

MINUTES

JOINT MEETING

NUTRITION ADVISORY COUNCIL AND ADVISORY COUNCIL ON AGING

FRIDAY, APRIL 29, 2005

PUBLIC AGENCY CENTER, ROOM 1000 A

THOSE PRESENT: Linda Olson, Mary Secor, Carol Bennett, Rudolph Tonz, Shirley Larisch, Catherine McCaffrey, Jim McCaffrey, Ruth Miskinis, Evelyn Thiemer, Barbara Blair, Cheryl Gray, Benefit Specialist OOA, Kathy Beimborn, Aging Services Worker OOA

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m. by Chairman Dorothy Blumer

NOTICE OF POSTING

Notice of posting was given by Linda Olson

APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 15, 2004 MINUTES

There being no additions or corrections, minutes of the October 15, 2004 meeting were approved as presented by Chairperson Blumer

CHERYL GRAY, BENEFIT SPECIALIST, OFFICE ON AGING

Cheryl Gray, Benefit Specialist, Office on Aging distributed information about Washington County's plan pertaining to Medicare Part D and what areas OOA may need assistance. Medicare Part D deals with prescription drug benefits. OOA staff will be trained to assist clients regarding Part D. Limited information from the government has been made available thus far. This will be a huge undertaking.

Medicare Part D will go into effect on January 1, 2006. Open enrollment will be from November 15, 2005 – May 15, 2006. After May 15, 2006 a penalty phase will be activated. There will be a penalty of one percent per month increase of whatever the current premium is when an individual enrolls. The initial monthly premium will be \$35.00 – \$38.00 per month. This will be in addition to any premiums for Medicare Part A and Part B.

There will be several cards to choose from with Medicare Part D. The cards will be similar to the current Medicare discount cards, in that they will determine what prescriptions are covered and at what pharmacy.

There will be a \$250 yearly deductible with all cards. After the deductible is met you pay 25% of your yearly drug costs from \$250 - \$2,250, and your plan pays the other 75% of these costs. Then, you pay 100% of your drug costs from \$2,251 until your out-of-pocket costs reach \$3,600. You then pay 5% of your drug costs (or a small co-payment) for the rest of the calendar year after you have spent \$3,600 out-of-pocket and your plan pays the rest.

There will be low income, retirees, and Medicare Advantage plans. There will be different benefit levels in each category.

The government has given each county funds to do outreach. OOA will have extra people help and has contracted Senior Law Attorney Jennie Pinnow. Ms. Pinnow will be assisting OOA and will make flyers to hand out. OOA will also work with Social Security to set up a plan of action to get the word out.

The time frame begins on May 22, 2005. CMS (Center of Medicare and Medicaid Services) will send out letters nationwide to beneficiaries. Then beginning May 27, 2005, Social Security will send out applications to low-income Medicare beneficiaries.

There will be a big push to reach low income people. Social Security has 56 days after May 28, 2005, to get letters and/or applications sent. Letters will be sent out in order of Social Security numbers. Letters will go out in batches at different times.

Catherine McCaffrey asked about calls she has been receiving from Financial Advisors. Cheryl recommended not talking to anyone like that at this time. Cheryl is concerned that if you don't get in by May 2006, you will be penalized for not enrolling. According to the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 a Medicare supplement cannot sell prescription drug coverage. Retiree coverage is excluded and this will help. Financial planners are not trained by the government and we should be cautious. It will not be known what cards will be available until mid-October 2005. There is protection for low income people.

The letter being sent out in May is an application form for a subsidy. There are three groups of people who the government is paying for premiums and deductible. Also, their co-pays will not be 25 percent. The co-pay can be \$1.00 - \$3.00 depending on their income.

Social Security will give out award letters to inform people what help can be received. The deadline for these people to enroll is November 15, 2005. If they do not enroll by the end of December 2005, the government will enter them into a card. They cannot change the card until a later date.

All in all, the "break even" point is that if an individual spends \$67.50 a month on their medications, they will break even. Individuals with higher monthly costs for medications are the ones to benefit from this. You are actually paying in the event that you will need it some day. This doesn't make it any easier to afford.

You must enroll or you will be penalized 1 percent per month. The premium will come off before you receive your Social Security check. If you are enrolled in the Medicare Advantage – Medicare Complete, Humana Gold choice and Smart Value, this may serve as your card. Information will be sent this fall to current enrollees.

Cheryl explained that there will be a series of information coming out a little at a time. Cheryl asked the Council members to let people know when there are presentations, they need to be there. We must also reach the home bound - long term care, group homes, assisted living and anyone on Medicare.

It is still not known what will happen to SeniorCare. There will be funding to June 30, 2007. However, it is not known if it will be credible coverage.

Individuals should get letters from their current drug plans that show their coverage and that it is as good or better than Medicare. They will need to provide this letter to prove that they had this coverage, so they will not receive a penalty, even five years later. If they don't get the letter, they will receive a 12 percent a year penalty if they wait to enroll.

Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit referred to as Part D. This is Part D and is referred to as both. Dual eligibles on Title 19 will be enrolled automatically because as of January 1, 2006, Title 19 will not exist and Medicare Part D comes in. It will already be known that these people are low income and have low assets. There are three groups of people who are eligible: 1) Dual Eligibles 2) Medicare Premium Assistance Programs 3) Limited incomes based on % of Federal Poverty Level and assets.

If you are covered by a company you will get a letter to show your coverage is as good or better. Low income monetary – 1 person gross \$9,570 annually, 2 people \$12,830 annually. Those people will receive full benefits, meaning premium paid, no deductible, no \$500 out of pocket. They will go from Medical assistance and will only pay \$1-3. Next higher level – Medicare buy in programs 1 person \$9,571 – 12,919.50, 2 people \$12,831 to \$17,320.50.

