

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Alaska Commission on Aging

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MEMORANDUM

To: Karleen Jackson, Commissioner
Department of Health and Social Services

Thru: Bill Hogan, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Health and Social Services

From: Denise Daniello, Executive Director
Alaska Commission on Aging

Date: November 16, 2007

Subject: Implementation of the Alaska State Plan for Senior Services, FY2008-FY2011 and Recommendations to the Governor's Health Care Strategies Planning Council

Cc: Rod Moline, Director, Senior and Disabilities Services
Melissa Stone, Director, Behavioral Health
Tara Horton, Special Staff Assistant, Commissioner's Office

In collaboration with our agency partners, the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) has begun a structured process to implement the goals and strategies of the Alaska State Plan for Senior Services over the next four years. The Plan, which was approved by the U.S. Administration on Aging in June 2007 and authored by ACoA, was the result of a year-long inter-agency effort that resulted in a comprehensive visioning document for Alaska's senior services and a desire among planning committee members to implement the goals and strategies stated in the Plan.

This process, inspired by the implementation of the Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Plan, is a new endeavor to engage State and not-for-profit agencies to move forward with efforts to improve senior services and the quality of life for older Alaskans. Due to the demographic transition and the unprecedented growth of the Alaska senior population, more agencies are working on projects that address the needs of older Alaskans. We believe that the Alaska State Plan for Senior Services is a tool that can provide guidance for those efforts.

ACoA hosted the first implementation meeting of the State Plan on November 7th, 2007 in Anchorage. The purpose of this meeting was to provide an opportunity for agency representatives who are working on senior-related programs and projects to come together to network and learn about what others are doing in senior services, to discover new ways in which they may partner in order to use resources more efficiently and effectively, and to work collaboratively towards promoting activities that address the goals of the State Plan. (Please see enclosed list of participating agencies.) A report of the outcomes from this meeting is being prepared by ACoA staff and will be provided to you upon completion.

For our purposes, "implementation" means taking a look at what many of us are already doing on behalf of seniors, ascertaining how that work fits into the goals and strategies identified in the Plan, and brainstorming

new ideas that we could pursue either as individual agencies or collectively to improve the quality of life for older Alaskans. Using this process, we will be able to document the coordination of efforts underway to improve senior services within the context of the Alaska State Plan for Senior Services for the Legislature, the Governor, potential funders, and the public.

In preparation for the meeting, agency representatives were asked to identify strategies from the State Plan that their organizations considered to be “high priorities” and others that their organizations were addressing or planning to address in the future. The results of their responses, described in the “Combined Implementation Matrix” attached, shows the breadth of interest among agencies in their work related to senior issues and the opportunity for new partnerships to use finite public resources more strategically in developing projects and services that address the needs of older Alaskans and their caregivers.

Most of the work that transpired during the implementation meeting occurred in small group discussions in which participants divided themselves into three groups that followed the objectives outlined in the State Plan for each of the State Plan’s six goals. In these small groups - Agency and Community Partnerships, Education and Public Awareness, and Advocacy - participants discussed the activities their organizations were already pursuing or planning, identified one strategy for their group to highlight for this year’s implementation process, and brainstormed a list of suggested action steps that agencies may take in support of the highlighted strategy.

In addition, meeting participants identified priority strategies for consideration by the Governor’s Health Care Strategies Planning Council and asked that the following recommendations be forwarded to your attention as chair for consideration by the Council:

- Establish a long-term care council comprised of State and stakeholder representatives to work with the Department of Health and Social Services to develop both short-term (3-5 year) and long-term (15-20 year) strategic plans for long-term care, incorporating both recommendations from previous long-term care reports and studies and new studies as needed, with a focus on delivering improved services for seniors and their caregivers which are also cost effective. A long-term care plan must address workforce shortage issues related to senior services across the continuum of care, from home- and community-based services through institutional care;
- Fund and expand the Aging and Disabilities Resource Center as the primary point of entry for long-term care services for all Alaskans;
- Create and support a statewide disease and injury prevention awareness campaign targeting baby boomers and older adults;
- Develop solutions to address the health care needs of uninsured and underinsured older Alaskans as recommended by the HCSPC;
- Explore the creation of an “Elder Care Fund” as a means to secure sustainable funding to support the needs of a growing elder/senior population.
- Provide support for coordination and implementation of state, local and neighborhood emergency preparedness plans to help seniors develop individual and community readiness for natural disasters, severe weather, and other emergencies.

To promote implementation efforts, ACoA will provide ongoing logistical support and agrees to coordinate annual meetings of agency partners to plan activities and report outcomes related to implementation, serve as the repository for agency reports of implementation activities, and publish results of implementation efforts on the ACoA website.

We appreciate your consideration of the recommendations described above for the Governor’s Health Strategies Planning Council and look forward to working with you and the Department in the implementation of the Alaska State Plan for Senior Services. Please feel free to contact me for additional information. Thank you.