



Florida Association of
Aging Services Providers

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Florida Association of Aging Services Providers

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Andrea Marsh, Bay County Council on Aging

Message from the President

By Darrell J. Drummond, Council on Aging of St. Lucie, Inc.



I have been a part of the senior network and the provider system for seniors in Florida for more than thirty (30) years. You don't realize how much you don't know until you are faced with having to provide assistance to a family member, only to find there are gaps in your knowledge base and your resource capability.

In past articles, I have often spoke about the independence of my father who is now a spry ninety three years (93). After a recent fall at home, he has needed medical attention at a hospital and currently he is in a rehab center while he regains his strength to be able to return home.

What I have found almost overnight, we have been challenged to find in-home assistance, food preparation, transportation, and

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This Issue's Sponsors



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medical equipment to assist in his ability to remain in his home.

I always assumed that I possess the knowledge of where these services are



available and how to gain access to them for my father. Wrong!!!! What I immediately have come across is the impact of the overwhelmed system that has an enormous waitlist for services and how it leaves families challenged to find assistance in the short term while waiting for assistance from government programs.

We are always advocating to our legislators the need to provide more funding for seniors who are in need of service and not let them languish on waitlists for service delivery. What is more stressing is the fact that contracting for these services independently is very expensive and because of our priority rating system, many times needy seniors are rated low because they are already receiving many of the services privately. Florida's senior population will only grow over time and it is essential that we press our legislators to identify ways to help keep seniors in the least restrictive living environment; it is the best option for the seniors and the most cost effective solution for our public funds.

This month's newsletter is focused on the nutritional program, through the Older American's Act (OAA) that so many seniors rely upon to help meet their nutritional needs. Andrea Marsh, Bay County Council on Aging and Josh Newby, Council on Aging of West Florida, Inc. will provide information on how we are navigating the continued increase in cost for food, thanks to inflation, and the continued effort to revisit how we navigate the program compliance provisions and adapt to the post COVID realization, that there are more efficient options for providing meal service that doesn't overwhelm providers with unnecessary compliance requirements.

Andrea will discuss in detail the history of the OAA program and the positive impact it has had on overall health improvement for seniors since its' passage in 1965. We are currently looking at the reauthorization of the OAA, and Andrea will discuss the impact the reauthorization may have on each of the seven (7) Titles that comprise the OAA.

Please remember that March is National Nutrition Month and the Administration for Community Living (ACL) is celebrating the senior nutrition program with the theme "Connection in Every Bite" this month.

As the legislature moves to finalize their work for this year's session, please be aware of the updates sent out regarding when and where you can be supportive of senior issues and legislation being forwarded on behalf of our seniors. We may ask that you reach out to your local representatives and ask for their support of vital bills being considered for final passage.

Darrell Drummmond

**FASP Member in the News****FASP Board Member Named Business Woman Honoree by Tampa Bay Business Journal**

Paola Bianchi Delp, MHA, MBA, ACHE has been selected as one of thirty women who will be honored in the 2024 Tampa Bay Business Journal's Business Woman of the Year. This award recognizes some of the most dynamic and influential businesswomen in Tampa Bay -- honorees who are industry leaders in banking, law, technology, health care, sports business, construction, and innovation.

More than 200 nominees were submitted for this year's awards and were evaluated for their career trajectory, achievements, and impact on both the organizations and companies they serve as well as the wider Tampa Bay community. The Awards Gala will be held Friday March 29 marking the 20th

anniversary of this event.

With more than 25 years of experience in the healthcare industry, Paola began working with Chapters Health Care as a consultant in 2018 and joined the organization in November 2019. She is the Chief Business Development Officer, President of Chapters Health CareNu, and President of ASSURITY DCE. Paola also serves as an At Large Representative with the Board of Directors for the Florida Association of Senior Living Providers

CareNu, the population health division of Chapters Health System, focuses on the health status and health outcomes for groups of people. It is a quality-based approach to chronic illness management and chronic illness care coordination, specializing in holistic care across the disease continuum.

FASP Executive Director Margaret Lynn Duggar said, "Paola interacts so effectively with her Board-Member colleagues, serving as a mentor, a problem-solver, and a person to challenge their thinking in the most respectful, helpful, innovative, and supportive ways. She has walked in a number of significant healthcare roles that have led her to understand their challenges and opportunities. What Paola brings to her colleagues in FASP – and the hundreds of thousands of elders they serve all across Florida every years – is dialogues and idea exchanges to create the understandings to move this better health care world from a good idea to a reality."



