



State of Illinois
Illinois Department on Aging

ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON AGING

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2024

INTRODUCTION

The Illinois Council on Aging (the Council or ICoA), an advisory body to the Illinois Department on Aging (the Department or IDoA), was established by the General Assembly on August 9, 1973 (20 ILCS 105/7.01). The Council is mandated to review and comment on reports prepared by IDoA to the Governor and General Assembly, to review and comment upon the Department’s State Plan and on all disbursements of public funds by the Department to private agencies.

The Council is also directed to consult with the Director regarding the operations of the Department, and to recommend to the Governor candidates for appointment as Director of IDoA. In addition, the Council is directed to submit to the General Assembly, the Governor and the IDoA Director, annual reports regarding programs, services and facilities provided to the aging population by state agencies.

The Council is comprised of 31 voting members which includes 23 appointed by the Governor as citizen members, at least 16 of whom should be at least age 60. Members should represent all geographic sections of Illinois and both political parties. The remaining members are appointed by the General Assembly and include two appointed by the President of the Senate, two appointed by the Senate Minority Leader, two appointed by the Speaker of the House, and two appointed by the House Minority Leader.

ICoA MEETINGS

The Council is directed to meet quarterly, or as often as the Council Chair deems necessary. In Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24), Council meetings were held via Webex on the following dates:

- September 19, 2023
- December 19, 2023
- April 4, 2024
- June 25, 2024

STATE ORGANIZATIONS/STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

During FY24, the Council met with experts from the following entities to consult regarding programs and services available to older adults in Illinois:

Adaptive Equipment & Caregiving Corner

The mission of the Adaptive Equipment & Caregiving Corner is to enhance the continuity of care from healthcare facility to home, increase client and caregiver safety during daily care, and maintain the client’s optimal level of functional independence. Adaptive Equipment Caregiving Corner provides education and resources to enhance safety, comfort, and peace of mind for seniors, family caregivers, and professional caregivers.

Illinois Broadband Lab

The Illinois Broadband Lab is a collaboration on broadband data, mapping, research, and publication driven by the Illinois Office of Broadband and the University of Illinois System. The Lab leads the community engagement work required to secure federal funding to expand broadband access and ensure digital equity for all residents.

East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging

East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging (ECIAAA) serves as one of the thirteen Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) in Illinois. Its mission is to lead and advocate for inclusive resources and services that empower the optimal aging of East Central Illinois' diverse older adult population, individuals with disabilities and their care partners. ECIAAA serves Champaign, Clark, Coles, Cumberland, DeWitt, Edgar, Ford, Iroquois, Livingston, McLean, Macon, Moultrie, Piatt, Shelby, and Vermilion counties.

Illinois Department on Aging

The Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) supports older adults to live independently in their own homes and communities. The Department recognizes the importance of programs and services that adapt to meet the needs and ensure the quality of life for an age cohort that continues to increase in longevity. Working with AAAs, community-based service providers, older adults and their caregivers, the Department strives to improve the quality of life for current and future generations of older Illinoisans.

Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services

The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) is responsible for providing healthcare coverage for adults and children who qualify for Medicaid, and for providing child support services to help ensure that Illinois children receive financial support from both parents. HFS administers its programs for older adults under the Illinois Public Aid Code, Title XIX of the federal Social Security Act, and the 1915(c) Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Waivers.

Illinois Senior Medicare Patrol

The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Program empowers consumers to prevent healthcare fraud. With volunteers and program staff, SMP helps people with Medicare and Medicaid to prevent, detect, and report Medicare and Medicaid fraud, waste, and abuse. The Administration for Community Living (ACL) provides funding to SMP programs in all 50 states. In Illinois, AgeOptions serves as the statewide SMP.

OLDER ADULT PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

ICoA communicated with various program areas and discussed efforts focused on helping older adults age in place and stay healthy and safe for as long as possible. In FY 24, ICoA reviewed the following services and initiatives:

Adult Protective Services

Adult Protective Services (APS) responds to reports of alleged abuse, neglect, and exploitation (ANE) of adults aged 60 and older and adults with disabilities between the ages of 18 and 59 who live in the community. In addition, the program responds to reports of self-neglect (SN) which refers to a condition that is the result of an eligible adult's inability to perform essential care tasks that substantially threaten his or her own health. In FY24, the program responded to 22,178 reports of ANE/SN. Trained caseworkers in local agencies throughout Illinois conducted investigations and worked with individuals to resolve abusive, neglectful, or exploitive situations and arrange for appropriate interventions.

