplee agreed.

INTRODUCTIONS

Commissioners and ex-officio members introduced themselves to guests and attendees.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND STAFF UPDATES

Jon Haghayeghi stated that this is his first meeting with the Commission. He shared that his background is as an economist, and he served as the executive director for the State of Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission.

Jon Haghayeghi presented to the Commission as follows:

Activities:

- Presented to the Alaska Mental Health Trust and AgeNet
- Attended site visits around Kenai.
- The office is preparing to move.
- Found a candidate for the rural outreach specialist position.

Jon Haghayeghi took a moment to appreciate the Trust noting that all the Commission's endeavors are possible because of the Trust. The Trust was able to provide funding for travel and the contractor for the development of the State Plan.

State Plan:

- The Senior Survey is projected to receive 7,000 responses this year; 1,500 on paper, and 5,500 online. The average completion rate is 71 percent.
- SurveyMonkey collects data on ages, locations, preferences, issues. They are able to cross validate regions, ZIP Codes, and attributes.
- Very pleased to have gotten the survey into the hands of so many seniors. Highlights from the responses include:
 - Age of respondents from Facebook were younger.
 - Good representation from the Alaska Native population – 11 percent.
 - Need to solicit for responses from the Aleutian Chain, North Slope, and other regions that had a low response rate. Suggested to reach out to rural chambers, senior centers, regional corporations; and put QR codes in newsletters as well as newspapers to advertise that the survey is still open to complete. A firm deadline was also suggested because they need time to compile the data. They also need to be sure they make a concerted effort to reach out to the underrepresented ethnicities.
 - For those narrative public comments on Facebook, it was recommended to group them together by similarities.

- Performance goals have been set for the Commission that very clearly define what they want to get out of the planner and rural outreach positions.
- This year the Commission is very well funded, and there about 20 trips approved on their travel plan. The Commission recently discussed visiting Unalaska, Bethel, Tok, and Dillingham.

Jon is excited for what the Commission will be able to accomplish this year, and he appreciates the opportunity to serve the Commission.

Lesley Thompson stated that she has been with the Commission for 15 years, and prior to that worked with youth programs. She stated she has a passion for people in rural Alaska, and they receive many phone calls at the office from people needing help with nowhere to turn. She feels it's important the Commission remembers to serve rural Alaskans, and she is pleased staff will be available to serve them. She appreciates the Trust because they have funded her position. She also has a passion for legislation from past work experiences, and she reminded Commissioners that they can also assist in getting legislation on the books by working with legislators.

Other items of interest:

- They are hopeful to have a presentation on the Open Meetings Act at the December meeting.
- 90,000 Alaskan households are eligible for Internet assistance, and there are only 10,000 taking advantage of it. It is based on income.

Lisa Von Barga added that the Internet program is the FCC Affordable Connectivity Program. The monthly subsidy is \$30, but tribal households are able to get a \$75 monthly credit. For the purposes of this program, the entire state of Alaska is considered tribal, so Native and non-Native households are eligible for the \$75 credit.

DIVISION OF SENIOR AND DISABILITIES SERVICES (SDS) UPDATES

Acting Director Newman stated that he will remain as acting director for the next several weeks. He reported on the following activities of SDS as follows:

Grants

In the past several months, the Department of Health (DOH) Grants and Contracts Unit has faced severe challenges in getting grants processed and payments out. He explained that Ellen Hackenmueller is the manager of SDS's Grant Unit that works with the DOH Grants and Contracts Unit. The Grants and Contracts Unit is not fully staffed, and there are challenges getting people trained. He has been doing his best to communicate with the Commissioner's office about the challenges that grantees are facing in meeting payroll and dipping into reserves.

Provider Rates

SDS has continued to proceed with the regular rate rebasing, but they also received an infusion of \$32M from the legislature, which equates to a ten percent rate increase across the board for home and community-based services (HCBS) providers. SDS was

able to receive permissions from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and the ten percent rate increases have now gone into effect.

There will soon be a release of new rate charts based on the rate rebasing that the Office of Rate Review (ORR) has conducted. The new charts will be accompanied by regulations, and the public comment period will begin. They are looking forward to hearing people's input on how the rate rebasing looks, and they are hopeful to get those changes put into place on top of the ten percent legislative appropriation.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds

The DOH had an opportunity to participate in the ARPA Enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (EFMAP) Opportunity. This allowed states to keep a portion of the funding they would normally have to pay for HCBS Medicaid services as long as they use that money to enhance services. Two projects have been developed to take advantages of the ARPA EFMAP Opportunity:

- Direct Service Professional (DSP) Relief and Incentive Program. This allows providers the opportunity to recoup some of the costs incurred during the pandemic if they paid overtime, launched recruitment initiatives, et cetera. So far over \$7M has been put out in this program.
- DSP Certification Program. Working with the Alaska Training Cooperative, this pilot program offers people free training as well as incentive payments to participate in the training for both the person receiving the training and the agency that employs them. They are hopeful this will remain a long-term program that will exist in Alaska that will enhance the professionalism and the long-range recruitment and retention of DSPs.

Budget

Acting Director Newman has been working on the budget as the Governor is preparing to introduce his budget in December. He and his admin team have been answering questions from the Office of the Governor as well as the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Eliminate the Waitlist

In the budget bill this year, the legislature asked that the DOH put together a five-year plan to eliminate the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) waitlist. This was an unfunded mandate, but SDS approached the Trust, and the Trust has offered the services of HCBS Strategies to develop that plan. Later this month, SDS will be holding a public facing webinar where they will invite stakeholders to come and share their thoughts on how they can go about eliminating the I/DD waitlist. SDS is very grateful for the Trust's willingness to fund innovation and incubate projects.

Mike Coons talked to Commissioner Crum and was informed the Department was in the process of talking to an insurance provider about bringing Medicare Advantage to Alaska. He asked if Acting Director Newman could address that. He also asked if the rate rebasing applies to the situation where physicians are paid varying rates for Medicare, Medicaid, TRICARE, and private insurance. Acting Director Newman noted that both of those questions are focused on Medicare, which is not a state-administered

program. Medicaid is a state-administered program in partnership with the federal government. He cannot speak to what the Commissioner is doing at his level to bring Medicare Advantage to the state, but he would be happy to follow up. Physician's willingness to accept patients on Medicare is also an issue that would be best addressed with the federal delegation, because it is an entirely federally administered program. The Medicaid rate rebasing is about HCBS. HCBS are not considered health care services; they are considered home and community-based services. The rates for hospitals and physicians are set in a completely different way than HCBS. HCBS include group home services, respite, chore, personal care services.

Nona Safra stated that she has been receiving calls from people on the Kenai Peninsula where it is a problem finding DSPs. Agencies are telling people to find their own workers and then have them apply to work for the provider agency. She knows of four people who either don't have a DSP anymore, or the DSP is showing up less than 50 percent of the time. People are afraid they will be removed from the waiver program because of the lack of hours of service. Acting Director Newman suggested letting people know that SDS is aware of the challenge of actualizing services. SDS is aware they are approving people for services people are not receiving because there is no one to provide the services. SDS is trying to be as flexible as they can to not remove people from service due to lack of service providers. He is hopeful that the rate increases will help turn it around and draw more people into the field. He also noted that they need to look at how technology can help allay some of the problems they will have in the future finding the workforce that is needed. They also need to rethink some of the ways that they allow people to serve those they love, and there are many innovative ideas out there about how to involve family as caregivers.

Darlene Supplee noted that as a provider, they still have not received first quarter advancement for the NTS grant, and they are now moving into second quarter. She thanked Acting Director Newman for being straightforward and honest about the challenges and for understanding the hardship that providers are facing. She stated that an increment increase in grant funding is a critical need. She wanted to confirm that the increment is on SDS's and OMB's radar as an urgent state priority to be inserted as a budget line item through SDS. Acting Director Newman stated that it is being verbally communicated, but he doesn't know what the Governor's ultimate decisions are going to be around the budget. He stated that providers and the Independent Living Network have clearly conveyed the need.

Janet Engan stated that one of her main advocacy points is for those seniors between the ages of 60 and 65 who do not qualify for Medicaid for the HCBS or waiver services because they are slightly over income, and they do not have insurance and do not have sufficient income to pay for services. If the rates are raised, it will be even more expensive for people in this situation to pay for their own chore or personal care services. She believes in a non-medical home and community-based service program that can be provided through a combination of federal Older American's Act funds and state funding to provide services for those people who are falling through the cracks and would be less costly to serve in their own homes independently. Acting Director Newman appreciated the comments on how they can better serve people as they age and need public services. He will take this message back to the Commissioner that

they need to work with Medicare, private insurance, and the Medicaid program to make sure people aren't falling through the gaps.

