



Washington State Council on Aging

Meeting Title: 2024 September Washington State Council on Aging Meeting

Date: 09/24/2024

Location: Zoom

	Members Present	Appointment		Members Present	Appointment
✓	Jean Kindem	At-Large East		Vacant	Association of Counties
	Gavin Carmichael	AAADSW WA Advisory Council		Susan Conniry	O3A Advisory Council
✓	Rep. Kelly Chambers (Dianna Hawkins, Leg. Aide)	WA House of Representatives	✓	Dennis Wheeler	Snohomish County AAA
✓	Suone Cotner	At-Large West		Vacant	Kitsap AAA Advisory Council
✓	Georgiann Dustin	NWRC Advisory Council		Vacant	Yakama Golden Eagle Advisory Council
✓	Deb Murphy	Central AAA		Guests Present	
(✓)	Vacant (Eileen McKenzie Sullivan, Cat McGaffigan sitting in)	Lewis Mason Thurston AAA Advisory Council	✓	Cathy Knight	W4A
✓	Ron Vivion	At-Large West	✓	Tim Smolen	SHIBA, OIC
(✓)	Vacant (Michael Adusah sitting in)	ADS King County Advisory Council	✓	Ben Veghte	WA Cares, ALTSA
✓	Bob Scarfo	Ageing & Long-Term Care Eastern Washington Advisory Council	✓	Mary-Anne Grafton	WA Assoc. of Senior Centers
(✓)	Sen. Karen Keiser (Emma Hellthaler, Leg. Aide)	WA State Senate	✓	Bea Rector	ALTSA
✓	Michele Blythe	Association of Cities	✓	Susan Engels	ALTSA
✓	Stephanie Carpenter	Southeast WA Ageing and Long-Term Care	✓	Melanie McGuire	ALTSA
	Rep. Tarra Simmons	WA House of Representatives	✓	Cameron Akita	ALTSA
✓	Bruce Dougherty	Pierce County Ageing & Disability Resources Advisory Board	✓	Tim Wood	Guest
	Karen Kiessling	At-Large East			



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Topic	Key Points and/or Decisions Made
<p>Welcome/Introductions Review/Approve Minutes and Agenda</p>	<p>Chairperson Michele Blythe called the meeting to order at 9:00am. Council Members and guests introduced themselves through in the Zoom chat.</p> <p>Council passed a motion to approve the agenda without changes.</p>
<p>WA Cares Update</p>	<p>Ben Veghte, Director, WA Cares Fund Ben highlighted WA Cares Fund as the nation's first universal long-term care benefit that started in Washington State. This work focuses on developing policies to improve economic security for workers by balancing work and family caregiving needs.</p> <p><i>Background and Legislation:</i> In 2014, the state examined solutions to the long-term care (LTC) crisis due to an increasing population of older adults and a shortage of caregivers. The ratio of available caregivers to care receivers is expected to drop from 7:1 in 2010 to 3:1 by 2050. The only way to support all Washingtonians is through a public benefit; the law supporting WA Cares passed in 2019.</p> <p><i>Program Updates:</i> Recent changes support near retirees and introduce portability starting in 2024. The maximum lifetime benefit is \$36.5K, which will adjust for inflation. Rulemaking will continue into the next year.</p> <p>The LTSS Commission's recommendation report is due by January 1, 2025, and the report will be finalized at the December 11th meeting. A contingency workgroup has convened in response to the upcoming initiative.</p> <p><i>Questions and Discussions:</i> Bruce Dougherty inquired about staff retention amid upcoming votes. Ben shared that this retention was not an issue, and that he is optimistic WA Cares will survive.</p>