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A More Human Approach to Soaring Prices and Increased Need

By Josh Newby, Council on Aging of West Florida



Inflation has affected us all—from our personal lives and finances, to how we do business, compensate employees, pay vendors and address needs among clients. Much ink has been spilled about the delta that exists between actual economic indicators such as stock yields and bond rates, and consumer sentiment. And while I won't go into the reasons for that here, the fact remains that with cumulative inflation at 8 percent since 2020 and the consumer price index up a whopping 17 percent in the same time frame, well let's just say our meal reimbursement rates haven't exactly kept up.

Complicating matters is the cyclical nature of economic oppression for the most needy. As prices go up, those we serve are able to afford less and thus need us as lead agency service providers more. But our capacity to meet those needs is diminished when state revenues do not match our outgoing expenses. American Rescue Plan money helps, but can only do so much against the treacherous rate-increase process.

Well, if you can't manipulate the revenue side, you have to do what you can on the expense side. With no unified fee schedule statewide, it is up to each lead agency to negotiate independently with their meal provider. The possibility of a unified fee schedule is a two-sided coin and the topic of much debate, but in this particular case, it is advantageous that we do not have one, as it allows us at Council on Aging of West Florida maximum flexibility with our subcontractors. Our contracts and procurement processes require that we go out for bid every three years, with a possible three-year extension built in. I can only speak to our agency's relationship with Trio Community Meals, but this setup works well for us. Nevertheless, we keep relationships with our other providers such as Mom's Meals and GA Foods open so that we can be ready at the end of any contract or amendment period to pivot.

Leveraging free market players against themselves of course leads to lower costs and better outcomes, within reason. In fact, the 2024 meal rates we are charged by Trio actually came in below expectations and below CPI. This allows us to net a little bit more on the revenue side and stretch that dollar a bit further. Every area of the state and every subcontractor is different, of course, but I will say that this is a business relationship that doesn't just happen. It has been cultivated for years by my longtime predecessor and stewarded in the present day by my staff. Organizations such as FASP and the new rate-lookup feature in eCIRTS allow us a broad perspective and a stronger arm in negotiating.

I have spoken with a number of colleagues across the state about their frustrations, and while our agency does not share their frustrations, I certainly empathize with them. In that spirit, humor the following tips and tricks handed down from my predecessor to me:



- Many make the mistake of only communicating with their meal subcontractor at contract time. Instead, keep friendly conversation active throughout the year: provide feedback, solicit advice, use their tools and ask good-faith questions. Most account managers have more leeway with rates than they let on, and it is human nature to help a buddy out.

- Along those lines, keep conversation with

competitors open, too. To my knowledge, they have never indicated that they feel this is a waste of time; on the contrary, they are usually happy to divulge advice and best practices just as a matter of friendliness (and hoping for your eventual business).

- At least initially, go out for bid more than you think you need to. I know it is a pain, especially if you go the selection-by-committee route, but forcing your current provider to respond to RFPs and rejoin the competitive market can be seriously advantageous.
- Cash is king, and admittedly maybe we cannot pay them as much as they would like, but can we contribute to their business model in other ways? Can we provide anonymized data that may help their business? Can you give the account manager free tickets to your annual gala?
- Be honest, to an extent. We are non-profit entities. We help the most vulnerable. Our providers are aware of the challenges we face. Oftentimes we are so cagey and closed-off in the negotiation process that we forget this is another human we are talking to, who probably has parents or grandparents who may be struggling. Use that. Be candid with them. People respond well if they feel you are treating them authentically.
- Finally, and on that point, negotiate! I cannot tell you how many colleagues I have spoken to who simply take bids at face value and don't push back. Be kind, be honest, but be a leader and lead the conversation in a way that demonstrates strength.

It is not easy out there. But using hard data and free market principles in a sincere and human way can go further than you think. It can be wearying, it can be frustrating. We're all just trying to help our clients. But I promise you, your contractors feel the same way.

One of the best pieces of advice I've ever read was in Dale Carnegie's seminal "How to Win Friends and Influence People." In it, Carnegie says, "It's not me versus you; it's us versus the problem." With that reframing in mind, remember that you are not at war with your providers. You are working together with them to serve the most people. Good luck, my friends.

Aging with Disabilities

By Andrea Marsh, Bay County Council on Aging &
Josh Newby, Council on Aging of West Florida

For many years, Bay County Council on Aging (BCCOA) and The Arc of the Bay have been service providers and partners serving the needs of senior adults and adults with disabilities, respectively, in Bay County. The mission of BCCOA is to improve the quality of life for older individuals, preserve their independence and delay more costly, less preferred institutional care. The Arc of the Bay's mission is to provide supports and opportunities for people with disabilities to choose and participate in valued adult activities. As both organizations are service providers in the community, it is not a stretch that they would intersect.