Jeanne' Larson, the project assistant for the Medicare Information Office stated that it will take a combination of both the state and the federal government focusing on the access issue. Medicare Advantage plans will not be on Alaska's landscape for the upcoming plan year. Medicare Advantage offers vision, dental and audiology services not normally covered by the original Medicare A and B. These plans are very sought after and they are a very popular option, but Alaska lacks the infrastructure of providers that can create the networks that these plans depend on. It will take state effort to incentivize doctors to come to Alaska and practice here. Alaska doesn't have HMO or PPO style care, which are a lot of what the Advantage plans are in the states. There are also federal requirements that there be so many hospitals and doctors in a certain mile radius, and because the rural parts of Alaska can't accommodate those provider requirements, they can't offer plans here. Alaska does see a less common type of Medicare Advantage plan called a Medicare Medical Savings Account. It is a high-deductible health plan that combines a medical savings account. Patients can use the money on things that Medicare doesn't cover, but the downside is even though it can be used for any qualified medical expense, there is still a large deductible to meet before the health plan pays anything. The Medicare Information Office cannot advocate because they are federally funded by grants. They encourage people to reach out to both their state and federal representatives to voice their concerns about the lack of access in Alaska. Every other state in the nation has at least one Medicare Advantage plan, but there are states where rural parts lack Medicare Advantage plan providers. The difference in those states is that people can drive to the next county to receive care, which is not an option in Alaska.

Pam Samash expressed the importance of seniors staying in their communities near their families and recognized the cost savings of keeping seniors out of nursing care. She asked how the Commission can advocate to the legislature to help SDS be successful. She also expressed her frustration with the senior medical benefits. Acting Director Newman stated that the main message is that HCBS not only enhance people's choices, independence, and dignity, but they are cost-effective ways to deliver services to people to keep them in their homes and communities and out of institutions.

STATE ON AGING GUIDANCE TRAINING #1

Janet Engan shared a 36-minute YouTube recorded webinar on State Plan Guidance, which was issued in 2021 and applies to all of the states. This webinar was developed and hosted by Brian Altman and Chris Mitchell with Administration on Community Living (ACL)/Administration on Aging (AoA), Washington, D.C.

Mission

Maximize the independence, well-being, and health of older adults, people with disabilities across the lifespan, and their families and caregivers.

Vision

For all people, regardless of age and disability, to live with dignity, make their own choices, and participate fully in society.

Highlights

- New State Plan Guidance applies to any new state plan taking effect on or after October 1, 2022.
- Incorporates key changes from the 2020 reauthorization of the OAA.
- Includes Biden-Harris priorities that shape ACL's work.
- Alaska's State Plan is due to ACL on July 1, 2023.

2020 Older Americans Act Reauthorization and the State Plan Guidance (SPG)

- Social isolation:
 - Requires taking a closer look at the negative health effects associated with social isolation.
 - Focus on screening for social isolation.
 - Title III-B adds supportive services that reduce social isolation.
- Caregiving:
 - New term – caregiver assessment.
 - Caregivers can care for individuals of any age with Alzheimer's.
- Nutrition/malnutrition:
 - Reducing malnutrition.
 - States and AAAs should reduce administrative burdens so that resources are where they are needed the most.

Biden-Harris Administration Priorities and the New SPG:

- COVID-19 recovery:
 - Significant disruptions
 - Significant flexibilities
 - Supplemental funding
 - Increased needs of older adults.
- Advancing equity:
 - Broad approach.
 - Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons; persons with disabilities; and persons who live in rural areas
 - Individuals with limited English proficiency.
 - At risk of institutionalization.
- Expanding access to HCBS:
 - How is the state building HCBS capacity?
 - How is the state improving HCBS program quality through innovation, partnerships with other state and local agencies, community-based organizations both within and outside the aging network?
- Building a caregiving infrastructure:
 - Build off the key findings from the RAISE Family Caregiving Advisory Council and other national efforts.

State Plan Content

- Signed verification of intent.

- Narrative:
 - Executive summary
 - Context
 - Quality management
 - Goals, objectives, strategies, and outcomes.

State Plan Key Topic Areas (with highlights)

- OAA core programs topic area:
 - Ensuring incorporation of the new purpose of nutrition programming to include addressing malnutrition.
 - Screening for fall-related traumatic brain injury.
- COVID-19 topic area:
 - Educating about the prevention of, detection of, and response to negative health effects associated with social isolation.
 - Dissemination of information about state assistive technology entity and access to assistive technology options for serving older individuals.
 - Screening for suicide risk.
- Equity topic area:
 - Ensuring meals can be adjusted for cultural considerations and preferences and providing medically tailored meals to the maximum extent practicable.
 - Supporting cultural experiences, activities, and services, including in the arts.
 - Serving older adults living with HIV/AIDS.
- Expanding access to HCBS topic area:
 - Incorporating aging network services with HCBS funded by other entities such as Medicaid.
- Caregiving topic area:
 - Implementing recommendations from the RAISE Family Caregiver Advisory Council.

Attachments to the State Plan

- Attachment A – State Plan Assurances
- Attachment B – Information Requirements
- Attachment C – IFF Requirements

State Plan Resources:

- ACL National Resource Centers: <https://acl.gov/node/2884>
- SAGE Aging Network Planning Tools: <https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/resources.cfm?s=36>
- Advancing States Tools for Planning: <http://www.advancingstates.org/state-technical-assistance/tools-planning>
- ACL Regional Support Center: <https://acl.gov/about-acl/regional-offices>
- State Plan Guidance: [KM_C364e-20180920105928 \(acl.gov\)](https://acl.gov/asset/KM_C364e-20180920105928)

The webinar outlined a sample timeline that highlighted the following steps:

1. Gather information

2. Draft the State Plan
3. Share drafts and refine
4. Finalize and obtain signatures
5. Submit to ACL.

The webinar concluded with a Q and A session for webinar attendees.

Janet Engan noted that the plan that was outlined in the webinar is a new format, and she felt it was very important that the Commission hear directly from the ACL because they created it. She believes that the updates to the plan will require a very close working relationship with SDS, particularly with the requirements on addressing social isolation, caregiving, and nutrition. How the state funds services in these areas may need to be addressed.

Nona Safra stated that she is very excited to see the screening for fall-related TBI topic area. She believes they will have access to that data through the university, which has a brain injury task force. She also recommended partnering with the Statewide Independent Living Center (SILC) and the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE) who are also both looking at traumatic and acquired brain injury.

Bob Pawlowski stated that in the Biden-Harris priority of increased needs of older adults, he believes that if they are trying to justify their funding formula, it's the lack of professional skills in the labor force and the low competitive wages that impact meeting the needs of older adults. In terms of the at risk of institutionalization, he believes they also need to focus on the lack of assisted living quarters, caregivers, and nursing homes, particularly in rural Alaska.

Paula Pawlowski referred Commissioners to the packet that also contains copies of the Executive Order from President Biden. She encouraged everyone to read the document. She also shared her discouragement at what this is now requiring. ACoA is a volunteer board, and she does not believe she has the depth of knowledge to bring what is required to this plan. She feels it's overwhelming. She is worried how they can create a plan for the entire state, and she feels they need more help from the State in terms of expertise on how to write this plan. She acknowledged they will have a contractor to help them, but she is still feeling overwhelmed.

Jon Haghayeghi explained that given all of the new requirements and standards, it's very likely that they will be writing a draft to be provided to Louise Ryan from ACL late February, early March. That will give them enough time to work with her to make any necessary modifications in a timely manner. Jan Engan asked if Louise had this timeline in mind for the entire plan or a portion of the plan. Jon thinks she would like a draft of the entire plan. Ellen Hackemueller agreed. Jan stated that they will need to develop a plan to meet that deadline. She suggested convening workgroups for the narrative and a funding formula.

Darlene Supplee offered her assistance in moving this forward. She noted that it may seem overwhelming for the Commission, but providers do this work every day, and she is happy to help.

Bob Pawlowski noted that they want information about COVID-19, but when they get into the equity topic areas, they are talking about HIV/AIDS versus COVID long haulers. He believes long-term COVID is a more important topic to be covering for seniors.

Chair Sivertsen referred Commissioners to the existing State Plan's objectives, strategies, and performance measures. He noted there is quite a bit of information contained in there, and it also highlights who the leads are on different topics. The Commission is going to be relying on partners for data and information. He believes it would be prudent for staff to help break this down and send out letters of inquiry to the partner agencies who are currently listed in the State Plan. That information would then go to the contractor.

Acting Director Newman stated that the department suffered a cyberattack this past year, and he asked Ellen Hackenmueller to provide a realistic snapshot of what the division is able to do in terms of providing data. Ellen stated that for the most part, despite the challenges of the past year, they do have the bulk of their data. Although the data isn't perfect and does contain some anomalies, they were able to maintain the same data collection requirements of their providers, and the providers met that. She did note that a quality assurance review of the data should be conducted because of the challenges of the past year.

Jan Engan stated that with the data they receive from their surveys and listening sessions, they can enhance some of the existing topic areas contained in the last State Plan.

WELCOME FROM LT. GOVERNOR MEYER

Lt. Governor Kevin Meyer enjoyed a lunch with the Commissioners and appeared before them to provide comment. He remarked on the Commission coming to Juneau to meet with legislators, which he always appreciated as a legislator because he was able to learn the needs of elders. He stated the Governor carefully chose the members of this Commission as he is very interested in senior issues. The senior population in Alaska is growing at the fastest rate in the nation per capita.

Lt. Governor Meyer is impressed by the statewide reach of ACoA, and he thanked Commissioners for their service. He also thanked seniors for getting out to vote, and he appreciated seniors volunteering at the polls. AARP will be hosting a town hall meeting to explain ranked choice voting.