Community Care Program

The Community Care Program (CCP) is a major initiative to prevent the unnecessary institutionalization of people in Illinois who are 60 years of age and older. The program is designed to meet the needs of older adults who have difficulty with household and personal care tasks. CCP services include in-home, adult day, emergency home response and automated medication dispenser. CCP served approximately 65,675 elderly individuals each month in FY24, thereby successfully diverting or delaying many of those individuals from entering a nursing facility.

Dementia Friendly America

Dementia Friendly America (DFA) is a national network of communities, organizations and individuals seeking to ensure that communities across the U.S. are equipped to support people living with dementia and their care partners. The DFA movement began in September 2015 following the White House Conference on Aging when USAging became the administrator, spearheading the effort. DFA's mission is to increase dementia awareness, reduce stigma, and provide quality dementia-friendly resources, education and support that fosters the creation of communities where people living with dementia and their care partners can live, engage, and thrive in community with others.

Family/Unpaid Caregiver Support

Family caregiving is very common; according to AARP, in 2020, one in five Americans were caregivers. Many caregivers live with or near the person for whom they provide care, while others may be long-distance caregivers residing in another city or state. No matter their circumstances, a variety of resources are available to family caregivers through IDoA, Illinois' 13 AAAs, and numerous partner organizations.

Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

As mandated by the federal Older Americans Act and the Illinois Act on the Aging, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) was established to protect the rights of individuals who live in a variety of long-term care settings. The five primary Ombudsman services are: investigation; regular presence visits; issue advocacy; consultations; and resident and family council support. Quality resident care and residents' rights are top priorities for the Program, which includes 17 Regional LTCOPs. In FY24, the LTCOP responded to 7,101 complaints. In addition, the Program handled 34,148 consultations and made 14,370 facility visits.

Medicaid Redetermination

Prior to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE), people enrolled in Medicaid needed to renew their eligibility on an annual basis. However, during the PHE that process was paused and people could keep their Medicaid without the annual eligibility review. Since the PHE ended on May 11, 2023, the federal government has ended the pause on annual eligibility verifications and Illinois has started the redetermination or renewal process for Medicaid again. The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) launched an outreach campaign urging people who use Medicaid to take steps to avoid losing their coverage.

Older Americans Act

Older Americans Act (OAA) funded programs serve older adults who reside in neighborhoods throughout Illinois. Available services fall into categories of access, in-home and community-based services, as well as nutrition, legal assistance, employment assistance and caregiver support. These services are coordinated through the AAAs and a network of community service providers.

Senior Health Insurance Program

The Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) provides objective counseling, advocacy, and enrollment assistance to Illinois’ Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers. SHIP counselors are certified to perform personal searches using the Medicare plan finder tool comparing Part D prescription drug plans and Medicare Advantage plans in order to facilitate the best choices for individuals receiving benefits. During FY24, SHIP counselors assisted more than 90,000 beneficiaries using a hybrid approach of in-person and remote online counseling.

State Plan on Aging

State Units on Aging, including IDoA, are tasked under the Older Americans Act with developing and administering a multi-year State Plan on Aging that provides goals and objectives related to assisting older residents, their families, and caregivers in their states. The State Plan serves as a blueprint for developing a comprehensive service system and outlines significant activities to best serve older adults and family caregivers in Illinois.

ICoA DISCUSSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Meetings with experts regarding programs and services furthered the mission of ICoA to promote the well-being of older adults in Illinois. The meetings provided opportunities to gather data, assess service gaps, provide recommendations, and share a common vision to best meet the needs of the older adult population. Highlights from the discussions in FY24 included the following:

Representatives from the Illinois Broadband Lab presented to ICoA on broadband equity. It was shared that \$65 billion was included in the federal bipartisan infrastructure law, the Green New Deal, for broadband expansion. The Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program, the federal grant program aimed at providing internet access to all Americans, has been allotted \$42 billion of the \$65 billion for high-speed internet access. The State of Illinois was granted approximately \$1 billion to create new internet infrastructure. The funding will be rolled into an existing program, Connect Illinois, that provides funds for internet projects. Nearly \$2.75 billion in federal funding will be used for equipment, including tablets and hardware, as well as for training individuals on how to connect to and use the internet. In 2024, funding will be distributed to non-profits, governmental organizations, and community-based organizations to prepare communities for the arrival of high-speed internet service. It was noted that the Digital Equity Act focuses on addressing the needs of covered populations that include low-income households, older adults, incarcerated individuals, veterans, people with disabilities, people with language barriers, racial and ethnic minorities, as well as rural residents. ICoA members were encouraged to provide public comments regarding needs of older adults, as well as suggestions on how to best roll out the program to covered populations.