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	<p>Dennis Wheeler asked about interest from other states and supplemental insurance plans. Ben noted 10 states, including California, are close to adopting similar programs. California is currently where Washington State was around 2017. Ben noted that there is a good chance that private insurers will come into the market if WA Care survives, marketed by AARP.</p> <p>Ron Vivion complimented the program's efforts and noted public awareness. Ben emphasized the importance of outreach, his openness to talk to groups to help correct the misinformation that exists.</p>
WA Association of Senior Centers	<p>Mary-Anne Grafton, Chair, WA State Association of Senior Centers (WSASC)</p> <p>Ron Vivion introduced Mary-Anne, who has the dual role of Chairing WSASC and being Director of the Lynwood Senior Center. WSASC represents approximately 240 senior centers across Washington State.</p> <p><i>Role and Importance of Senior Centers:</i></p> <p>Mary-Anne shared that senior centers cater to individuals aged 55 to 105, covering all life stages. She reviewed the Governor's proclamation for National Senior Center Month, first recognized in 2023. Senior centers serve as vital community spaces providing health services, such as foot care, which Medicare no longer covers.</p> <p><i>Challenges in Retirement:</i></p> <p>Financial planning is common, but social planning is often neglected. Retirement leads to loss of work-related social communities, causing isolation for many after about a year. Senior centers act as essential social infrastructure, offering unique social opportunities and daily activities, such as daily coffee chats.</p> <p><i>Current Trends and Issues:</i></p> <p>Some cities integrate senior centers within parks and recreation departments or municipal centers. There is a growing trend for cities to close centers to save money, making such services scarce. Senior centers develop in various forms, from grassroots, non-profit, volunteer-run organizations to creative partnerships.</p> <p><i>Activities and Partnerships:</i></p>



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Senior centers offer a range of activities, often partnering with Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) networks for services like SHIBA, transportation, and Meals on Wheels (MOW). Most are not funded by the Older Americans Act (OAA) in WA; funds usually go to food and caregiver assistance services for medically fragile older adults.

Senior centers rely heavily on volunteers, whose contributions vary across localities. Many volunteers also become active program participants. Senior centers are vital places for social interactions where people meet and form friendships.

Evidence Based Classes: Balance changes around age 40. Evidence-based exercise classes aid fall prevention with a cost benefit of 1:19, saving the community on emergency/medical needs.

Better Age Pilot: Jim Firman, CEO of the National Council on Aging (NCOA), is piloting this program in 8 states. 50% of older adults have 0-1 chronic conditions. The question is how to invest in these initiatives.

Loneliness Epidemic: Social isolation increases the risk of dementia by 50%, heart disease by 29%, and stroke by 32%. 25% of adults over 65 are socially isolated.

Funding Sources: 20% of senior centers are municipally funded. The remaining centers are grassroots or non-profits. Counties may or may not provide funding, for example, King County's levy funds only a portion of their senior centers. Previously, United Way provided funds, but these have been cut.

Challenges: One senior center was noted for having 10 funding sources for congregate meals which takes days each month to track and report. Fundraising is critical, yet challenging, as nobody wants to pay for admin/operations.

Many senior centers have closed over the years, though some received COVID relief funding. Senior centers are powerful tools to develop age-friendly approaches.



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	<p><i>Discussion:</i> SCOA had proposed for a statewide survey of senior centers to assess resources and staffing, with the aim to build capacity and grow senior centers with separate funding streams from existing work at AL TSA.</p> <p>Bruce suggested including senior centers in estate planning for older adults, similar to the 1-800-CARS-4-KIDS model. Mary-Anne appreciated this idea and shared that endowments are discussed, though some centers lack staff to support these efforts.</p>
<p>DAC, Rate Setting Board Update</p>	<p>Georgiann Dustin provided a brief update on the Dementia Action Collaborative (DAC) and Consumer Directed Employer (CDE) Rate Setting Board.</p>
<p>Excellence in Action Update</p>	<p>Bruce Dougherty reviewed the nominations for the Excellence in Action Awards. David Duttry, nominated through Pierce County ADR, has been a volunteer in the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) since 2022. He routinely responds to concerns and questions from 4 assigned Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF) with a total of 560 beds. He has logged 157 hours visiting assigned facilities.</p> <p>Susan Kingsbury Comeau, Director for Mt. Si Senior Center, was also nominated. Her local senior center oversees over 27,000 active check-ins by older adults and has served over 11,000 meals. Susan manages employees and budget. She is a board member of Snoqualmie Valley Health Foundation and Nonprofit Insurance Alliance.</p> <p>The motion to approve the nominations as presented passed. Ron discussed that these were to be presented at the Fall Conference following a discussion with Walt Bowen.</p>
<p>Break</p>	
<p>SHIBA Presentation</p>	<p>Tim Smolen, State Health Insurance Benefits Advisors, OIC</p> <p>Dennis Wheeler introduced Tim Smolen, SHIBA Manager at the OIC, whose work focuses on program development and budget operations. The OIC recently announced a 10% increase in premiums, with open enrollment approaching.</p> <p>Tim provided an overview of SHIBA, noting that open enrollment for Medicare is critical; SHIBA helped about 45,000 people last year. He emphasized the importance of objective conversations about Medicare options.</p>