Chair Sivertsen asked the Lt. Governor for recommendations on what organizations should do to get their messages out to legislators. Lt. Governor Meyer suggested they talk to the legislators in their districts. Lunch and Learns can be effective, but it's often staff that attends them because the legislators are in other meetings. Evening receptions can be an informal event that many legislators attend. The one-on-one meetings with legislators are the most effective. Printed materials are also helpful.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public appeared before the Commission to provide comment.

PARTNER REPORTS

Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education

Nona Safra reported that the Governor's Council has met this past quarter. The executive director position has been posted, and the job description has been rewritten and updated.

The two major accomplishments of the Council include:

- Passage and signing of SB 185, minimum wage exemption bill to remove subminimum wages in Alaska.
- ACL dropped the Council's non-compliance issue.

Goals in the Council's Five-Year State Plan that impact seniors include:

- Community inclusion, supports, and services – increased access to a flexible system of meaningful supports and services in homes and communities across the lifespan to increase the number of people with disabilities living the lives they choose.
- Self-advocacy and leadership – increase access, education, tools, and opportunities for self-advocacy across the lifespan to increase the number of people with disabilities expressing the visions of their lives in local, state, and national forums.
- Employment – increase access to supports, services, programs, and training necessary for successful transition, meaningful work experiences, integrated and competitive employment, as well as career development across the lifespan.

Other priorities of the Council and its partners:

- Hiring an executive director, planner, and project coordinator.
- Expand the ABLE Act.
- Making an icon available for driver's licenses in Alaska for people who have hidden disabilities and may have issues dealing with first responders.

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

Nona Safra reported on SILC priorities as follows:

- Increase funding for senior grants and Centers for Independent Living.
- Participant-directed care modeled after the VA directed care model. A white paper has been developed by the SILC.
- Expansion of the Environmental Modification (E-Mod) program.

Nona Safra concluded her presentations about the SILC and the Council by encouraging the Commission to support these partners in their advocacy efforts that impact seniors.

Transportation

Nona Safra stated that she sits on a commission that is advocating for the following:

- To promote legislation and policies to increase transit services and foster healthy, thriving communities. Most of Alaska does not have public transit, and this impact seniors, particularly on the Kenai Peninsula.
- Increase state funding for transit administration operation and capital so all Alaskans have full access to jobs.
- Increase capital funding to ensure vehicles are maintained, safe, and accessible.
- Create and fund a public transit act in statute.

Living, Working, and Playing Towards Independence Conference

Nona Safra shared the following highlights:

- Someone maced a security guard at the Egan Center, and they had to evacuate.
- The conference concluded early because of positive COVID tests.
- They need to create a statewide network of advocates.
- Need a person-centered directed care pilot.
- Director Duane Mayes released the Alaska Work Matters Task Force report.
- DVR pays for leadership training, so the Commission may want to send seniors to attend this leadership training.
- Discussed the MASST program.
- Session on veteran-directed care. Kenai Peninsula Independent Living Center (ILC) has 110 veterans being served in this program. The program is extremely successful, and they would like to see this program expand.
- Nona was able to participate in a brain injury presentation. She encouraged Commissioners to speak up about issues that affect seniors and consider recruiting for future members of ACoA.

Nona thanked the Trust for the Brain Injury Network and Alzheimer's and related dementias mini grants. These mini grants make a huge difference for people on a day-to-day basis.

Pioneer Home Advisory Board

Bob Pawlowski reported that they have not been able to do in-person visits to the Pioneer Homes for the last couple years, but this year they were able to visit Juneau, Sitka, and Ketchikan in September. They had time to tour the homes, talk with staff, visit with residents, and share meals. The visits were very valuable, and Commissioner Kovol was able to attend the visit in Juneau with them.

Common Themes:

- Residents and staff working well together
- Nana Management Services contract services working well
- Activities differ between homes
- Staffing and personnel shortages – nurses, CNAs – retention
- Inflation for goods and services – logistics challenges for supplies

- Deferred maintenance – lack of interest for contract repair, costs exceeding estimates.

Future Plans:

- Continue to meet bimonthly
- Plan fall 2023 trip to Anchorage and Palmer Pioneer Homes.

Occupancy Rates FY'22 To Date:

- Division-wide - 498 beds
- APH 81.81% - 169 beds
- AVPH 99.24% - 79 beds
- FPH 91.72% - 91 beds
- JPH 100% - 49 beds
- KPH 96.67% - 45 beds
- SPH 96.97% - 65 beds

FY'22 Total Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD) Elders Served:
286 – 59.46% of elders

FY22 Average Percentage of ADRD Elders Served per Home:

- APH - 58.22%
- AVPH - 58.54%
- FPH - 63.22%
- JPH - 75.00%
- KPH - 50.00%
- SPH - 52.94%

Pam Samash asked if they had considered getting a USDA loan for Pioneer Homes to have greenhouses. This would give residents a job and provide a sustainable food supply. She also suggested they could raise chickens for both food and animal therapy. Bob Pawlowski stated that he will offer this suggestion, but as 50 percent of the residents are at level 3 care or above, it's asking the other residents to take on a lot of extra work when they have other hobbies they would like to do. He believes that although this is a good idea and could be something to pursue, it would need to be in partnership with the community.

Mike Coons stated that a location in Palmer had vegetable gardens and raised beds, and he feels gardening gives residents in level 1 and 2 something to do. He thinks Pam's idea is good and thinks the biggest logistical hurdle is ensuring there is adequate space to do it.

Chair Sivertsen noted that there are multiple homes that have greenhouses. One of the things with pets and animals is that some seniors are thinned skin, particularly those with declining health, and so they would need to be careful about accessing livestock. The care for chickens cannot fall on Pioneer Homes staff.

Brenda Shelden from the Alaska Pioneer Homes Advisory Board shared that there are activities available for the Pioneer Home residents both indoor and outdoor. The

activities are very specific to what is available in the community and what the staff has available. The key is bringing in partners to interact with the homes at low to no cost versus having a home try to run a project like that.

Pam Samash believes that reaching out to the community for offers of volunteerism to help with gardening and chickens at the Pioneer Homes would be fruitful.

Acting Director Newman felt that the more innovation and variety brought into the Pioneer Homes, the better. He noted that the Juneau Pioneer Home used to have a daycare, and he asked if that was still available. Bob Pawlowski stated that it is not currently open, but they are doing outreach to reactivate it.

AgeNet

Marianne Mills stated that AgeNet is a membership association of senior service providers and advocates for older Alaskans and senior services. They focus on the entire state of Alaska, and they are trying to develop as many services as possible to help older Alaskans stay in their own homes and communities of choice for as long as possible.

During the pandemic they saw the number of home-delivered meal recipients double, triple, and quadruple, and the cost of food and other expenses has gone up. At the last AgeNet annual meeting, they were feeling hopeful about the 13 percent increase in the community-based grants, but those grants were vetoed out of the budget. Community-based grants are the main source of services for older Alaskans with 24,000 people receiving services through the grants. There are only 2,000 people who receive services from the Alaskans Living Independently Medicaid waiver. She believes some people misunderstood that when they advocated for “home and community-based services” that they meant “waiver” when they were actually talking about the grants.

AgeNet is trying to educate on the importance of the community-based grants from SDS. Alaska has the fastest growing senior population in the country. The grants are a cost- and program-efficient way to provide much needed support services to seniors and their unpaid family caregivers and cost much less than Medicaid, Medicaid waiver, assisted living, or long-term care services. It’s also what people prefer. Examples of community grants include:

- Nutrition, transportation, and support:
 - Home-delivered meals
 - Congregate meals served at senior centers
 - Transportation to appointments and shopping.
- Information and referrals.
- Adult day programs.
- Senior in-home grants:
 - Case management
 - Chore
 - Respite services.

- Family Caregiver Support Program – Provides support for unpaid family caregivers, a break from caregiving, information and referral on benefits and services for older Alaskans, lifeline counseling, and training.
- Health Promotion and Disease Prevention – Tai chi classes to prevent falls and a variety of other classes are available.
- ADRD grants – Education, counseling, and support groups.
- Center for Independent Living (CIL) grants – Provide skills training, individual advocacy, peer support, nursing, and Alaska assisted living home transition assistance. 40 percent of all CIL grant services are provided to people aged 60 and older.
- Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) – Provide the front door to SDS with information and referral, short-term assistance, and person-centered intakes.

The number of seniors in Alaska is growing by at least 10 percent each year across the state with certain areas such as Mat-Su increasing by 25 percent. These grants have not increased since 2015 while the number of recipients seeking services and inflation costs have increased greatly. Community grants only pay a very small fraction of the actual cost of the delivery of services. Without grant fund increases to maintain services, Fairbanks was required to remove 50 seniors from the Meals on Wheels program to reduce the number of meals by 16,000.

Community grant regulations prohibit senior service providers from charging for services, so they ask for a suggested donation. The grants are the only main revenue source for each grant service. Often donations are few and do not come close to the actual cost for services. In Kodiak, the full cost per meal can range from \$28 to \$31 per meal. Grant funding only covers about one-third of that cost, and more than half of home-delivered meal recipients are not able to make a donation for the meal because the program targets people most in need.

Case management services in Anchorage and Mat-Su regions increased by 40 percent with only donations being made for those services. AgeNet has members from senior service providers from all over the state. The time to increase these grants with a \$1.4M increase is now. This funding increase would barely maintain present services. AgeNet encourages SDS and the Governor to include this much needed amount in the FY'24 state operating budget to maintain services for the increased Alaska senior population and to keep seniors living in their community of choice.

