

**Maryland Commission on Aging
Video Conference
June 3, 2020 • 10 – 11 AM
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present:

Rose Maria Li, Chair

Paula Blackwell

Joy Hatchette

Barry Liden

Jay Magaziner

George Rebok

Carmel Roques

Sharon Saunders

Allen Tien

Hon. Benjamin Kramer

Hon. Kathy Szeliga (represented by Joan Lebo, Legislative Assistant)

Members Absent:

John Haaga

David Roth

Staff:

Rona E. Kramer, Secretary, Maryland Department of Aging

Grace Fielhauer, Director, Communities for Life, and Legislative Liaison

Guests:

Rebecca Lazeration, Associate, Rose Li and Associates, Inc.

Derek Smith, Associate, Rose Li and Associates, Inc.

Greetings:

Dr. Li welcomed members, including new member Paula Blackwell. The minutes from the April 1 meeting were approved unanimously by those present.

Secretary Remarks:

Secretary Kramer noted that the Maryland Department of Aging has been busy during the past months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Nutrition and Meal

Services program saw a dramatic rise in services requested. Since the onset of the pandemic, the program has seen a 500 percent increase in meals provided and 265 percent increase in clients served. Secretary Kramer praised the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA's) for doing a wonderful job keeping up with the increased demand. A recent condition by Federal funders requires AAA's to spend at least 40 percent of the emergency Federal funding at local restaurants. This condition benefits the local economy by supporting small businesses, reduces the strain on food banks, and gives seniors a greater variety of foods to sample.

The Senior Call Check program increased membership from 180 participants before the pandemic to 1,080 current participants. In addition to daily recorded calls, Senior Call Check participants now receive at least one live call each week, with additional live calls performed as needed. Live calls are performed by AmeriCorps volunteers or Department of Aging staff members. Callers are trained to measure behavioral health, evaluate for depressive symptoms, assess physical or psychosocial needs, evaluate nutritional or medication needs, identify potential domestic violence, and connect seniors with any necessary services.

The Maryland Caregiver Services Corps (CSC) was created at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to quickly deploy volunteers and other resources to the homes of seniors who need urgent assistance with everyday tasks when their typical caregiver becomes unable due to COVID-19 exposure, illness, or other challenges. Older adults in need of caregiving services, or their family, can dial 2-1-1 to connect to the 24/7 multilingual CSC help center. Help center volunteers are trained to triage the caller's needs and identify potential matches for volunteers from the Maryland Responds Medical Reserve Corps Network. The CSC has served 52 individuals as of last week. Secretary Kramer has recorded public service announcements (PSAs) to publicize the program to a wider audience.

Secretary Kramer thanked Grace Fielhauer for her hard work improving and expanding the Community for Life (CFL) program. The program is expected to add three new jurisdictions before the end of the current fiscal year. Current CFL centers have shifted focus from providing transportation and related services to providing grocery and medication assistance. Some CFLs have offered members the option to suspend membership payments temporarily during the pandemic. All CFL centers are regularly sending gift packages to their members, containing items such as hand sanitizer, wipes, toilet paper, and treats.

Secretary Kramer recently recorded the third series of PSAs for the CFL program. The series consists of one longer video (7-8 minutes) and 13 shorter clips (30 seconds). The longer videos are played at nursing homes, hospitals, and similar venues. The shorter clips are used in other media settings, including the Senior Call Check calls. The second series' longer video has received 27,000 views on YouTube. Interested parties can learn more at the Department of Aging or Department of Health websites.

The Durable Medical Equipment program completed warehouse outfitting on time and on budget. However, program launch has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to logistical issues of the pandemic, when the program launches, equipment pick-up will only be available at the warehouse. However, numerous drop-off centers will be available throughout the state.

Secretary Kramer remarked on the role that the Department of Aging has played in the advocacy of nursing home residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nursing homes are regulated by the Department of Health. Secretary Kramer is meeting daily with the state ombudsman to discuss adjustments to services. For example, unable to perform in-person meetings, the state ombudsman is participating in video conferencing and telephone calls with residents and family members to address concerns. Secretary Kramer announced that the state completed testing every resident and staff member at all congregate living facilities. Asymptomatic infected staff members were identified and placed in quarantine. Temporary staff shortages were relieved by medical staff from the National Guard or local hospitals. To continue timely response to nursing home needs, Secretary Kramer has asked the Nursing Home Oversight Committee (which she chairs) to meet on a monthly (instead of quarterly) basis for the duration of the pandemic.

Secretary Kramer will testify before the Senate Finance Committee the week of June 8. She looks forward to providing updates on the work and accomplishments of the Department of Aging.

Review of Communities for Life (CFL) Service Navigator Training

Drs. Li and Saunders conducted an initial review of the CFL Service Navigator training course developed by McDaniel College. The course originally consisted of eight modules, requiring approximately 40 hours of coursework to be completed over a period of 8 weeks. Reviews from participants indicated that the coursework took too long to complete. To address these concerns, Drs. Li and Saunders

drafted a report of recommendations for revising the training. They are proposing to reduce the syllabus to five modules, requiring approximately 12 hours (1.5 days) of coursework and 16 hours of on-the-job training. The revised coursework permits the Introduction to Gerontology module to be an optional module for individuals with prior gerontology experience. Dr. Li invited interested Commissioners to submit comments or questions about the draft report prior to June 9, 2020. She expected that the Commissioners would also have a chance to review the revised modules when they become available.

Update on Communities for Life Review

In Fall 2019, Drs. Rebok and Magaziner, co-chairs of the CFL Review activity, identified students Jennifer Baker and Rhea Mehta to assist with the review, including conducting qualitative interviews. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the students were unable to complete the interviews within the academic year. While both Ms. Baker and Mehta have expressed interest in assisting with the CFL review when it resumes, their availability to assist is tentative. Drs. Rebok and Magaziner will share the project needs with the new cohort of students to determine if any students are interested in assisting. Interviews will occur when centers reopen. Dr. Magaziner announced that Dr. Saunders has joined Drs. John Haaga and David Roth as CFL review committee members.

Additional Items for Discussion

Dr. Roques asked whether the emergency programs to assist older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic would continue to receive funding after the pandemic. Secretary Kramer explained that the Federal emergency funding for the programs is secure through August 31, 2020. At that point, other funding opportunities may be considered to continue the programs if necessary.

Dr. Li presented potential topics for the two remaining 2020 Commission on Aging calls. She mentioned the potential for inviting Dr. Vanya Jones (JHU) to speak on mobility and injury prevention and Dr. Quincy Samus (JHU) to speak on her work with the MEMORI Corps program delivered by trained older volunteers to help caregivers assist older person with dementia. Commissioners confirmed interest to return to the usual format of 2-hour meetings to accommodate a guest speaker.

Dr. Roques expressed interest in discussing initiatives leveraging volunteers for in-home caregiving. For example, Maryland Responds Medical Reserve Corps volunteers are used exclusively for in-home caregiving because they undergo background checks and are covered by liability insurance. Dr. Roques raised the

concern that families are increasingly expected to care for older adults who are living longer than ever before and require often complex care.

Dr. Tien noted that there is a need for better services, including in-home services, in the wake of staff shortages associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. He cited the Social Determinants of Health Taskforce for Baltimore City, led by the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), as a volunteer program seeking to identify and implement solutions to health inequities due to social determinants.

Future Meetings:

The next scheduled meetings are set for September 16 and November 18, 2020. The site visit to Keswick is no longer planned for CY2020 and will be considered in CY2021.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 AM