



Washington State Council on Aging

Meeting Title: 2024 March Washington State Council on Aging Meeting

Date: 03/26/2024

Location: Zoom

	Members Present	Appointment		Members Present	Appointment
✓	Jean Kindem	At-Large East		Vacant	Association of Counties
✓	Gavin Carmichael	AAAD Southwest 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	✓	Susan Kerr	Kitsap AAA Advisory Council
	Vacant	NWRC Advisory Council		Vacant (Melissa Howtopat)	Yakama Golden Eagle Advisory Council
✓	Deb Murphy	Central AAA		Guests Present	
✓	Michele Horaney	Lewis Mason Thurston AAA Advisory Council	✓	Cathy Knight	W4A
✓	Ron Vivion	At-Large West	✓	Walt Bowen	Senior Lobby
	Vacant (Michael Adusah sitting in)	ADS King County Advisory Council	✓	Georgiann Dustin	Guest
✓	Bob Scarfo	Aging & Long-Term Care Eastern Washington Advisory Council	✓	Bea Rector	ALTSA
	Sen. Karen Keiser	WA State Senate	✓	Melanie McGuire	ALTSA
✓	Michele Blythe	Association of Cities	✓	Cameron Akita	ALTSA
✓	Stephanie Carpenter	Southeast WA Aging and Long-Term Care	✓	Annie Moua / Darrelyn Nuesca	ALTSA
	Rep. Tarra Simmons	WA House of Representatives	✓	Susan Engels	ALTSA
✓	Bruce Dougherty	Pierce County Aging & Disability Resources Advisory Board	✓	Andrea Meewes Sanchez	ALTSA
✓	Karen Kiessling	At-Large East			



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Topic	Key Points and/or Decisions Made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome/Introductions 	<p>Vice-Chairperson Dennis Wheeler called the meeting to order at 9:00am.</p> <p>Motion to approve February meeting minutes was approved.</p>
<p>LTSS Waiver Renewal: New Freedom</p>	<p>Annie Moua and Darrelyn Nuesca, HCBS Waiver and New Freedom Program Managers at AL TSA provided an update on the LTSS Waiver renewal process. The New Freedom Waiver is renewed every 5 years and receives stakeholder feedback with each renewal.</p> <p>New Freedom Program: a budget-based program that provides clients the opportunity to choose from a variety of services and programs. Eligibility criteria is set under federal program requirements, and it is currently operating in King and Pierce Counties. To be eligible, a participant must have income at or below 300% of the Federal Benefit Rate.</p> <p>Available Services: participants can use their budget for various services within their care plan. Choices include personal assistance, environmental modifications, home-delivered meals, vehicle modifications, and training/education. Popular options are massage, hearing aids, dentures/dental work, incontinence supplies, diabetic supplies, and transportation.</p> <p>Expansion and Funding: The program aims to expand to new areas. Unlike other programs (e.g., MTP), New Freedom hasn't received immediate federal funding. AAAs (Area Agencies on Aging) can choose whether to participate.</p> <p>Gavin Carmichael shared that he would discuss expanding the program with Southwest WA's AAA. Annie shared that waiver currently covers only King/Pierce counties and must be included in the application to CMS. If other areas want to join, AL TSA can submit a waiver amendment. Some AAAs have expressed hesitancy towards this program in the past decade, but changes have been made to WA's Administrative Code to address concerns.</p>