Marianne Mills stated that another thing that's important for the Commission to know is that primarily because of the shortage of staff at the Department of Health Grants and Contracts Unit, many grantees have not received their first quarter payment. Grantees are having trouble paying their bills, buying food for their programs, and paying their staff. She recognized that the staffing shortage at DOH impacts providers on the ground.

Marianne Mills knows she can count on the Commission to support AgeNet's advocacy for the 13 percent increase in community grants. She thanked the Commission for their

support on this topic last year. She noted that the legislature supported this increase last year, and she is hopeful for this year.

Marge Stoneking and Darlene Supplee appreciated Marianne's presentation. Ellen Hackenmueller also appreciated the presentation. She stated that she has shared this same information to a variety of different groups, but it's always the most impactful hearing it directly from the provider network. Acting Director Newman also felt the presentation was very well done, and he appreciated hearing the recognition of the challenges at DOH. The division is very aware of the workforce issues and how it impacts the direct care that seniors are receiving.

Darlene Supplee shared that it's \$114,000 in first quarter advancements for the Fairbanks Senior Center to maintain services. This is funding they have to have in reserves, or they have to get a gap loan to be able to cover those expenses.

Chair Sivertsen suggested holding another summit so the partners can lay out all the priorities and determine a main priority for the advocates.

Alaska Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO)

Due to technical difficulties, the video/audio file for the beginning of this presentation was not available.

Stephanie Wheeler stated that October is Residents' Rights Month, and this year's theme is "Inspiring Unity within Our Community," which emphasizes the importance of meaningful community within the facility and encouraging residents' connection to their local community. A Powtoon video was played for the Commission and can also be found on the Ombudsman's Facebook page. They have been educating residents about their rights and created various materials for residents.

Staff Changes:

- New Deputy Director – Alvin Ancheta
- Assistant Ombudsman – Kerri Tanner
- New LTCO Specialist – Stephanie Welsh

LTCO Regional Changes

Ombudsmen are assigned to different regions across Alaska, and typically they change out regions every three years, but that was extended last time because of the pandemic. The changes have been communicated to all facility administrators, resident council presidents, and service partners.

FFY'22 Priorities

1. Increasing facility visits
2. Increasing engagement with resident councils
3. Revamping the volunteer program to align with the national standards
4. Increase the number of volunteers.

Data Review

<u>FFY '21</u>	<u>FFY '22 Preliminary</u>
Complaints investigated – 292	Complaints investigated – 211
Facility visits – 269	Facility visits – 583
Info and assist – facility staff – 732	Info and assist – facility staff – 619
Info and assist – non-facility staff - 786	Info and assist – non-facility staff - 912

A member of the audience asked if the number of complaints investigated came down with the increase in the number of facility visits. Stephanie Wheeler stated that they typically get their complaints because they are in the facilities, so this data is interesting and they continue to analyze it.

Top Five Complaints – FFY '22

1. Discharges and evictions
2. Residents feeling like they are not getting the services from outside providers that they should
3. Rights and preferences
4. Quality of food or food services
5. Resident representative or family conflict.

FFY '23 Focus Next Several Months

- One-time funding from ACL to increase visits to assisted living homes.
- Strategic planning meeting November 29th to review data and set priorities for FFY '23.
- Assisted living home meetings with administrators moved to quarterly.
- National Ombudsman Conference in November
- New volunteer orientation and training – quarterly
- LTCO federal report
- LTCO annual report.

Travel Plan for the First Three Months of FFY '23

- Kenai/Soldotna, Homer, Cordova
- Fairbanks/North Pole, Galena/Tanana, Bethel, Kotzebue
- Valdez
- Juneau/Sitka
- Anchorage/Mat-Su/Eagle River

Volunteers

- Small team of ombudsmen, so volunteers are necessary for the program.
- Lost 69 percent of volunteers during the two years of the pandemic.
- Recently recruited volunteers in the communities of Valdez, Cordova, and Anchorage.
- Gradually rebuilding the volunteers and would like to have volunteers in all communities.

Alaska Opportunity and Poverty Task Force

- Foundational learning
- Effect of poverty on child development
- Faith-based organizations – addressing poverty
- Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness
- Next steps: Task force ends its work in December
- Next two months – policy recommendations.

Additional Program Activities:

- Co-presented with Sandra Jenkins for a national virtual presentation to nearly 600 LTCOs on how the Alaska LTCO and Adult Protective Services work together. Alaska was identified as one of three states to present on their relationship.
- Working with AARP Alaska to schedule some informational sessions on ranked choice voting for seniors in assisted living homes and skilled nursing facilities.
- Completed a guide for facility leadership about the LTCO program.

LTCO Funding

Anticipate flat funding for FFY '23 with the exception of the one-time funding from ACL to hire a temporary, full-time ombudsman. The position is funded through September 2023.

ALH Home Closure

Over this past year, there were at least 21 new facilities that came on board for seniors, but there were approximately 25 home closures. Stephanie talked with one of the administrators on why they decided to close two homes in the Interior. The administrator shared that initially they had 14 residents, but a number of them caught COVID, and half of them passed away, which was very hard on the administrator, staff, and the residents. They closed the first home and moved the residents to the second home. In closing the second home, things became too difficult to be both the administrator and supporting residents with limited staffing. He had been in the field for 13 years, but it was too taxing on him and his family. Darlene Supplee added that her center sent meals to that first home through their nutrition program during the staff shortage. After the closure, they provided meals to the remaining location to help alleviate that burden. It's something they are looking at replicating in the Interior to help support smaller assisted living homes. The closure of those two homes was a big impact for the Interior.

Bob Pawlowski requested Stephanie Wheeler send the Powtoon to Heidi Hamilton. He asked if the ombudsman visits the Pioneer Homes, and Stephanie said they visit all of the Pioneer Homes.

Mike Coons asked what they are going to do for that ombudsman position they get to have for just the one year with the ACL funding. Stephanie said they are thankful for the funding and hope they are able to show the value of the position by the number of routine assisted living home visits. If the federal government decides not to continue to support the position with more funding, it might be an opportune time to demonstrate the effectiveness to the Alaska State Legislature.

Jan Engan asked what the goal number of volunteers is for there to be adequate support to the paid staff. Stephanie said that their goal right now is to get five new volunteers per quarter over the next year. Pre-COVID they had 70 volunteers, many in the main hub regions. Jan asked Stephanie to send her and Jon Haghayeghi numbers and locations as ACoA considers their advocacy for the upcoming session.

Acting Director Newman asked if there were training requirements for the volunteers, and if they receive more volunteers, will her office need more support to be able to absorb the increase. Stephanie stated that the deputy ombudsman oversees the volunteer program and can oversee 40 volunteers. Volunteers must attend 36 hours of training plus 10 hours of field training. They receive their guidance and training through the national group. Volunteers are also required to have a background check. Volunteers' responsibilities include:

- Go into facilities and visit residents
- Educate residents about their rights
- Pass complaints to the LTCO if they are unable to deal with it.

Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

Kelda Barstad passed along regrets from Steve Williams and Katie Baldwin-Johnson who were unable to attend today's meeting. The Alaska Mental Health Trust is a public trust that serves Alaskans who have mental illness, addiction, intellectual and developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injury, or Alzheimer's disease or related dementia. The core mission of the Trust is to reduce and prevent the institutionalization of Trust beneficiaries by contributing to a robust continuum of care done in partnership with State agencies, private providers, and advocates. She added that the Trust really appreciates the partnership with the Commission on Aging, and that partnership is integral to ensuring a robust continuum of care for Alaska's seniors.

The Trust is anticipating a Trustee vacancy in FY '24, so the application process will be opened this fall. The Trustee position comes with a stipend for the days they are participating in Trust activities as a Trustee. The position coming vacant is a public position. The appointment is recommended by the Governor and confirmed by the legislature.

Kelda Barstad stated that the Trust Land Office (TLO) has a land sale going on right now for the next couple of months, and anyone interested should check out the TLO website. The TLO also takes reasonable offers at any point during the year if people see a parcel of land not listed in the yearly land sale.

Other activities of the Trust include:

- Completed and conveyed the FY '24/'25 budgets to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).
- Hosted a successful conference with over 375 people in attendance including State agency staff, private agencies, advocates, and Trust beneficiaries with a variety of different topics being discussed.

- Participated in councils that have been established to make recommendations for the Governor's People First Initiative including the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA), Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP), Human and Sex Trafficking, Foster Care, and Homelessness.
- The Dementia Action Collaborative has been renewed for a facilitator for another year, and the Trust is proud to sponsor that initiative. They have changed contractors and they look forward to getting that initiated. With the Dementia Awareness bill, Public Health will be taking a more active role in that collaborative, particularly around data and prevalence issues.
- Behavioral health crisis response continues to roll out as one component of implementing the 1115 Behavioral Health waiver. The mobile crisis response team in Fairbanks is starting to collect some statistics, and nine percent of their calls have involved seniors over this last quarter. The Trust will continue to track by age groups as well as areas as these programs roll out. They will also ensure the teams are aware of ADRD, delirium, and delusion, which are things that impact the senior population and could create behaviors that lead to a crisis.

