

Created by the Older Americans Act of 1973, Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) are the local leaders in serving older Kansans and caregivers in all 105 counties of the state. Area Agency on Aging programs help older adults maintain their dignity in their homes and communities with comprehensive, coordinated, and cost-effective supports and services. To ensure Kansas is prepared to meet demand, the Area Agencies on Aging advocate for the following:

Senior Care Act (SCA)

The SCA is a vital safety net for older Kansans enacted by legislators in 1989 to create a coordinated system of services to help older Kansans avoid premature nursing home stays.

Thank you, lawmakers, for adding additional base funding to the Senior Care Act (SCA) program in 2022.

This is a "smart dollar" common sense program:

State-funded Senior Care Act services save taxpayers money. SCA services protect the well-being of older adults and prevent early enrollment in Medicaid/KanCare. The FE waiver costs substantially more than SCA services; and, upon entering a nursing facility, most older adults spend down their resources to become Medicaid-eligible within two years. When comparing SCA versus nursing facility costs the monthly difference is more than \$5,000 per customer.

The Senior Care Act is based on a sliding fee scale. This means that customers have a stake in their care by paying a portion of their income for services.

1. Adequate Funding for Nutrition Services

Restore and Expand funding for the Nutrition program to reflect inflationary costs. We support restoring the \$850,000 in state funds cut in FY22 budget for Nutrition services for older Kansans and caregivers. During the pandemic, Nutrition providers throughout the state maintained meal services to older Kansans. These providers now are dealing with increased costs of food, labor, fuel, and volunteer shortages due to the pandemic. State funding for nutrition services has not increased since 2009. Inflation has eroded the real dollar power of this funding, and an adjustment is needed to maintain and sustain current levels of service. These monies are highly leveraged with funds from federal and local sources and with voluntary donations from Nutrition participants and the thousands of hours of volunteer hours that make this program work in Kansas communities.

2. Tax Exempt Status

Statutory tax-exempt status for Kansas AAAs. Funding for services provided by AAAs is primarily generated from government entities. All AAAs are designated as 501(c)(3) organizations; three of which are administered by county governments and exempt from Kansas state sales tax; and eight remaining are not exempt. To create resource parity and equalization of resources to meet increasing demand for services to older Kansans and their caregivers, we ask for statutory authority exempting all AAAs from Kansas sales tax.

3. Infrastructure Investments

Kansas infrastructure must include and support a "safety net" to support growing demand for home and community-based services. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that demand for home-care workers will grow faster than any occupation in America--faster than the average for all occupations. Infrastructure investments are needed to support quality community-based health services to meet the growing demand services by older Kansans, people living with disabilities and caregivers. We advocate for:

- **Continued Funds for the Older Kansans Employment Program (OKEP) at 2021 level.** OKEP is a component of our state's current safety net that provides career assessment, specialized training and job search assistance to Kansans age 55 and older. OKEP matches older job-seekers with employers in private business and is an important investment in infrastructure for a population disproportionately affected by COVID-19. As the workforce and the economy struggle to recover, OKEP services will be more important than ever to address the needs of Kansas employers and older job-seekers.
- **Establishment of a statewide workgroup to identify ways to attract, recruit, and retain workers and improve direct care jobs.** We ask for AAA representation on work groups and that emphasis on workforce issues affecting rural Kansas be a high priority.

We support expansion of KanCare: Expanding Medicaid will actively respond to the social determinants of health by improving economic conditions for older Kansans with severely limited finances. People age 60 to 65 who are ineligible for Medicare and fall in the “coverage gap” will then have better access to health care, safe and affordable housing, good nutrition and reliable transportation.

We support and advocate to maintain Medicare for today’s seniors, as we know it. We support future Medicare beneficiaries receiving today’s coverage and not being forced into private plans.

The Area Agencies on Aging in Kansas are part of a national network of 629 AAAs and 246 Title VI organizations, which are the designated leaders on aging issues at the local level to respond to the needs of seniors and caregivers in every local community. In Kansas, Area Agencies on Aging are the “single points of entry,” coordinating the delivery of publicly-funded community-based services for older adults and caregivers. The AAAs are locally administered and use federal, state and local funding to provide five broad categories of services: Information and Access Services, Community Services, In-Home Services, Housing, and Elder Rights. Service delivery decisions are made at the community level and services are usually delivered in private homes of older adults who need services.

Primary Responsibilities of Area Agencies on Aging include:

- a. Serving as a community planning agency to improve community services to seniors
- b. Acting as advocate for older adults
- c. Providing services which help older adults remain in the community and avoid unnecessary or premature moves from their homes and providing support that helps caregivers of older adults
- d. Promoting *person-directed care*
- e. Developing coalitions and networks of support for older adults and their caregivers to avoid or reduce the need for publicly funded services
- f. Coordinating services in a specific geographic area and manage services effectively and efficiently
- g. Helping older adults live happier and more active lives through disease prevention and intervention

For almost 50 years, Area Agencies on Aging have expanded meaningful, cost-effective options that help people live healthy, engaged, secure lives in our homes and communities. When more than 90% of people want to age in place at home, comprehensive efforts must be implemented and sustained to make this system work.

Area Agencies on Aging provide “non-Medicaid” services, which address social determinants of health. Trustworthy information, home delivered meals, and personal care aides contribute to aging successfully and enhancing caregiver capacity. Area Agencies on Aging have close ties with communities and expertise in leveraging resources and ideas to make effective use of important, but limited, non-Medicaid resources.

According to The Center for Economic Development and Business Research, there are more than 600,000 Kansans aged 65 and older; and projected to increase to 700,000 in ten years. A robust infrastructure is needed to address the significant demographic shift in demand for equitable policy and opportunities. Area Agencies on Aging must have a major role in the state’s strategic collaborations and coordination to ensure the aging perspective is clearly represented.

Comments? Questions? Please feel free to contact:

Annette Graham, k4ad Board President | 316-660-7298 | Annette.Graham@cpaaa.gov
Leslie Anderson, k4ad Executive Director | (785) 267-1336 | leslie@k4ad.org