The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) updated ICoA on Medicaid redetermination efforts. HFS reported that continuous enrollment in Medicaid is no longer tied to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE). Eligibility redetermination efforts started with the mailing of letters on May 1, 2023. HFS explained that Illinois has two types of redetermination forms, Form A (also known as Ex Parte) and Form B. Form A Ex Parte is used when the Medicaid recipients' income can be verified electronically or if they have no income. Form A Ex Parte redeterminations average 50 percent of Illinois Medicaid recipients. Form B is for recipients whose income cannot be verified electronically, including the self-employed and those without Social Security numbers. Form B requires the recipient to attach proof of income and submit the form back by the due date. If they do not, their Medicaid coverage will end. Therefore, all focus is currently on the Form B Medicaid recipients to ensure they return their paperwork to give them the best chance of continued Medicaid coverage. There is a 90-day reinstatement period after coverage loss for failure to respond if it is found they are eligible for reinstatement. If the recipient does not submit within that 90-day window, they must reapply. The goals of redetermination are to maximize the number of eligible Medicaid recipients, as well as ensure those no longer eligible maintain health coverage through the Marketplace, employer-based programs, or Medicare. IDoA is working closely with HFS to encourage Medicaid participants to return their paperwork to remain eligible and refer individuals no longer eligible for Medicaid to other sources for their insurance needs.

IDoA shared planned improvements to the Community Care Program (CCP). It was announced that federal approval has been granted for the enhanced service definition of Emergency Home Response Service (EHRS) to include global positioning technology (GPS), as well as fall detection enhancements. The new GPS enhanced bracelets or pendants will allow coverage outside of the home to individuals wearing the devices. ICoA members agreed that these enhancements will allow older adults to stay in their communities longer and be safer there as well.

Kelly Richards, IDoA State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, presented to ICoA and shared that the mission of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) is to protect and improve the quality of care for residents living in long-term care communities by working as their advocate to assure that their rights are upheld. In addition to their work inside nursing home facilities, the LTCOP conduct community education sessions, advocate through legislation, and support the development of resident and family councils. Ombudsmen engage in person-directed advocacy and do not act without the permission of the resident or participant. They work to problem solve complaints to the satisfaction of the resident, educating and empowering residents to ensure that their rights are honored. Kelly explained that Ombudsmen are not mandated reporters because the program is resident-directed. However, if a resident gives permission to an Ombudsman to report abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation, they will do so. Lee Moriarty, IDoA Deputy State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, highlighted current initiatives including Artifacts of Culture Change to promote person-directed living. The Artifacts of Culture Change is a self-assessment tool that nursing homes and other long-term care communities can use to note their progress toward changing institutional culture care. The tool can be used to implement changes that increase residents' rights and choices. Statewide trainings are wrapping up for long-term care communities that explain how to successfully use and benefit from the Artifacts of Culture Change. LTCOP is also working to raise awareness of their services and making efforts to ensure that residents are aware of the program as soon as they enter a long-term care facility. Efforts to raise awareness include the Virtual Resident and Family Support Council that meets twice a month. The sessions are

recorded. There are more than 55 videos posted to YouTube that can be accessed at any time. Lee encouraged ICoA to access the videos at www.youtube.com/@illtcombudsman6169.

Susan Real, CEO of the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging (ECIAAA), shared efforts to expand dementia friendly communities in their 16-county Planning and Service Area (PSA). The Dementia Friendly America (DFA) initiative consists of a national network of communities, organizations, and individuals seeking to ensure that communities are prepared to support people living with dementia, as well as their caregivers. She spoke about efforts in Decatur that started in 2021 using the DFA toolkit. Dementia Friendly Decatur is taking steps to educate and raise awareness to reduce stigmas surrounding dementia, encourage dementia friendly practices by businesses, and engage individuals with in-person training or participation in an online community. In late 2023, Dementia Friendly Decatur was a recipient of the Governor's Engaging Aging Award that recognizes groups that have made a positive impact on the lives of seniors in Illinois. Linda Little, Coordinator of Dementia Friendly Decatur, highlighted program efforts that were kicked off with a summit held at the Scoville Zoo in October of 2022. She said that the purpose of Dementia Friendly Decatur is to educate and help people become more comfortable interacting with individuals who have dementia. The goals include decreasing social isolation that often comes along with dementia and supporting individuals with dementia so they can stay active for as long as possible. The Decatur Dementia Friendly initiative includes setting up a monthly dementia-friendly zoo day that includes free admission for people living with dementia and their caregivers. Highlights of zoo day include games, socialization, snacks, and interaction with zoo animals. Dementia Friendly Decatur is supported through three grants funded by the Land of Lincoln Credit Union, Macon County Mental Health Board, and the Community Foundation of Macon County. Susan and Linda shared that they would be happy to talk with any ICoA members that may be interested in engaging their communities in Dementia Friendly initiatives.