Assets are also considered - \$6,000 in assets for 1 person and \$9,000 for 2 people. A home and car are exempt. If you have a life insurance policy with a face value of more than \$1,500, then the cash value is considered an asset.

Social Security will only be working on outreach and sending out applications until November 15, 2005. Office on Aging will be going around to all the Senior Centers.

Cheryl will be meeting today with the Social Security office and Jennie Pinnow. Outreach will probably be starting in June. Good people who care will be working on this.

Churches and Advocacy groups will be contacted. Lower income people will try to be reached first. If need be, caregivers will be depended on to help these people discern. County departments will help with outreach and assisted living facilities.

There are exceptions to get meds that people really need. There are appeal avenues. Letters may go out to those who don't actually qualify because only Social Security will be looked at.

Linda Olson requested assistance from the Councils to get the word out in their communities. All subsidized housing and meal sites will be addressed. Staff at hospital discharge planning will be addressed.

Linda also recommended putting off insurance agents for now. Linda asked if the Councils have groups at churches that should be contacted. Information could be put in bulletins when there is a schedule for presentations.

Information on workshops will be put into newspapers and radio stations. The Social Security office will have applications. Cheryl will take applications to presentations. On May 20, 2005 Thrivent will be having a fish fry and flyers could be handed out.

If people receive letter/application and they know they will qualify and they should send it in. Anyone on Medicare will have to consider this.

APPEARANCE BY KATHY BEIMBORN, AGING SERVICES WORKER

Kristen Hosking, Dietitian was not able to attend the meeting. Therefore, Kathy Beimborn, Aging Services Worker, Office on Aging discussed Caregivers Support – Powerful Tools for Caregivers. Kathy helped facilitate a six week class in Hartford. The class gives caregivers, inside or outside of the home, tools to manage emotions and access resources. They met once a week for two and a half hours. They met from February 14 – March 21, 2005. There were five people in the class. The class can take 12 to 15 people at a time.

A Caregivers support group developed as an extension of the first class held in West Bend. There is currently a group in West Bend that meets once a month. It is active and reaches a wide range of caregiving needs. The group also helps caregivers find more care in the home or helps with placement for a loved one and provides continued support.

Betty Koch is the facilitator of this Caregivers Outreach Support Group of Washington County. Bette was recently nominated and accepted to the Caregiver Community Action Network (CCAN) as the Wisconsin Representative. CCAN is a nationwide, volunteer led outreach program of the National Family Caregivers Association (NFCA). Bette is instrumental in obtaining helpful information.

Kathy, along with Karel Bretsch, will be leading another class in the fall. This will be advertised.

In 2004, OOA doubled the amount of people receiving Alzheimer's Caregiving support funding and national support funding. Up to \$4,000 per year can be received to give respite to a caregiver. This can provide 2-3 days a week of Adult Day Care. A caregiver may qualify if their household income is under \$40,000 annually. If their income is \$20,000 or above, they may have a cost share. If a care receiver can't go to Adult Day Care, it is a possibility that home care would be covered.

National Caregivers' funding could be obtained for a vacation respite. This can be paid with no cost share if the household qualifies. Up to 14 days of care can be provided at any facility, up to seven consecutive days at a time.

This assistance gives clients the resources to continue to keep the care receiver at home. Clients have said that if it were not for the respite, they would have had to put their care receiver into a nursing home.

Linda told the Council members that if they knew of anyone who could benefit from Powerful Tools for Caregivers to let the Office on Aging know. The sessions in the fall will be held from 6:00 p.m. -8:30 p.m. in September or October at the Public Agency Center.

REVIEW OF ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Linda asked the Council members if each of them were willing to stay on with the Councils. Ruth Miskinis will ask her Senior Center to present the opportunity for anyone else who might like to be on the Nutritional Advisory Council. There will still be a vacancy for Slinger on the Advisory Council on Aging. Barbara Blair will talk to Janie Krieg, Meal site Manager at the Slinger Senior Dining Center, and have her ask for more help. All Council members in attendance are willing to continue.

The Councils do not meet during the winter months. The Councils meet every other month April – October. It was discussed if the Councils would rather meet once a quarter. Council members do not want to meet in the winter months.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, June 23, 2005, at 1:00 p.m. in Room 1000 A of the Public Agency Center. This will be a joint meeting of the Nutrition Advisory Councils.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The deadline for Senior Conference registration is today. Linda passed out registration forms. Some of the workshops are full. These are "Creative and Easy Cooking", "Confessions of an Aging Male Chauvinist Pig", and "Identify Theft".

Linda needs assistance on the day of the Senior Conference with registration and to hand out Goodie Bags and folders. Carol Bennett, Mary Secor and Shirley Larisch will assist with the Senior Conference on Thursday, May 5, 2005. Linda asked them to arrive by 7:30 a.m. at the Washington County Fair Park Pavilion.

Planning for Senior Day at the Fair is underway. Senior Day will be on Thursday, July 28, 2005. Applications for the "Most Admired Senior Citizen" contest will be sent out to all groups and organizations. Linda asked the Councils to nominate anyone they felt would qualify for the "Most Admired Senior Citizen". Rudy asked if couples could be nominated. Linda responded that couples could be nominated together.

There will be a reduced admission into the fair for seniors during the morning of Senior Day. There are other special activities being planned for that day. Senior Day at the Fair is sponsored by SynergyHealth.

Discussion was held as to Senior Dining facilities in Washington County. Questions regarding sanitation policies and procedures and donation policies were discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion Catherine McCaffrey; second motion Evelyn Thiemer to adjourn the meeting. Motion Carried. Meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.