

Created by the Older Americans Act, as amended, in 1973, Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) are the local leaders in serving older Kansans and caregivers in all 105 Kansas counties. AAA programs help older Kansans age in place with coordinated, cost-effective supports and services. To ensure Kansas lawmakers are aware of the specialized needs of older adults and to be prepared to meet increasing service demands, we advocate for the following priorities:

## 1. Senior Care Act (SCA)

The Senior Care Act is a smart-dollar, cost-effective program serving eligible Kansans aged 60 and older. The SCA addresses social determinants of health by providing an assessment of needs, case management, home care, emergency response systems, home modification, respite and other services to address an individual's needs. Kansas AAAs are commissioned by state statute to administer the SCA and contract with providers to deliver services.

Through coordination and person-centered approaches, AAAs organize, deliver, and finance services within the plan of care to help older Kansans age in place and delay or avoid costlier services or premature institutional care. Advanced age increases the probability of a chronic condition: those over age 80 are affected the most. Each AAA is allocated funds based on an established funding formula, and an income-based sliding-fee scale determines the amount a customer contributes towards the cost of their care.

During the pandemic, 1,874 customers received SCA services; resulting in a \$7.1 million cost avoidance to the State of Kansas. ***K4ad asks that funding remain at the current level of \$10,000,015, and that eligibility defined by statute remains the same.***

## 2. Nutrition Services for Older Adults

Nutrition is the program area with the highest amount of funding for all AAA's. The program funds home-delivered meals and meals at congregate sites (i.e. senior center, etc.). Voluntary donations, numerous volunteer hours, and state funds are highly leveraged with federal and local sources to support nutrition services. Inflation has deteriorated buying power by 38.35% since 2009, which was the last year of a funding increase, resulting in providers struggling to sustain the program. To maintain current capacity and number of meals, and to make this program work in local communities, ***k4ad asks for an increase of \$3.0 million for the nutrition program serving older Kansans; and that any nutrition funding is passed through to the AAAs for distribution to nutrition providers.***

## 3. Tax Exempt Status

**Statutory tax-exempt status for Kansas AAAs.** Funding for services provided by AAAs is primarily generated from government entities. All Kansas AAAs are designated as 501(c)(3) organizations; three of which are administered by county governments and exempt from Kansas state sales tax; and the eight remaining not exempt. To create parity of service dollars, support the missions and goals of the AAA, and meet increasing demand for services by older Kansans and their caregivers, ***k4ad asks the legislature to pass legislation exempting the Area Agencies on Aging from paying Kansas sales tax.***

## 4. Older Kansans Employment Program

OKEP is a component within our state's current safety net that provides career assessment, technology training and job search assistance to Kansans aged 55 and older. OKEP matches older job-seekers with employers in private business and is an important investment in the infrastructure for a population disproportionately affected by COVID-19. As the workforce and economy struggle to recover, ***k4ad asks for continued funding to support the needs of Kansas employers and older job seekers.***

## 5. Person-Centered Services

Medicaid requires all Home and Community Based Services settings to optimize autonomy and independence in making choices related to daily activities, relationships, and location of services in all non-residential settings, including adult day service centers and assisted living facilities. This mandate provides an opportunity for Kansas law to be amended and protect the appeal rights of a resident in the event of eviction from an assisted living, residential health care or home plus facility; and to add case management as a separate service to provide unbiased options, ensure informed choice, and identify service gaps. To ensure services are person-centered, ***k4ad supports legislation that strengthens home and community-based services.***

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 older adults and caregivers in every local community. In Kansas, Area Agencies on Aging are the “single points of entry” and coordinate 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 aligned with Title III-B (in-home and access services); III-C1 and III-C2 (home delivered and site-based nutrition programs); III-D (disease prevention and health promotion services); and III-E (caregiver services), which are all provided in the homes and communities for older adults in need of services.

**Primary Responsibilities of Area Agencies on Aging include:**

- 1) Serving as a community planning agency to improve community services to older adults
- 2) Acting as an advocate for older adults
- 3) Promoting person-directed care and providing services which help older adults remain in the community and avoid unnecessary or premature moves from their homes and providing supports that help caregivers of older adults
- 4) Developing coalitions and networks of support for older adults and their caregivers to avoid or reduce the need for publicly-funded services
- 5) Coordinating services in a specific geographic area and managing services effectively and efficiently
- 6) 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 helping 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 the 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.

There are more than 600,000 Kansans aged 65 and older; and projected to increase to 700,000 in ten years. A robust plan is needed to address the significant demographic shift that challenges equitable policy and opportunities. Expanding Medicaid will actively facilitate improved access to care for older adults with low incomes, particularly those who are unserved or underserved; incorporate quality and sustainability into program operations; and improve coordination between health systems. As better health is an outcome of accessible health care, ***k4ad supports Medicaid Expansion to improve access to health care, good nutrition, and reliable non-emergency medical transportation.***

Area Agencies on Aging also work on the federal level to advocate for fair and equitable policy to ensure older adults can age in place. Medicare beneficiaries should not be forced into private plans to receive needed services, thus, ***k4ad supports and advocates for today’s seniors to have access to Medicare, as we know it.***

**Comments? Questions? Please feel free to contact:**

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