Staff from the Division of Advocacy and Preventive Services (APS) updated the Council regarding efforts conducted by their new Quality Assurance (QA) team. The QA team's primary duty is to complete comprehensive reviews of provider case documentation to identify deficiencies and form corrective action plans if necessary. The APS Division has also contracted with the National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) to complete a comprehensive analysis of the Illinois APS program. They will review statutes, regulations, and procedures to locate inefficiencies and provide solutions to any problems found and recommend best practices. This evaluation will be completed in November 2024 and results will be shared with stakeholders, including ICoA.

Sandy Pastore, IDoA Division Manager of Home and Community Services, presented progress on the development of the next Illinois State Plan on Aging. She said that Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) are conducting area needs assessments to implement their three-year plan for Fiscal Year (FY) 25-27. These assessments focus on the greatest areas of economic and social needs of the older adults within their service areas. Sandy provided an overview of the federal and state funding streams to support the programs and services offered through the AAAs. Sandy explained the initiatives being implemented to reach service goals: Initiative 1 to raise awareness and share information about the availability of aging services and supports; Initiative 2 is to drive continuous quality assurance and improvement activities to maximize the effectiveness of the services being delivered; and Initiative 3 is to increase public awareness of needs and resources available to support caregivers in Illinois. Sandy shared that in 2023, IDoA partnered with the AAAs to hold 20 in-person and three virtual caregiver roundtable meetings to hear from caregivers across Illinois and better understand

their needs and challenges. The input from the more than 450 participants will help to shape the future of services offered. There will be additional opportunities to collect public feedback in the upcoming months with public hearings beginning in January of 2025 and the final FY26-28 Illinois State Plan on Aging due to the Administration for Community Living by July 1, 2025. Sandy encouraged the Council to reach out to their local AAAs to attend public hearings and provide input.

Sandy Leith, Director of the Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP), provided an update noting that the Medicare Medicaid Alignment Initiative (MMAI) started in 2010 will conclude at the end of 2025. MMAI will be replaced by a new generation of plans called Special Needs Plans (SNPs) in 2026. SNPs combine Medicare and Medicaid to provide low-cost health insurance, prescription coverage, supportive services, and transportation in one plan to people who qualify for both Medicare and Medicaid. SHIP funds are being used to support counseling of SHIP sites to help with conversion to these new SNPs. Sandy also introduced the new Medicare Choices handbook developed by SHIP to help counselors and beneficiaries make better health care choices. Sandy also told the Council about current SHIP counselor trainings being held throughout Illinois. These are four-day trainings and scheduled through June 21 in six locations including Springfield, Chicago, Dixon, Lombard, Decatur and McLeansboro. Sandy encouraged Council members to visit <https://cmsnationaltrainingprogram.CMS.gov> to take a training course offered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and brush up on their Medicare knowledge.