Upcoming Work of the Trust:

- Committee meetings are October 19th and 20th with a Program and Planning Committee meeting on the 20th.
- Next full board meeting is November 16 – 17.
- Committee information and packet will be available on the Trust website later this month.
- Joint Advocacy will be gearing up for the 2023 session, and the Trust appreciates the partnership with the Commission as well as the other advocacy boards. Everyone is encouraged to go to the Trust website to view the Joint Advocacy website and join the listserv.

4th Quarter FY '22 Grants:

- Over \$2M grants to the community. Highlights include:
 - Alzheimer's Resource Agency capacity building
 - Funding a foster care resource center.

Bob Pawlowski noted that recent statistics show that the veteran population with PTSD is twice as likely to develop dementia. Similarly, PTSD and dementia is also linked to complex behavior. He wondered if data will project out future needs for these individuals. Kelda Barstad noted that the chances of dementia for Trust beneficiaries is greatly increased. Long COVID is also showing similar signs pointing toward dementia. They have additional considerations when trying to figure out what ADRD prevalence is in Alaska because there are high rates in every Trust beneficiary category when compared to the Lower 48.

Chair Sivertsen noted that he is aware the Trust is interested in the homeless population with addiction and lack of housing. He asked if the Trust has projects and grants out to address this population. Kelda stated that the Trust has a number of projects that are working with homeless services and housing specific to homeless Trust beneficiaries. The Trust has contributed to a number of permanent supported housing projects in recent months that are currently under construction in Nome, Bethel,

and Anchorage. The Trust works with the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness and the Alaska Chapter for the Balance of State. They also have a variety of projects they work on with Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC). The Trust is currently supporting a rural housing coordinator in Kotzebue, and they are a contributing funder to the Homeless Assistance Program, which provides prevention and rapid rehousing funding to a variety of communities statewide. The Trust contributes to the Special Needs Housing Grant, another AHFC program that works to put affordable housing in place. The Trust also partners with the Alaska Association of Housing Authorities (AAHA) to establish different programs across the state. The Trust has also provided start-up grants for regions looking to solve homelessness in their area.

Pam Samash would like to talk to Kelda further about the Trust's foster care initiatives offline. Kelda will put her in touch with Jimael Johnson.

Mike Coons has concerns about money from the City of Anchorage and other grant funding being used for overpriced rents in Anchorage. Kelda noted that Trust costs are typically one-time costs with the exception of the partnership with AHFC. When the Trust contributes to a capital project, it is not ongoing funding. In terms of costs related to homelessness, people who are homeless interact with first responders multiple times a day at great cost. They also require differing levels of support, the cost of which varies for each. Some of the most successful programs are those that pair a case management service with short-term rental assistance. The most expensive programs are for those people who would otherwise be in institutional care and who often have support from disability benefits. One of the reasons they are seeing increases in senior homelessness is because the base Social Security, Public Assistance, and disability benefits are being greatly outpaced by the cost of basic needs, which is beyond just the Trust's ability to stabilize.

Mike Coons noted the correlation between closing down institutions for people with disabilities and the spike of the homeless population. He asked if the Trust is working to re-institutionalize people so they can get the care they need, because people with mental health issues are living on the streets and need institutional-level care, plus seniors need to be protected from being attacked on the streets. Kelda Barstad responded that the Trust's mission is for deinstitutionalization. The Trust works with API to improve practices and training and to ensure there are good staffing ratios so people get the best support they can. The Trust is heavily invested in implementing the 1115 Behavioral Health waiver, which does encourage broadening mental health and substance misuse treatment. The Trust supports permanent supportive housing, which supports this population as well. There is the opportunity to help people in a crisis when they aren't able to make decisions for themselves; however, if people have decision-making capacity, they may not be ready for treatment, and that will need to be addressed through outreach and encouragement so people can maximize the meaningfulness of their lives. Treatment can be supported, but it can't be forced on people.

Kelda Barstad also noted that the Trust has mini grant programs for any of the Trust beneficiary categories. The Behavioral Health and Traumatic Brain Injury mini grant does offer rental and utility assistance. Trust beneficiaries can access the mini grant program once a fiscal year for up to \$2,500 per fiscal year.

Lesley Thompson stated that the mini grants for ADRD in the past have required that the person get something from their doctor with a diagnosis of ADRD, which is a challenge in both the rural and urban communities. She suggested coming up with a solution to advocate for.

Kelda Barstad stated that the Trust also has a Microenterprise program for people who want to establish small businesses, and the funding range is \$10,000 or less. Partnership grants are typically between \$25,000 and \$50,000 for provider agencies who have a need during the fiscal year and would like to apply for funding. Lesley Thompson suggested including this information in the Senior Voice for senior agencies to be aware of this program.

REVIEW OF NEXT DAY'S ACTIVITIES

Chair Sivertsen referred Commissioners to the list of places the Commissioners will visit for their listening sessions and site visits over the next couple of days, and the group discussed the particulars for their visits.

RECESS

Mike Coons **MOVED** to recess. The motion was **SECONDED**. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**. The business meeting will reconvene on October 6th.

October 4 – 5, 2022

Commissioners engaged in listening sessions and site visits throughout the Anchorage and Mat-Su Valley regions.

Thursday, October 6, 2022
CALL TO ORDER – 9:00 a.m.
ROLL CALL

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, SAFETY MOMENT

Guests were introduced.

ALASKA HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION

Jim McCall stated that he conducted a survey of the assisted living providers in the Municipality of Anchorage in August 2022 and shared some comparisons from previous years. He highlighted the following:

- Survey response rate was smaller than 2020 but was still 17 percent.
- 54 percent of homes reported occupancy rates of 80 percent or better, down 11 percent from 2020's report.
- 32 percent of homes reported occupancy below 70 percent, which is unchanged from 2020. Reasons included personal business decisions or the passing of a resident and the inability to obtain clients.
- Tenured operators of five years or more expanded 30 percent from 2020.

- Operators operating less than two years declined by 50 percent.
- 77 percent of homes indicate caring for ADRD clients.
- 23 percent are caring for seniors with behavioral health issues, which is up 8 percent from 2020.
- The use of wait lists continues to decline with only 18 percent of homes indicating they use them today.
- 73 percent of homes report a prospective resident would likely wait six months or less for a vacancy, which is unchanged from 2020.
- Behavioral issues continue to be the top restriction to occupancy with two-thirds of homes placing some sort of limit. This is an increase of 21 percent from 2020.
- Mental health counseling and dental care are the two services less likely to be offered in assisted living homes in Anchorage, which is unchanged since 2020.
- 96 percent of homes accept clients enrolled in the Medicaid waiver program, which is up 6 percent from 2020.
- In both surveys, operators showed the majority of their residents are 100 percent dependent on Medicaid for payment of care.
- 72 percent of respondents were satisfied or better with Medicaid, which is down slightly from 2020 because of concerns with in the staffing of managing the program and the reimbursement rate levels.
- Over half of assisted living home residents utilize some other form of public assistance. 84 percent of providers reported being satisfied or better with those programs.
- Private pay residents appear to be declining. In all of the responses, only one individual was 100 percent private pay compared to five in 2020.
- Of the homes responding in 2022, the average annual cost of care was reported at over \$105,000 or over \$8,700 per month. This is an increase of 23 percent from 2020.
- Assisted living operators report family members provide little to no monetary support for residents.
- Levels of care continue to increase with 64 percent of homes reporting slightly to significantly higher needs, which is an increase of 6 percent from 2020.
- Regarding the age of residents within homes, the two categories that increased the most were “slightly older” or “significantly younger” than in 2020.
- 68 percent of respondents rated the assisted living market in Anchorage in slight to severe need or demand, which is an increase of 30 percent from 2020.
- The ability to attract and retain staff and competition from other homes were listed as the top two issues impacting the industry over the next couple of years.
- The average monthly food cost per resident is now \$679 as the average, which is an increase of 22 percent from 2020.
- 86 percent of homes list behavioral issues as the top reason for discharging a resident.
- English is the most often spoken language in homes followed by Tagalog. No Alaska Native languages were listed in responses received in 2022. There were one or two in 2020.
- 82 percent of homes reported difficulty attracting or securing staff, an increase of one-third from 2020.

- The average beginning wage for a staff member was \$14, an increase of \$2 from 2020.

AARP Livable Communities Workshop

Jim McCall thanked Teresa Holt for inviting him to the 2022 AARP Livable Communities Workshop: Housing for People of All Ages. He noted that the workshop attracted speakers from across the nation and was the best conference he has ever attended. The four themes this year were housing choice, design, stability, and equity. They also discussed missing middle housing which they defined as a set of residential building types that exist in the middle of the continuum between detached single-family homes and larger apartment buildings.

Jim McCall felt that the most interesting part of the conference was the information about Cornell University conducting a project called The National Zoning Atlas. Across the nation there are about 30,000 local governments that dictate land use which impacts construction of housing solutions. The overall goal is to help understand zoning issues and broaden the participation in land use decisions. Jim provided the link to the project website in his presentation and encouraged people to visit the site.

Ch'bala Corners Grand Opening

Ch'bala Corners is located in the Spenard area of Anchorage and had its grand opening on September 14th. This complex has 48 intergenerational housing units, 19 of which are seniors. AHFC funded this development in 2021 through the National Housing Trust Fund and the Senior Citizen Housing Development Fund. The project received approximately \$3M from AHFC as well as funding from other sources. 1,000 applications were received for the 48 units that were available.