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	<p>Representative Chambers asked about the rate clients would be eligible for. Darrelyn explained that clients have a budget (e.g., 100 hours) for personal care. Unused hours convert to a dollar amount (up to \$3,500) for other services. Exceptions can be requested for larger budget items.</p> <p>Suone Cotner asked if this renewal is offered to all AAAs. Darrelyn confirmed that AAAs have been informed through W4A, with some interest coming from Eastern WA.</p> <p>Bruce Dougherty asked how many active clients there were in King/Pierce Counties. Darrelyn responded that there were roughly 375-425 clients.</p> <p>Annie Moua provided an overview of the COPES and Residential Support Waivers (RSW) which support clients through wraparound services. COPES and RSW have already been approved by CMS, and New Freedom is up for renewal next year.</p> <p>Ron Vivion commented that these waivers must demonstrate they provide a cost savings to CMS and show the innovation of WA's LTSS system.</p>
WA Cares Update	<p>Andrea Meewes Sanchez, Office Chief of WA Cares Fund Policy and Planning introduced herself to the Council.</p> <p>It was an exciting legislative session. The LTSS Commission made updates to WA Cares, including provisions for portability. Good news: Portability was approved. Individuals who have paid into the program for 3 years can access benefits even if they leave the state.</p> <p>WA Cares is tracking Initiative 2124, which will be on the fall ballot to make the program optional. Advocacy is crucial to emphasize the program's importance. Actuaries have worked on solvency concerns and WA Cares has engaged Milliman for rate studies comparing Medicaid rates to private pay rates.</p> <p>Karen Kiessler inquired about the sense around the upcoming initiative. Andrea noted that there are many unknowns and a lot of stakeholder support for the program. If the I-2124 passes (providing and</p>



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	<p>opt-out option) WA Cares will have plan and continue to support clients. Karen shared that SCOA needs to consider activities to take on these updates.</p> <p>Michele Horaney asked if any changes have been seen in stakeholding since the legislative session. Andrea noted that public presentations have become much more positive in people understanding why the program exists. A couple years ago, more negativity existed while the LTC insurance opt out was happening.</p> <p>Karen noted that people originally saw the benefit as a small amount thinking it was intended for residential care, not realizing that funds were for home and community-based services. Andrea added that WA Cares benefits act as a bridge to support long-term care needs, not as a solution to all LTC needs.</p>
DAC Update	<p>Georgian Dustin, Northwest Regional Council Advisory Council Member and member of the Dementia Action Collaborative (DAC) provided a brief update on the DAC.</p> <p>The DAC has 3 committees that support the group. The DAC website provides resources and support for those interested. Lynne Korte, Dementia Care Program Manager at AL TSA, helps to update all this information.</p> <p>The DAC has two upcoming webinars on May 8 and June 4. Georgiann will provide more information when it is available. One topic to be discussed will be the DAC State Plan.</p>
Aging/Longevity Summit	<p>Bob Scarfo, designated as SCOA's representative on the Aging & Longevity Summit planning committee, expressed his gratitude to be a part of the planning. He also acknowledged the work Nina Banken, AL TSA's Strategic Planning Manager is doing to plan this event.</p> <p>Event Details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scheduled for May 22nd.• Invitation-only attendance.• Uncertain if the event will be recorded. <p>Kickoff and Vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The event will look back to the 2013 Original Aging Summit.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor and First Lady Inslee will set the tone, encouraging attendees to envision the future. <p>Attendees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top leaders, government officials, legislators, AAAs, state agencies, and local governments will participate. <p>Action-Oriented Follow-Up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A follow-up meeting is planned to focus on actionable steps. <p>Adapting to New Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with unprecedented events requires innovative approaches. • Office structures may need to evolve. <p>Multi-Sector Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Multi-Sector Plan will be a central topic throughout the day. <p>Invited Guests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 180 guests are on the list. • Includes JLEC members, Governor’s office, LTSS Commission, academics, ACHs, and state patrol. <p>Michele Horaney expressed hope for the meeting being open for viewing. Other council members expressed surprise in the Summit being invite only and hoped it would be more inclusive. Walt Bowen noted that he is working with TVW to get the Summit televised. The event will take place in Tacoma at Rustin.</p>
<p>Legislative/Outreach/Advocacy Committee Discussion</p>	<p>Ron Vivion expressed gratitude to Rep. Chambers for her work during the last session, acknowledging the overwhelming amount of information reviewed. He shared that Karen is writing thank-you notes to local representatives and encouraged everyone to communicate with local representatives to thank them for their work. It is important to know who represents you and that they know your interests.</p> <p>Susan Conniry reported that in Ocean Shores, they have hired a consultant representative and emphasized the need to work on Legislative Priorities.</p> <p>Michele Horaney raised a question about combining three committees into one.</p>