A number of years ago, for quite a few years, BCCOA had a program for developmentally disabled seniors. The program allowed seniors with developmental disabilities to "retire" from training programs and enjoy retirement which included activities and travel just as any other senior would experience. The seniors in the program integrated with activities at a congregate meal site, including lunch. The seniors also had activities of their own which



were developed with each senior's support coordinator. These included monthly field trips and education on important topics such as health and safety. Referrals for the program came through the Florida Department of Children and Families in conjunction with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

There were typically 10-12 participants at any one time in the program. The program was funded through the Florida Department of Children and Families (and formerly the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services) and ran for

more than 30 years. The program ended when it was no longer funded.

For many years BCCOA and The Arc of the Bay have worked alongside each other to serve those in need in the community. Both agencies have been, and continue to be, affiliate agencies for United Way. The Arc of the Bay has provided volunteers for BCCOA and also does delivery of a weekly Meals on Wheels route. The lines of communication have always been open between the leaders of both of the agencies. Their goals also align to provide independence to those whom they serve.

The partnership between two similarly situated but different organizations makes sense. In the case of Council on Aging of West Florida (COAWFLA) and Arc Gateway in Pensacola, FL., that partnership is just starting to blossom into something more productive. Like BCCOA and Arc of the Bay, Pensacola's non-profits have a similar history of collaboration via the congregate meals program. Council on Aging of West Florida's Americorps Senior Companion program also assists Arc Gateway clients at their facility, providing assistance, companionship and social interaction.

Now, though, thanks to a new statewide initiative to explore further opportunities for joint success, and to determine just how much overlap exists in the state between the two populations, COAWFLA and Arc Gateway are taking their partnership further. Different ideas that have surfaced include a transportation collaboration and state funding for a new joint adult day care.

Transportation is a challenge in rural parts of the state without immersive and exhaustive public transportation infrastructure. As a result, many transportation rates are simply cost-prohibitive, even when using a coordinated provided like paratransit. Arc Gateway has a fleet of vehicles that mainly operate first thing in the morning and late afternoon. COAWFLA is exploring the possibility of using that fleet and paying for related expenses during the off hours as a way to diversify options for clientele and drive down costs from companies with a lot of overhead.

Similarly, a new adult day care has been talked about for many years, particularly in the even more rural Santa Rosa County to Pensacola's east, where the line between haves and have-nots is particularly bright. A new adult day care would require a huge initial capital investment and risk, but distributing both the investment and the risk across two organizations might alleviate some of that burden. COAWFLA and Arc Gateway are also hopeful that the collaboration will pique the interest of state lawmakers who would see this as a unique possibility for a special appropriation.

New ideas are emerging between these two industries and between these two organizations both in Bay County, and in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties. The overlap between the two, as well as the funding shortfalls both experiences, justify and in many cases require novel thinking and collaboration as we all seek to improve the lives of those we serve in sustainable ways.





June is Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month. Nearly six million people in the United States are living with Alzheimer's Disease.

In the article below Andrea Marsh describes the six-week BRAINHealth Program sponsored by the Bay County Council on Aging which is designed to prevent, delay, or reduce cognitive decline and memory loss.

How Is Your Brain Health?

By Andrea Marsh, Bay County Council on Aging

In March of 2023 Bay County Council on Aging launched the BRAINHealth program. Planning for the program was a year in the works. An advisory committee was formed consisting of members from the Board of Directors. Included in the committee were two retired nurses, an attorney, and a retired educator, as well as senior staff members. There was much to get done. An available space was renovated with a fresh coat of paint and new floors. Purchases included tables and chairs, a big screen television, as well as a ping pong table and a SMARTfit machine. Grant funding from a private foundation provided funds for the furniture and television.

The biggest challenge was finding the right person to run the program. After several months of searching, we were fortunate to find an individual with a clinical background and the appropriate education and experience, along with the right personality to be the face of the program. Someone who could recruit members in the community as presenters for the program. Lynn McCory serves as our BRAINHealth Coordinator and has been an integral part of the program's early success.

The program runs for six weeks on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm (with lunch provided) for a total of 12 four-hour sessions. Typically, there is a two week break before the start of the next program. There are 10-15 participants in each program. The number of participants is intentionally kept at a smaller number to allow for more personal interaction. Many of the services provided in the program are billable to Older Americans Act grants for eligible participants. Additionally, there is a nominal fee/copay for each participant.

This first year has been an exciting year with 7 six-week programs completed with over 60 participants completing the program. The community response and support has been overwhelming. Presenters from the community for the sessions are medical professionals (cardiologist, neurologist, podiatrist, general practitioner, chiropractor), nutritionists, physical fitness instructors (Tai Chi, Pilates, yoga, cardiovascular exercise), music therapists, and others who volunteer their time. Each presenter spends 1 – 1 1/2 hours providing essential information to help keep the mind and body fit as an individual ages. It is a holistic approach to aging. The program is designed to build healthy brain routines to prevent, delay or reduce cognitive decline and memory loss.