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	<p>SHIBA offers free, impartial advice with an average appointment time of 45 minutes, considering the context of each individual's life and priorities.</p> <p><i>Medicare Changes:</i> Mandatory notices for Medicare plan recipients are due on September 24th. Many plans may exit their counties or the state, potentially affecting tens to hundreds of thousands of people.</p> <p>There are significant changes in Medicare due to the Inflation Reduction Act, including a \$2,000 limit on out-of-pocket spending for prescription drug coverage. Tim urged recipients to review coverage options and documents.</p> <p><i>Impact on Older Adults:</i> There are an increasing number of seniors living alone and isolated. Tim's call to action is to engage in conversations about Medicare coverage. He noted that around 30% of people review their coverage, but only half of those take action. Many low-income older adults are eligible for benefits and are not enrolled, potentially missing out on \$175/month in their Social Security checks.</p> <p>Dennis Wheeler highlighted that senior centers are ideal locations for SHIBA to provide technical assistance and support. Tim acknowledged the ongoing partnership with Lynwood Senior Center and the potential for senior centers to host public presentations.</p> <p>Suone Cotner asked about ways to contact individuals about providers exiting the state. Tim responded that SHIBA will organize public presentations but will not reach out to individuals directly.</p>
Partner Updates	<p>Cathy Knight, W4A State Director Cathy Knight agreed with Tim about linking the SHIBA program to the W4A website to increase traffic. AAAs also provide support in insurance benefits information and redirect to SHIBA.</p> <p><i>WA Cares:</i> AAAs are heavily involved in implementing, contracting, and working with the provider network. There is concern over I-2124; W4A, as a 501(c)(4), can advocate against it.</p>



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Cathy encouraged [joining W4A's action alerts](#) list for updates and advocacy efforts. Funding through AAAs is for outreach and sharing positive benefits, though it is not appropriate for AAAs to speak out about the initiative.

Fall Advocacy Day Agenda Topics:

Funding is crucial, as ALTSA is requesting around \$32M for nutrition programming. If not included in the Governor's budget, W4A/Advocates will need to advocate for it.

Cathy reviewed the draft agenda with Council, including

- 10:00 AM: Welcome
- 10:05 AM: Lynn Kimball, Legislative Chair and USAging Board Member
 - Discuss W4A's 25 legislative agenda items and the relationship between state and federal funding.
- Panel Discussion:
 - Claire Lane from the hunger coalition.
 - Nutrition providers and clients.
- Bea - broad ALTSA requests, including the Multi-Sector Plan on Aging, the next governor summit, Age/Dementia Friendly work, and advocate engagement.
- SCOA EIA Announcement - moved to Senior Lobby Day.
- National Perspective and OAA Reauthorization
 - Amy Gotwals from USAging discussed the likelihood of a continuing resolution.
- The Power of Advocacy – Breakout Topics:
 - Advocacy 101
 - Brain health/dementia friends
 - Poverty reduction advocacy (estate recovery, WA Cares/I-2124)
 - Social engagement
 - Senior centers
- Closing Remarks.

Cathy expected over 100 attendees and aimed to cover a wide range of topics. She confirmed the event will be virtual, with the capability to record the main session but not the breakouts.