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	<p>Ron expressed interest in committee work outside regular meetings and proposed a separate focused committee discussion.</p> <p>Michele Horaney, with a background in public relations and HOA leadership, highlighted the importance of aligning written bylaws with actions.</p> <p>Suone Cotner thanked Michele for noting these considerations and requested a thank-you template for legislators from Karen.</p> <p>Karen thanked individual local leaders for their work on bills and commended their civility across the aisle. She suggested sending a letter as an attachment via email.</p> <p>Ron drafted a letter to thank legislators for their work during the session, on behalf of the Chair (letter shared and reviewed on the Zoom call). Karen inquired about the procedure for sending the letter. Ron explained the process but noted that no action has been taken yet. Ron moved to send the thank you letter to the legislature. Karen wished to discuss the letter on the table to review if it was appropriate to send and motioned to table the letter. The motion was seconded and carried (two opposed to tabling the sending of the letter).</p> <p>Dennis Wheeler commented on the Dementia Planning toolkit that he received last week, which includes a healthcare directive, durable power of attorney, and mental health directive.</p> <p>Karen shared that she would need to be out the rest of the meeting following the break.</p>
Break	
Partner Updates	<p>Cathy Knight, W4A State Director</p> <p>Cathy provided an update following the legislative session. She was grateful to see \$12M was funded for Senior Nutrition. The ask was for \$15M, the Governor's proposed \$7M. These are one-time only so will need to continue advocating for ongoing funds.</p>



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Proviso language and sponsors for additional case managers did not succeed. Previously, there was funding for caseload support, but now there's a need for support for those without caregivers. The Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) has secured funding for lowering caseloads.

Cathy highlighted the importance of the New Freedom program, emphasizing that clients need more support. AAAs play a crucial role in balancing the program. If advocating for this program at an AAA, it's essential to stress the need for caseload support.

Cathy shared that AAAs can also share many resources provided by the DAC.

WA Cares: W4A sends a weekly email. Advocates are encouraged to amplify messages from the WA Cares email through advocacy alerts. The program focuses on portability and had positive outcomes during the session. AAAs are receiving funding for implementation and will have responsibilities for local contracts with the provider network. There is a strong partnership between AAAs and the State/WA Cares team. AAA directors can also be consulted for more information.

Ageing Summit: The plan is to replicate the 2013 summit and bring forward the work ahead. The summit's focus will be on the next governor's responsibilities, and AARP will likely seek a commitment from the next governor. Many State Agency representatives will attend to collaborate across departments and address aging-related issues. The goal is to make decisions that impact policy and the next administration. Each AAA Director and the Chair of SCOA will receive invitations.

USAging Policy briefing: reviewed discussions that took place with Senator Cantwell and Senator Murray's staff. The importance of the Older Americans Act (OAA) was emphasized, along with the role of funding and AAAs in supporting local communities. Title IIIB supportive services dollars are crucial for additional funding, given the wide range of services provided. Advocacy efforts should focus on protecting funding, as maintaining the current level is effectively a cut considering population increases.

OAA Reauthorization: ALISA (Aging and Long-Term Support Administration) will engage in conversations about implementing changes and priorities under the Act. There's a push for greater flexibility in Nutrition programs.



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Ron expressed interest in exploring a potential new title for Senior Centers. Cathy was surprised by Senator Sanders' request at the committee, especially considering the absence of USAging's presence during the ask. Cathy sees this as problematic and is uncertain about the proposal's trajectory. Historically, priorities have centered around services, so creating a separate title might divert attention away from those services.

Dennis reached out to his AAA to discuss changes in the OAA for 2024. Cathy discussed collaborating with Susan to dig into these changes. Susan mentioned that ACL (Administration for Community Living) is working on Final Rule implementation and is also looking toward reauthorization, which may occur by the end of this year (sometimes extended). The Final Rule compliance deadline is set for October 1, 2025.

Walt Bowen, Senior Lobby

The Senior Lobby presented its final report at the last meeting.

The new Broadband Office director's insights are eagerly anticipated.

