

GACA Report for February 9, 2022 AZ4A – Arizona Aging Board Chair, Mary Beals Luedtka

Greetings; thank you for giving the Area Agency on Aging Directors the opportunity to be with you during these meetings and bring to you updates on the status of services provided by the AAA's across the State.

Legislative Asks

This year, our ask is for Legislators to continue supporting the work we are doing State wide, by not reducing our funding. We received some one time funds that need to be put in the regular budget and we are meeting with the Governor's office regularly to provide data, etc. on how the one time monies were utilized. Cutting these vital funds would result in a larger wait list than we have now. The Governor did not include these funds in his recently released budget.

AAA Regions are focused on vaccinations and access to them:

Region III is working with the CIL (New Horizons) to prepare and implement a marketing campaign for the older adults and physically disabled adults in Northern Arizona. They are also working with North Country Health Care to provide some vaccination clinics. **Region V-** In partnership with contracted senior center sites and other community organizations PGCSC began offering community vaccine clinics in both Pinal and Gila counties beginning the month of December 2021. PGCSC contracted with Paradigm Site Services to offer all available vaccines to seniors, caregivers, staff, volunteers, and others in the aging network. To date, PGCSC has held 19 clinics and processed 1,632 total vaccinations.

In addition to vaccination outreach, PGCSC is offering free virus testing kits to all clients and caregivers participating in agency programs. The goal is that by providing in-home testing kits seniors will be able to get results in their home vs. going to a testing facility. To date PGCSC has distributed 10,946 individual tests to 3,111 seniors. **Region VIII-** Vaccine Hesitancy Project provided 180 COVID test kits, 900 KN95 masks and other resources for upcoming Tribal vaccine clinics. ITCA created a vaccine hesitancy campaign on Facebook.

Recruitment & Retention of DCW's

Region III has issued new contracts for Home Care Providers and Adult Day Care Provider. They included 2 new elements.

- 1) Monies for incentives is included. Starting December 1 providers may use these one time monies to provide a variety of incentives, i.e. sign on bonuses, retention bonuses, referral bonuses. All of this money must go directly to the DCW (Direct Care Worker)
- 2) Rates were increased by \$4.00 an hour. \$3.00 an hour is required to go directly to the DCW.

Challenges

Overall challenges for all the agencies are:

- 1) Lack of DCW's (Direct Care Workers)
- 2) Staff shortages within the AAA's
- 3) Increased aging population in Arizona (University of Arizona Eller College of Business shows that from 2010 – 2019 the population in Arizona over the age of 65 has increased by 48.4%, the largest growth in all of the different segments, i.e. Under 18 grew .07%; total population increased 13.9%)
- 4) Increased demand for services
- 5) Affordable Housing and increased homelessness (Today half of those who experience homelessness are over the age of 50, in the early 1990's it was only 11%. An increase of 37%)
- 6) Increased food prices and limited availability of certain items
- 7) Winterization assistance
- 8) Mental Health and social isolation resources

Misc. Updates:

Region One

Martin Luther King Day of Service

As an AmeriCorps grantee, the Agency's AmeriCorps Members participate in two Days of Service annually: September 11th and Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday. For Martin Luther King Jr. Day of service, AmeriCorps Caring Circles Members delivered 260 first aid kits to senior housing sites throughout Maricopa County. The senior housing sites selected had previously received household cleaning supply kits through the Agency's Goods4Home program. First aid kits were requested as an additional needed item. AmeriCorps Members and Agency staff delivered the kits, door to door on Friday, January 14th.

Accreditation

Since 2006 the Agency has been continuously accredited through the Council on Accreditation (COA). The Agency is currently in the process of re-accreditation. 97 pieces of self-study evidence such as policies and procedures, program assessment tools, training plans and other documents that demonstrate the Agency meets best practice standards were submitted at the end of January. The Agency is preparing for a site visit by the COA reviewers which will occur in March.

Region III

Virtual Senior Center

Now implementing the Virtual Senior Center for older adults to connect, engage and enjoy. This new collaboration provides socially isolated clients with access to an online virtual senior center. You can schedule classes 24/7 any day of the year or you can join a community on line for classes that are pre-scheduled. This is a pilot and we are starting with 100 seniors who are interested in this concept. It could also be a way for a senior center to provide more activities even while their congregate setting remains closed.

Region V

Senior Center Automation

PGCSC is rolling out the second phase of implementation of the ServTracker data collection software at contracted senior center facilities. The web-based system currently allows centers to automate home delivered programs by collecting participant data, optimizing delivery routes, customizing meal schedules and collecting client signatures. The second phase will allow senior centers to set up a self-serve kiosk at the registration desk where participants will be able to reserve meals and register for classes, transportation service and volunteer opportunities.

Region VI

Senior Sin Ruedas Taskforce-Santa Cruz County:

The Area Agency on Aging collaborates with the SEAGO-Mobility Management team to address the lack of transportation in Santa Cruz County. The first taskforce meeting included partners APS, The Chamber of Commerce, AZ Complete Health, Valley Assistance Services, a volunteer driver, and Senator Rosanna Gabaldon participated. We plan to share statistics from SCC to create a feasibility study that will help us find solutions to the transportation challenges we see in SCC.

READI Meals

Real Emergency and Disaster Innovative meals (READI) allow us to prepare for times such as what we are experiencing with Covid and meet our emergency preparedness plan with our nutrition sites. Staff presented READI meals to Cochise and Santa Cruz Health Departments. The sites are struggling with hiring a support staff due to the increase in Covid cases in their respected areas. Nonetheless, we are working very hard to make it a safe process for everyone and make this an enjoyable experience for those sites who are running the project. Ultimately, READI grants the senior centers ways to reduce food waste and increase nutritious freeze-dried food to our participants.

Region VIII

ITCA-AAA Updates

Title III & Title VI Virtual Monitoring of older adult services in 17 Tribal communities begins in February 2022. ITCA-AAA information/resources televised in Indian Health Service and 638 Tribal health facilities has now been extended through March 2022. New Title III Director's Training (a 4-part series) provided information about older adult programs and services.