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2025 Meeting Schedule	Council reviewed the draft 2025 meeting schedule. Jean Kindem requested to meet in-person once next year. Council discussed February's schedule, with Senior Lobby Day on the 20 th and the regular SCOA meeting on the 25 th .
Legislative, Outreach, Advocacy Committee	<p>Ron Vivion, Chair of the Legislative/Outreach/Advocacy Committee (LOA) reviewed the Senior Center Advisory letter. Much of the information in the original draft has been cleaned up to the current draft. Georgiann complimented the work done on the letter.</p> <p>Ron reviewed the content of the letter, which requests the establishment of an office responsible for tracking and building capacity for Senior Centers, with a budget to pilot a program in Snohomish County.</p> <p>Council passed a motion to send the advisory letter to the state government, after a call for discussion.</p>
AL TSA Update	<p>Bea Rector, AL TSA Assistant Secretary Bea provided an overview of her topics to discuss, with a main focus on the budget. Significant efforts are being devoted to the budget and a stakeholder letter was sent last week.</p> <p>AL TSA proposed its budget request to the Governor's Office which is a preliminary step; the agency proposes maintenance and policy asks, which go to the governor's office and then to the legislature.</p> <p>Maintenance Level: this request covers the budget necessary for existing obligations, including caseload growth, changes in federal requirements, and collective bargaining agreements. The total ask for maintenance is \$1.6B for the biennium. This includes funding for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with new Final Rules. • Addressing caseload growth. • Rate adjustments by RSB, totaling \$721M for CDE/HCA/AFH rates. <p>Caseloads are increasing, leading to a tight budget forecast. The Governor's budget will be released in December.</p> <p>Policy Level: Includes new items and rate changes not mandated by statute or federal requirements Total policy asks are \$723M, as detailed in the stakeholder memo. Specific policy requests include:</p>



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1. Multisector Plan on Aging.
2. Person-Centered Technology: focus on assistive devices to address caregiver shortages and help individuals remain at home. This includes remote monitoring, caregiving, and assistive devices to maintain independence.
3. Adult Protective Services (APS):
 - Investigate abuse, neglect, and exploitation, including self-neglect.
 - Need to improve the way we work with those being investigated for self-neglect, build rapport and trust, and assess the need for guardianship.

Other requests include:

- Additional housing supports and rental subsidies as an effective support method.
- Spousal Waiver: proposal to allow waivers for spouses to become paid providers, historically not permitted.
- Reduce case management ratios for AAAs and HCS from 75 to 72:1 to provide parity with DDA's ratio.
- Rate Increases:
 - Assisted Living Facility Rates: Need for better support for Medicaid residents.
 - Nurse Delegates: Ensure rates are on par with other nursing services to avoid institutional care.
- Senior Nutrition: last big ask which addresses funding cliff due to the end of one-time federal funding and ensure continued access to meals and raise Medicaid rates for HDMs.
- WA Cares: related to hiring FTEs for assessments and IT support, launching in 2026. Funding will come from the LTSS Trust Account.

Bruce asked if Bea could comment on facility rates. Bea noted that the budget request for ALFs is to match AFH rates (move to ~95% from ~80%). The requested funding for skilled nursing facilities is to transition to PDPM (an acuity-based rate model).

Bruce suggested establishing a long-term speaking schedule to identify areas of interest moving forward. Bea expressed interest in continuing work on MPA, DAC, State Plans, and AAA plans in future Aging Summits. Bea noted SCOA and AAAs helped conduct local forums in 2016.



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Election of Officers	<p>Dennis Wheeler presented the slate of officers nominated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair: Michele Blythe • Vice Chair: Bruce Dougherty • Secretary: Suone Cotner <p>Georgiann asked about the role of the secretary. Bruce explained that the secretary manages and makes the official record of meetings, assists with agendas, and oversees the official record of the body.</p> <p>Ron Vivion opened the floor for additional nominations. Jean Kindem suggested the need for more coverage across the state and nominated Bob Scarfo for more representation. Bob declined the nomination but thanked Jean for the acknowledgment.</p> <p>Ron recommended a vote for the slate of officers nominated—Council voted unanimously to approve the slate as presented.</p>		
New Business/Public Comment	Council adjourned the meeting at 11:57am.		
ACTION ITEMS		Assignee	Due Date
Send Advisory Letter to State Leadership, Governor		Cameron	ASAP