April is Social Security Month, and some counties have over 60% of their population aged 65 and older.

Preparations are underway for the Fall Conference. Further details will be provided as they become available. The event may be in person.

The next legislative session will be dynamic and exciting with the Aging Summit, a new governor, and many new legislators. Senator Keiser announced her retirement. There will be an opportunity to educate many new elected officials.

Cathy Knight shared that AARP is actively involved in WA Cares. Making WA Cares an opt-in program would effectively destroy it. The coalition and AARP will educate voters on the implications of their vote.



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Member Association Updates	<p>Bruce Dougherty reported on Pierce County’s Advisory Council (AC) meeting, which discussed continuity of operations plans during emergencies.</p> <p>The Council discussed previously tabled discussion on the thank you letter to the legislature. Dennis proposed sending the current bylaws and RCW (Revised Code of Washington) to members to demonstrate that sending the letter is within the Council’s purview. Michele Blythe pointed out that this would be the second letter to legislators, emphasizing that it complies with bylaws and speaks to advocacy. Ron discussed the question asked of whether the council is authorized to send letters to entities other than the Governor and DSHS/ALTSA leadership which led to a discussion about holding a separate meeting to review the authority of SCOA. Michele Blythe discussed the potential to act on sending the letter. Deb noted that the earlier vote was to table for further discussion.</p> <p>Council moved, seconded, and passed the motion to send the thank you letter to the 2024 legislature with 7 in favor, 3 opposed.</p>
ALTSA Update	<p>Debrief of Legislative Session: Three pieces of request legislation (RL) successfully passed and were signed yesterday. 5802: Adopted new CMS acuity-based data, replacing the RUGS system, for the Patient-Driven Payment Model (PDPM). The transition from one system to another was smooth. An amendment to the original bill ensured collaboration with impacted stakeholders, which was the intent all along. 5811: Expanded the definition of family members, correcting a technical error from 2023. In-laws are now included. Continuing education (CE) topics are available and responsive to the needs of individuals.</p> <p>Fair Labor Standards Legislation: Family members in and out of care plans are not subject to disciplinary action.</p> <p>LTSS Trust (House Bill 2467): Makes the WA Cares LTC insurance portable, following an important recommendation from the LTSS Commission.</p> <p>Senior Nutrition received \$12M funding.</p> <p>Affordable Housing: The shift from nursing homes to in-home settings has been ongoing for decades.</p>



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Residential caseloads have remained relatively stable until recently. There has been a rise in in-home settings, possibly due to higher housing costs. Additional funding for residential assistance was provided.

WA Cares: Funding was provided for expansion and portability, and IT development for the consumer portal.

ASL Interpreters: Considering ways to expand opportunities for interpreters in Washington State.

Guardianship Bill: Expanded the Office of Public Guardianship (OPG).

Despite being a short session, it yielded significant policy changes and important funding. Looking ahead to 2025, ALTSA is working on request legislation (RL) and early budget discussions for the agency. Stakeholder planning dates in July will facilitate discussions about agency RL and budget priorities.

Deb asked why there was a shortage of interpreters in the state. Bea shared that there were several reasons, including insufficient supply to meet the demand and a lack of a pipeline for training and certification. Unlike Oregon, there is no 4-year school where individuals can major in American Sign Language (ASL). Bea shared that Earnest Covington leads the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) at ALTSA as a point of contact.

Bruce shared his appreciation for the many ALTSA presentations he has sat in on and would like to explore more programs with ALTSA leadership. Bea noted the subject matter expertise of many programs, office chiefs, and division directors that can be reached. Many programs and populations are growing in need of services within every division.

Ron raised the question discussed earlier regarding SCOA's authority to thank legislators for their work. Bea noted that she did not see an issue with sending a thank you letter, also acknowledging that specific questions on authority come up. Boards and Commissions are also a good resource for this.

Council thanked Bea for her update and the meeting adjourned at 12:01pm.



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ACTION ITEMS	Assignee	Due Date
Contact AAAs with SCOA member vacancies	Cameron Akita	April meeting
Send Thank You letter to legislators	Cameron Akita	