GOAL Awards

Jim McCall explained that through public comments, a document is created as a blueprint of how programs will be viewed and awarded for the next GOAL cycle, which includes tax credits, home funds, senior funds, et cetera. GOAL awards can be used for senior housing, low-income family housing, special needs populations, and others. An emphasis point wise for this cycle will be small communities, energy efficiency, rehab, and project mix.

Public Housing

Jim McCall presented the wait list for senior disabled housing as of September 2022. There are 1,097 individuals on the wait list for those units, which is up about 7 from this same time last year. The Housing Choice wait list stood at around 3,900 individuals as of September. Housing Choice Voucher recipients have to go through briefings, which has now been made available online. The VASH or veteran vouchers has a 91 percent utilization rate.

Energy Update

This update provides a synopsis of the agencies that AHFC has provided grant funding to for the Weatherization Program for 2021 and 2022 for a total of approximately \$11M. A lot of seniors benefit from this program. Congress recently passed the bipartisan infrastructure law, which will provide about \$18M for Alaska's Weatherization Program.

The Supplemental Program provides approximately \$3M across nine regions. This supplements HUD funding of Indian housing projects constructed by regional housing authorities across the state. Examples of that can include such things as onsite water, road construction, and other infrastructure developments.

Cold Climate Housing Research Center received \$1M of capital appropriation. This group studies energy efficiency to make building homes in Alaska and the Arctic much more feasible and economic to operate once constructed.

Vacancy Rates

Jim McCall stated that vacancy rates are between zero and two percent. Rate increases in the last year have gone up between 10 and 30 percent. Many landlords are now opting for month-to-month leases, which provides landlords more flexibility and minimizes their risks. He encouraged Commissioners to read the article in the Senior Voice that provides a variety of resources and advice such as home sharing.

Alaska Economic Trends magazine delved into the rental market in their September issue. The Anchorage rental market is up 14 percent; the average is about \$1,340 per month, which is the largest increase in rent in 20 years. Many first-time homebuyers have not been able to move to the next step and purchase because simultaneous to the rent increase, the price of homes has increased and homes are at all-time high levels and interest rates have increased.

Alaska Housing Homeowner Relief Program

This program represents \$50M of federal money received by AHFC for people who own homes and were impacted by COVID. This program closed to applicants in early April. AHFC received 7,700 eligible applicants that were reviewed through a tiered process and were then provided assistance. As of the most current report, AHFC has dispersed about \$18M to help homeowners get back on their feet with mortgage payments and utility expenses. There may be some excess funding left over, so they are going through the process of determining how to distribute that. Many seniors have utilized this program.

September 27th HUD announced that 19,000 new Housing Choice Vouchers will be available across the nation. Alaska's share of that is 26 new vouchers.

Chair Sivertsen stated that during one of their visits there was discussion regarding the cost of people privately paying for assistive living being unable to afford it and considering returning to the homes they own or going out of state where they can get

more affordable care. Another issue they heard was a lack of care coordinators to help people navigate what services or funding sources people might be eligible for.

Mike Coons asked what the criteria was for Ch'bala Corners for the 48 individuals who were selected for housing and what happened to the other 1,000. Jim McCall stated that there are 1,200 people on the wait list for AHFC public housing, so he is not surprised by the number of people who applied for Ch'bala Corners. The criteria is based on age and income levels per the source of funds used to build the building.

Darlene Supplee asked if there are any comprehensive studies or anything that would reflect out the disadvantage to the state in terms of lost revenue if they do not react on housing or assisted living and people exit the state. Jim McCall said that he hasn't seen it but believes it would be good data to gather. Years ago, the ISER study reflected a \$3B impact, and it would be interesting to see what the economic impact is today.

Acting Director Newman would like more information about the assisted living home loan program and whether or not assisted living homes could use that program to modify their homes for behaviorally challenging individuals who can be destructive to property. Jim McCall replied that they mostly see assisted living homes use the Assistance Provider Program, which is geared for smaller homes of two to five beds.

In regards to the survey, Acting Director Newman would like to follow up on the Medicaid administration and get more information on what people's concerns were. Jim stated that the biggest underlying theme he received was slow response and lack of staff.

Acting Director Newman appreciated the discussion around zoning. SDS hears concerns that it is challenging for people to get licensed as an assisted living home. Frequently the issues have to do with local codes, not state expectations.

DISCUSSION OF LISTENING SESSIONS

Chair Sivertsen thanked all the Commissioners and partners that participated in the listening sessions. He asked for Commissioners to turn their notes from the sessions in to Jon Haghayeghi for inclusion in the State Plan.

Commissioners shared highlights as follows:

Janet Engan, Mike Coons, Kathy Swartz/Jim McCall, Jon Haghayeghi/Brenda Shelden/Chuck Foster, Lesley Thompson

- Upper Susitna Senior Center, Sunshine Clinic, Palmer Senior Center, Willow, Houston, Glacier View, Sutton
 - Met with individuals one on one.
 - Many of the seniors were living remotely and needed assistance with chores such as gathering wood and snow removal.
 - People usually come to the senior center on all-terrain vehicles or were dependent on someone to pick them up.

- The site manager identified the lack of wellness checks for older adults on a regular basis as the biggest need.
- One person said they needed services in Talkeetna that would allow them to continue living in their home.
- Since the fire in Talkeetna, there is no more public laundry service and showers. People have to travel outside of the community to do laundry and shower.
- Senior center provides a place for people to fill water jugs.
- Senior centers have had to cut back on some things they are providing for meals.
- Clinic director said the biggest problem they see is food insecurity for people living in that geographic area.
- For years the Palmer Senior Center had an agreement with Carrs to bring over groceries that were overstock or near the expiration date, and instead of being able to stockpile those, they are using them for the daily meals for the seniors.
- Transit is available, but it requires people to schedule outings in advance.
- Door-to-door transit service is missing, and oftentimes seniors can't carry bags into their home.
- Personal income and how people are able to manage with the low incomes that are now being impacted by inflation.
- A need for centers to have an emergency preparedness plan.
- Information resource network is very confusing. Subject matter specialists and some way to coordinate that is needed.
- Not all seniors have unlimited cellphone minutes, and calling state agencies and being on hold for long times eats up their minutes.
- Need a variety of venues when ACoA tries to reach out to people. This is a multi-generational constituency who respond by different means.
- Chore services are a need.
- Geriatric specialists are needed.
- Lack of physicians accepting new Medicare clients is an issue.
- Staffing is an issue, and they aren't receiving qualified applicants.
- Mental health for older adults; suicide and isolation are big issues.
- Affordable housing.
- Need for care coordinators for a one-on-one connection.
- Happy that things are opening up after the pandemic and that masks are no longer required. They are working on getting back what they have lost over time.
- People were happy to have physical activities throughout the year, particularly intergenerational activities.
- Could use volunteers to work with Ukrainian refugees who have settled in the area to help them work on getting their citizenship.
- Not receiving payments in a timely manner has put the senior centers in a very precarious position, especially at the Palmer and Wasilla Senior Centers that serve large numbers of people. Have heard anecdotally that this issue has been going on long before COVID.

Mike Coons suggested that the Commission write a strong letter to the Governor through SDS regarding the untimely payments to grantees.

- Willow had a turnout of nine people; Houston had a turnout of three people, two seniors and the daycare coordinator; Glacier View had four attendees; but Sutton had no attendees. They heard that everyone heard about the session, but they had limited attendance at all locations.
- No medical support at Glacier View. They use a phone tree.
- Glacier View is a very tight-knit group and they communicate well.
- Willow people were pleased with the Mat-Su Council on Aging starting up.
- Happy about more in-person activities and returning to normal.
- Indications that people who were already fairly withdrawn became even more so during the pandemic by choice.
- Book club at Willow with a Zoom option.
- There is less fear.
- Willow is seeing an increase in population.
- Willow was happy to have the increase in funding during the pandemic; however, the funding is now gone. The funding had a big impact on transportation in Willow allowing the provider there to charge no fees to clients, and they provided 16,000 rides per year.
- There is no senior center in Willow, but there is a community center run by a quasi-political organization causing internal strife. Lots of people in the community have ideas, but no one wants to step up to the plate. People are maxed out.
- One challenge is that there a new federal requirement that people have to sign in person once a year to qualify for food assistance.
- Increase in the number of seniors.
- Inflation.
- The heating program pays for fuel oil and firewood, but there are no firewood approved vendors in Willow or Houston.
- Food pantry averages 225 meals per month. With the PFD, it dropped to 110.
- Hard to reach the State for benefits.
- Socialization is an issue.
- Willow wants to be able to get together once a week and have a sit-down lunch to network.
- People in rural Alaska don't want housing where it is on top of each other or side by side. One suggestion was small houses in a 10-acre area so everyone can live in their own space.
- A remark was made that Glacier View is the end of the road for the people who live there. People want to stay in that facility until end of life.
- Medical issues are frequent at Glacier View. There is no PCA service; all the people there help each other.
- PFD is the number one lifeline for seniors, and there needs to be consistency with the PFD.
- People were not happy with ACoA's survey because they didn't have the ability to comment specifically, and they felt the questions were dumb.