Travis Trumitch, Illinois Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Coordinator with AgeOptions, talked to the Council about how to detect and prevent Medicare fraud. Medicare estimates that \$60 billion is lost each year to fraud, errors, and abuse. SMP partners with the Illinois Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) to reach as many people as possible with their message and education about fraud detection and prevention. Travis reviewed the most common types of Medicare fraud. The most common is the durable medical equipment (DME) scam. DME scams involve things like braces, walkers, canes, and oxygen tanks. Typically, the beneficiary receives a phone call from the scamster, pretending to be affiliated with Medicare. The beneficiary is asked to confirm their Medicare number and other personal information. The scammer then sells that information to a DME company who pays a doctor to sign off on a prescription for the equipment. The scammer will then bill Medicare. The second most common Medicare fraud is the genetic testing scam. The scammer will attend an outreach event or contact the beneficiary through the mail. They misrepresent themselves by advertising free testing for Medicare beneficiaries through companies such as 23andMe or Ancestry. They gather the beneficiary's Medicare number and personal information, as well as complete a cheek swab. The scammers fraudulently bill Medicare for cancer or cardiovascular screenings ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000. The third most common Medicare scam is for urinary catheter kits. The scam works the same way as the DME scam, where the beneficiary's information is gathered but with this scam all the personal information has come from a past data breach. A doctor signs the prescription and the product is billed to the beneficiary's Medicare account. Some older scams that are still reported include the Medicare card scam where a caller poses as a Medicare representative and tells the beneficiary that they need a new gold colored plastic Medicare card with a chip in it, which does not exist. The scammer obtains the beneficiary's information and fraudulently bills the account. SMP's motto is "Prevent, Detect, Report" and their advice to beneficiaries for avoiding fraud is to never give their Medicare, Medicaid, or Social Security numbers to anyone they do not know and trust. SMP encourages individuals suspecting Medicare fraud to call the SMP Hotline at 1-800-699-9043. More information regarding SMP may be found at www.illinoismp.org.

Christina Hardin-Weiss, MS/SLP provided an overview of Adaptive Equipment & Caregiving Corner. Christina co-founded Adaptive Equipment & Caregiving Corner with partner Cindy Hardin-Weiss to provide education and resources to enhance the safety, comfort, and peace of mind for seniors, family members and professional caregivers. Adaptive Equipment produces educational and instructional videos and home medical equipment product reviews. They also have a subscription-based website containing “how-to” videos on many different topics as well as product usage instruction. For questions or to access resources, individuals may visit the website at www.aecorner.com. The site contains interactive tools, videos, product information for seniors, family caregivers and professional caregivers that will make caregiving safer and easier as well as allow people to remain independent and to age gracefully in their homes for as long as possible.

Michael Schumacher, IDoA Regional Coordinator, presented to the Council regarding Older Americans Act (OAA) services provided by the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). In Federal Fiscal Year 2023 (FFY23), 471,104 clients received OAA funded services. This is a 15 percent increase from the number of individuals served in FFY22. Regarding nutrition services, there was a slight decrease of five percent in the number of home delivered meals but there was an increase of 88 percent in the number of units, or individual congregate meals, served. In FFY 23, legal assistance, chore, transportation, and nutrition counseling categories saw increases of 16 percent, three percent, 16 percent, and 14 percent, respectively, from the previous year. The AAAs also provided 778,627 units of service in the information and assistance category, a four percent increase from FFY22. Caregiver services also increased by 18 percent. The older relative caregivers program, formerly known as grandparents raising grandchildren, showed a very large increase of 94 percent in total clients from FFY22 to FFY23. Michael shared that federal funding sources have generally stayed the same so the AAAs are making funding go further to serve more participants. AAAs are also raising awareness of the services available by holding public education campaigns using various strategies including advertising. Council members discussed ways to facilitate more participation in OAA services, including generating more awareness and continuing to target service delivery to those most in need.

ICOA Membership (As of 6/30/2024)

Community Members

Sue Vega, **Chair**

Kim Hunt, **Vice Chair**

Julie Bobitt, Ph.D., **Secretary**

Britta M. Larson, **Nominating Chair**

Anthony Frazier

Rev. Melvin L. Grimes

Paulette M. Hamlin

Christina Hardin-Weiss

Talat Khan, Ph.D.

Susan Lawler

Sylvia Mahle

Patricia Marton, Ph.D.

Mubarak A. Mirjat, DPT

Phyllis Mitzen

Crystal Odom-McKinney

Edgar Ramirez

Kate A. Schwartz

Meijan Linda Yu, Ph.D.

Legislative Members

Senate

Senator Laura Fine (D), 9th District

Senator Mattie Hunter (D), 3rd District

Senator Dave Syverson (R), 35th District

House

Representative Maura Hirschauer, (D), 49th District

Representative Rita Mayfield, (D), 60th District



State of Illinois, Department on Aging

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Senior HelpLine (8:30am – 5:00pm, Monday – Friday):
1-800-252-8966; 711 (TRS)

Adult Protective Services Hotline (24-Hour):
1-866-800-1409

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate against any individual because of his or her race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, order of protection status, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, or unfavorable discharge from military service in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities.

If you feel you have been discriminated against, you have a right to file a complaint with the Illinois Department on Aging.

For information call the Senior HelpLine: 1-800-252-8966; 711 (TRS).