- Houston – positives are that there is more activity now and they love having a place to come to socialize.
- People in Houston are coming to Mid-Valley Senior Center so they can turn the heat down in their homes during that time.
- Meals at Mid-Valley are provided by Wasilla Area Seniors (WASI).
- Mid-Valley has never been a source of information and referral, but new director is working with WASI to share information.
- People in the Houston area are living in dry cabins, and Mid-Valley has a need for a water station.
- Challenges in Houston: Inflation and costs. Quote, “When your social outlet is the food pantry, that’s kind of sad.” People get their meals during the week at Mid-Valley and then stock up for the weekend at the food pantry. Mobility issues are a challenge in the winter.
- Ages 55 to 60 is tough because they are too young for Medicare and not eligible for retirement pay. People fall through the gaps not qualified for Medicaid but not enough money to pay for services. Need for financial advice.
- Cell phone reception is terrible in the area.
- People want in-person communication, not technology.
- PFD was a big issue and they count on it.
- Mike Coons did an excellent job facilitating the sessions.

Bob Pawlowski, Paula Pawlowski, Chair Sivertsen

- Anchorage-Chugach Manor, Chugiak-Eagle River, Aspen Creek, Marlow Manor, Chugiak assisted living, Turnagain Social Club, Pioneer Home
 - All of the above comments were also heard in Anchorage, with the exception of being rural-specific.
 - Heard about the issues related to socialization, engagement, and care needed for seniors.
 - Independent living – senior centers provide a location for people to gather and share issues of concern.
 - Family financial abuse was an issue.
 - Low income or subsidized housing is often located in unsafe neighborhoods.
 - Language barriers in Anchorage
 - Snow and ice are issues for seniors.
 - In-home services and the value of adult daycare
 - Marlow Manor is 95 percent ADRD. Comfortable accommodations and good caregivers, and their specific role is managing ADRD. Very dependent on the family for medications, voting, and keeping the in-room refrigerator stocked. No transportation provided.
 - Aspen Creek has a medical team, and they have a contract with Geneva Woods for medical supports and medication. Transportation available.
 - Chugiak assisted living has low-income subsidized housing and assisted living housing. They have a central community dining room. They have an activities coordinator, but they don’t have a medication coordinator. Transportation available. Warmest reception at this location. The biggest

difference between the housing options was that service dogs were allowed in assisted living, but subsidized housing allowed pets. Pride in the uniqueness of this facility for their service region.

- Smoking and alcohol are an issue, particularly if smoking is allowed in their room. Alcohol is a safety issue.
- Marlow Manor is a good example of the need for advanced care.
- Turnagain Social Club had an area for advanced care on the lower level.
- The Pioneer Home advanced care is successful.
- Wills and estates – understanding the legal side is an issue.
- Younger people don't need to talk down to seniors who are people who have a lot of lived experience.
- People had different perspectives on exercise.
- COVID and isolation took its toll, and people are getting back together to play games and have congregated meals.
- Talked to providers and residents, and the perspectives were opposing in regards to issues within those facilities. Security was an issue for residents. Some facilities had cameras outside and others didn't.
- Care coordination is lacking.
- The listening sessions were informal as there was no facilitator, so they talked to people individually.
- Residents at one facility felt they lacked input into what was going on in the facility itself.

Jan Engan suggested looking into adding something to the State Plan relating to facilities having a mechanism whereby residents can give input into the condition of the facility.

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND MASST

Director Duane Mayes introduced A'isha Jackson as the new MASST employee located at the Anchorage Job Center at 3301 Eagle Street. A'isha stated that MASST is a terrific way to get seniors out in the community to volunteer or to supplement their income during retirement. Rita Gray noted that she will continue to work with the Commission for many more years, and Chair Sivertsen thanked Rita for her support. Lesley Thompson stated that Rita has been working on trying to get a MASST volunteer to do the surveys, and she also continues to recruit sites.

Director Mayes stated that public vocational rehabilitation has been in existence for 102 years. The mission of DVR is to help Alaskans with disabilities get and keep good jobs. DVR is a planning organization that works with the person with a disability to identify their profile, aptitudes, and interests and then work with the person to either develop a trade or get a college education.

Three priorities have been established at the national and regional level:

- Recruitment and retention to include recruitment and retention of vocational rehabilitation counselors.
- A positive customer experience. Implementing rapid engagement to get people into service quicker than the past.

- Do more to improve DVR's public image and self promotion.

Alaska Work Matters Task Force Final Report

This time-limited task force to look at all systems that have to do with employing Alaskans with disabilities in competitive and integrated employment. The task force was comprised of approximately 20 leaders from within state government as well as employers and people with disabilities helped draft the final report. There were five core areas that were identified in the report such as State As a Model Employer (SAME) as well as building the capacity of the private sector so that they do more to hire seniors as well as people with disabilities.

An ad hoc committee will be formed to actualize the recommendations from the final report. Director Mayes concluded his presentation by sharing his belief in the power of work.

Chair Sivertsen shared that some seniors are afraid of going to work because they fear losing their supports or benefits because they go into a higher income bracket. Is there a way to get seniors and people with disabilities into the workforce without losing these benefits they rely on? Director Mayes stated that one of the benefits of combining MASST with DVR is that if the person applying is over the age of 55 and has a disability, DVR has funding they can tap into for training, particularly on computers. Many of the jobs they find for seniors are sedentary, light-duty positions. When a case is opened and they recognize other benefits or funding the person might be receiving, DVR has specialist partners that can do a benefits analysis and provide information about how much the person can earn without jeopardizing funding mechanisms.

Jan Engan asked if the MASST income earned is through Title V and exempt from programs such as housing. Rita Gray stated that MASST wages are exempt from food stamps and subsidized housing, but it does count against Social Security.

Bob Pawlowski asked if there are metrics established for implementing the recommendations from the Alaska Work Matters Task Force. Director Mayes stated they will be communicating with the legislature. He and Patrick Reinhart met with Commissioner Ledbetter from the Department of Labor, and they carefully reviewed the report to get her approval for the ad hoc committee. The tentacles of the ad hoc committee will be all the Trust beneficiary boards. Bob Pawlowski offered his assistance.

Acting Director Newman asked who the partners are that provide benefits analysis. Director Mayes stated he will get him a list of the benefits analysis providers from around the state.

Acting Director Newman also asked about the relationship between the Provisional Hire Program and MASST. There are people at SDS who he was told were hired under the Provisional Hire Program, but after talking to the employees in some detail, it sounded like they were hired under the MASST program. He wonders what the relationship is and if someone can be hired under both programs. Director Mayes stated that SDS has

hired at least 50 Alaskans with disabilities through the Provisional Hire Program, and there are joint cases of both MASST and Provisional Hire.

AARP

Teresa Holt reported to the Commission as follows:

Vision: A society in which all people live with dignity and purpose and fulfill their goals and dreams.

Mission: AARP's purpose is to empower people to choose how they live as they age:

- Being financially fit
- Being physically and mentally fit
- Engaging in meaningful activities.

Ways AARP Works:

- Advocacy – Marge Stoneking, advocacy director.
- Education – Determining how to do education both in-person and virtually.
- Member Engagement – Events to prevent social isolation.
- Community Action – Pre-COVID, community action teams in Fairbanks, Anchorage, Mat-Su, Juneau, and Ketchikan. Looking to revive the Fairbanks site. The idea of these teams is to look at what needs to happen in the community and then take some action. Age Friendly Initiative has started in Anchorage, and they are working to make Anchorage more age friendly, and they will be recruiting volunteers and holding listening sessions about what people want in Anchorage.

2022 In Review:

2022 Focus Areas:

- Caregiving for people who are caring for family members in their own home.
- Voter Education – Ranked choice voting and redistricting education.
- Healthy Living.
- Digital Equity/Broadband – Helping seniors get access to Internet and devices and learn how to use them.

2022 Focus Outreach Communities:

- Alaska Native
- Veterans
- African American/Black.

2022 Webinar Series

1. Age Smart
2. Tax Aid
3. Carbon Footprint
4. Gardening

5. Technology – Hosted by Senior Planet. Recommended to visit their website that contains a host of different trainings geared just toward seniors. AARP is looking to get some host sites to provide in-person Senior Planet technology courses.
6. Fall Harvest

AARP is looking for input on webinar series ideas for next year.

2022 Voter Education

- Train the trainer
- Ranked Choice Voting video
- Mock elections at Tanana and Palmer fairs
- Poll of Alaskan voters
- Candidate briefing
- Video voter guides
- Forum with candidates for Governor
- Tele-town halls
- Webinars – staff and volunteers
- Sent information by mail.

2022 Livable Communities

Community Challenge Grants – Alaska received five Community Challenge Grants:

- Aleutian Pribilof Islands – Greenhouse rebuild and food program
- Anchorage Navy League – Refurbish a site downtown so it’s wheelchair accessible
- Thane Community Gardens, Juneau – Accessible community gardens
- Valdez Adventure Alliance – Accessible parking lot at a popular trail head and accessible start to the trail
- Wasilla Area Seniors Gardens – Added accessible gardens and benches.

Other activities:

- AARP opened a Fitness Park in Anchorage.
- State Community Challenge grants of \$5,000 each. One was at Folker Intergenerational Park, which added musical equipment.
- Anchorage Age-Friendly Designation.

2022 Miscellaneous Events:

- Dementia guide for caregivers
- Older American Day Celebration
- Anchorage golf league
- Vaccine Task Force
- Tele-town hall events on Medicare and scams
- Jazz in the park.

2023 AARP Priority Framework:

Health:

- Caregiving
- Physical/brain health

Social Connection:

- Fun
- Technology

Financial:

- Fraud prevention
- Housing

- Age-friendly communities
- Social isolation
- Saving for retirement
- Managing increasing costs

Teresa Holt stated that they are looking forward to ACoA's State Plan because AARP plans on mirroring that. She will share some of the poll questions AARP created, because some were state issues.

STATE PLAN FOR SENIOR SERVICES

Michelle Humphrey and Shanna Zuspan from Agnew::Beck presented to the Commission on the development of the State Plan for Senior Services. They explained that completing the State Plan is an opportunity to determine the needs for seniors in Alaska, a population that has grown at a rapid pace over the last 10 years. The elderly population is expected to triple by 2050.

They demonstrated the continuum of care for seniors and the needed services. As people age, they prefer to live independently for as long as possible as long as they are surrounded by the services and supports they need to be successful. They would also like to see issues like public health and racial equity overlaid on the continuum graphic.

Janet Engan felt this would be a good place to address seniors who live remotely transitioning to community hubs where more services are available. Mike Coons believes the graphic needs to consider the settings of urban, rural, and remote, because service arrays look very different in each setting type. Bob Pawlowski noted that the long-hauler issue with COVID also needs to be considered in the graphic as does the impact of the increase of dementia.

Methodology:

Data Collection and Analysis:

- Summary and analysis of relevant background data including population and demographic forecasts, health indicators, utilization rates and caregiver ratios.
- Summary and analysis of data collected through:
 - Elder/senior listening sessions
 - Senior provider survey
 - Survey of older Alaskans.

Advisory Committee Meeting:

- Present data from listening sessions and needs assessments.
- Refine goals and objectives for 2024-2027 Statewide Senior Plan.
- Address strategies and performance outcomes.

Plan Development:

- Draft version of Alaska's State Plan for Senior Services, FY 2024-2027 for review and editing by ACoA Advisory Committee and executive director – April 2023.

- Final version of Alaska’s State Plan for Senior Services, FY 2024-2027 with edits incorporated – June 2023.

Based on a question about increasing performance measures in the plan, the Agnew::Beck contractors stated that ultimately performance measures should be tracked regularly, and the plan should identify what those performance measures are. There is no need to go back and ensure everything from the previous plan was done exactly the way they thought it would be done because of the variability in the world caused from the pandemic, staffing fluctuations, and changes in administration.

Jon Haghayeghi stated that Louise Ryan discussed deadlines for the plan. He said that ideally, they will try to have the data cleaned up and ready to be analyzed so they can get working in January. Louise had indicated she would like to see iterations of the work so they don’t have to backtrack and redo everything. Jon would like to get something to her by end of March, early April. They will have the draft plan reviewed in May, and it will be finalized at the turn of the fiscal year.

The Commission was asked about themes they are hearing in their listening sessions and the following highlights were provided:

- Glad things are getting back to normal after the pandemic.
- Concerns about lack of staffing available to deal with dementia and ADRD.
- Some people wanted it to be recognized that COVID isn’t necessarily over, even though people are acting like it is. People are pleased to not have to mask and appreciate gathering in a congregate fashion, but there is still anxiety among some people.
- Inflation is an issue, and the number of people who are self pay in assisted living homes is down.
- Need for better access and ability to understand federal programs. Need guidance documents for individuals.
- The transition for providers after the federal CARES and ARPA funds have run out will be interesting.
- Inflation is also impacting the providers’ business patterns – cost of food and how providers can offset those increased costs.
- Need for people to have convenient access to information. Cable TV access has been altered in rural Alaska, which has been problematic to getting information to people.
- The data should demonstrate the gaps, and the plan should include periodic targeted surveys of the areas where the gaps exist.
- See if there is a way to lay groundwork in the State Plan to address with the federal delegation the half-a-percent minimum Alaska receives even though they have the largest growing senior population of all states. Chair Sivertsen noted that because the percentage is based on population, Alaska will never rise above the minimum.
- Access to technology – device access, affordability, and education. Digital equity. During the listening sessions, education on how to use devices was the number one requested need.
- Seniors want face-to-face communication or phone communication.

- Need to address people who fall through the gap of being over resourced for Medicaid and yet are very low income.
- The pandemic focused very intensely on the older population, and there was an issue of people being able to sign up for vaccines until the State set up a waitlist to get people scheduled in their locations. Senior centers managed the waitlists until they could hand them off to the State. Public Health needs to be aware that seniors in these situations need to be managed differently than the rest of the population.
- Write the plan in a way that it would be a successful tool for the VA and other federal health infrastructure.

Darlene Supplee asked if Agnew::Beck was able to do a slide show of the administration's new priorities so they can see those. They noted that there is a bulleted list in the handout, but they don't have anything else to share at this point. The presentation was distributed to Commissioners.

Louise Ryan from ACL joined the meeting and stated that the State Plan process is different this time than previous years. There are changes in the Older Americans Act from 2020 that need to be incorporated, such as addressing social isolation; caregiving, including caregiver assessments; and nutrition and malnutrition. The Biden Administration has requirements around COVID-19 response; advancing equity; and building out home and community-based services capacity. The other thing that is different this time is the idea of setting goals, measurable objectives, and outcomes.

Bob Pawlowski shared that one of the concerns they have been hearing is lack of staff, and he asked how they address that. Louise Ryan suggested they could explore working with the provider communities and state and local governments to create recruitment campaigns. They can also do advocacy around this issue. There are profound shortages in every state in Region 10, and it includes not only direct service providers but also includes case managers, fiscal staff, and others.

Louise stated that when they review their past plan, they will see that some things will still be relevant, but the focus they should place on these should be through the lens of the administration's changes and should include outcomes. This will be more than just an update of the old plan with new goals; it should be inclusive of these new areas of focus. She added that as they develop the plan, they need to ensure they integrate and align with the reality of how services are provided and coordinate with SDS and other entities as well.

Janet Engan suggested incorporating a paragraph in the State Plan that addresses some of the challenges that Alaska faces as they try to incorporate these new focus areas. Alaska has a different way of providing services that they have to contend with because of the remote geographic infrastructure and lack of remote staff and services. Louise stated that around the goals, objectives, and outcomes, ACL is looking at certain topic areas such as coordination between Title III and Title VI, addressing malnutrition, and abuse prevention. Clearly the workforce impacts that ability, but the responsibility to have a goal and objective to address the workforce issues would be something they may or may not want to have as part of the State Plan. It may be something they do separate from the State Plan as advocacy.

Mike Coons asked how they can take into account the funding formula in terms of urban, rural, remote, and really remote. Along with that, can they incorporate in the State Plan a push to go from a half percent to one percent in the funding formula? People in the federal government don't understand the remoteness of the geographic regions of Alaska, even those on the road system, and the costs associated with trying to serve these areas. Louise stated that for their plan, they want to include objectives that are achievable, which is why it's important to partner with SDS, because they are the entity that carries out the services. She noted that ACL does not control the budget, and it's also important that the Commission look beyond the Older Americans Act funds to see what other state and local funds contribute to that. Ellen Hackenmueller appreciated the comments from Louise about coordinating with the state agency in terms of what is realistic for service delivery. Ellen would also weigh heavily the feedback received through the provider survey and comments from individual providers.

NEXT STEPS, MEETING DATES AND TIMES

Chair Sivertsen asked that Commissioners submit their listening session notes to Jon Haghayeghi for State Plan development. Suggestions for next steps included:

- An appropriate way to address the way that the economy relates to the needs of seniors is to pay attention to the state's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). This document speaks to the importance of all industries and a diversified economy for the state. Integration of plans is a good idea, so if there is a way that Agnew::Beck can include any appropriate notations out of the CEDS into the senior plan where there is crossover, that would be appropriate.
- Need to focus on staffing.
- Need to discuss the formation of committees and the funding formula.
- Continued work on the provider survey.
- Planning for Advocacy Day.

Next Meeting:

- December 5 – 9, 2023 via Zoom.

ADJOURN

Commissioners provided final comments summarized as follows:

- Appreciated observations about the strength of the remote communities.
- Enjoyed the site visits and listening sessions. Good to hear the individual needs.
- Need to advocate for person-to-person services for older adults.
- The Commission can help to establish community leads in rural communities.
- Alaska has a lot of challenges. Looking forward to the upcoming legislative session and educating new legislators.
- Inspired by the people who contributed to the listening sessions. Good to hear about neighbors helping neighbors.
- Apparent during the meeting that they need to move issues forward simultaneously because they are all interconnected.

- Learned a lot from the past several days during the meeting and the listening sessions. Good to hear that the work on the ground is helping people feel socialized, fed, and safe.
- Would like to learn more about Medicare and its relationship to state services.
- Appreciated hearing the concerns about the lag in grant funding getting to provider agencies.
- It was a privilege to spend time with the Commission and people in the listening sessions. See the need to have senior navigators for people's information needs.
- The Commission has a lot of work ahead of it on the State Plan.
- The Commission has very knowledgeable and dedicated members at this time.
- Thank you to partners for their participation in the meeting, and thank you to the Anchorage Senior Center for hosting the meeting at their wonderful facility.

Mike Coons **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Bob Pawlowski. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at approximately 4:30 p.m.