The BRAINHealth Program consists of six disciplines:

1. Wellness Education
2. Fitness, Exercise & Movement
3. Nutrition Works
4. Socialization & Engagement
5. Support Groups
6. One-on-One Sessions with Professionals

Individuals who have family members living with Alzheimer's disease, memory impairment or dementia may worry that they are beginning to experience some of the symptoms. They may have joined a large group of people who are known as the "worried well". The BRAINHealth Program is especially designed for families and individuals who want to build brain-healthy routines, increase their knowledge and keep their brain sharp.

An important element of the program was the purchase of a SMARTfit machine. This machine is a neuro-rehabilitation and fitness technology system to rapidly enhance cognitive function and physical mobility by training the brain and body to work together more efficiently by "gamifying" coupled with a unique activity known as "dual tasking neurogenesis".

The result is an improvement in cognitive processing speed and open ended decision making. The system tracks changes and improvements in motor and neurocompetence over time, as well as visual perception abilities. To put it more simply, it improves reaction time and eye-hand coordination. When a participant starts the program, their first time using the SMARTfit provides a baseline. They then spend 15 minutes during every session on the SMARTfit with their

results individually recorded. Upon completion of the program, the participant's progress with the SMARTfit provides a final outcome. All who have attended have shown notable increases.

There is no control over certain risk factors for cognitive decline and memory loss such as

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heredity, genetics and certain physical conditions. However, some of these factors can be addressed and modified through lifestyle changes. The latest research demonstrates that factors such as diet, social connections and physical activities can prevent, delay or reduce almost half of dementia cases associated with the aging process. Research in this field has convinced professionals that keeping the brain healthy through lifestyle changes assures that memory loss and cognitive decline does not determine one's future. We anticipate our BRAINHealth Program growing and expanding in the future with the goal of educating many on the benefits of and path to a healthy brain

History of the Older Americans Act

By Andrea Marsh, Bay County Council on Aging



The Older Americans Act (OAA) was passed by Congress and signed into law on July 14, 1965 in response to concern by policymakers about a lack of community social services for older persons. The law established priorities and operations for key programs and services to help keep adults age 60 and older healthy and independent and was part of President Johnson's "Great Society" initiative.

The legislation established authority for grants to states for community planning and social

services, research and development projects, and personnel training in the field of aging. The Administration on Aging (AoA) was also established within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, to administer the newly created grant programs as well as to serve as the federal focal points on matters that concern older persons. It also called for the creation of State Units on Aging.

OAA has had a number of reauthorizations during the past 59 years including one set for this year. There have also been amendments and changes to the Act to better serve the targeted older population.

The 1960s

OAA was initially extended for two years and provisions were made for AoA to study the personnel needs in the aging field. Amendments to the Act provided grants for model demonstration projects including the Foster Grandparents Program, and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program.

The 1970s

A new Title VII is created authorizing funds for a national nutrition program for the elderly.

Area Agencies on Aging were established through the Comprehensive Services Amendments for the Act. Also added was a new Title V authorizing grants to local community agencies for multi-purpose senior centers, in addition to the creation of the Community Service employment grant program for low-income individuals age 55 and older that was administered by the Department of Labor.

Transportation was added under Title III model projects through amendments. Grants were authorized under Title III to Indian tribal organizations with priorities on transportation, home care, legal services, and home repair and renovation.



Amendments made changes to Title VII's nutrition program relating to the availability of surplus commodities through the Department of Agriculture and amendments consolidated the Title III Area Agency on Aging administration and social services, the Title VII nutrition services, and the Title V multi-purpose senior centers, into a new Title III and added a new Title VI for grants to Indian Tribal Organizations. The old Title V became the Community Service Employment grant program for low-income individuals, age 55 and older (created under the 1978 amendments as

Title IX). Additionally, amendments required each state to establish a long-term care ombudsman program to cover nursing homes.

The 1980s

There were reauthorizations of the Act with emphasis on several priorities including supportive services to help older persons remain independent in the community, clarification of the roles of State and Area Agencies on Aging in coordinating community-based services, and in maintaining accountability for the funding of national priority services including legal, access, and in-home services.

Additional appropriations were provided for in-home services for the frail elderly, long-term care ombudsman, assistance for special needs, health education and promotion, prevention of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation, and outreach activities for persons who may be eligible for benefits under supplemental security income (SSI), Medicaid, and food stamps. Emphasis was also given to serving those in the greatest economic and social need, including low-income minorities.

The 1990s

The reauthorizations and amendments provided an increased focus on caregivers, intergenerational programs, and protection of elder rights. A new Title VII "Vulnerable Elder Rights Activities" was also added which included the long-term care ombudsman, prevention of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation, elder rights and legal assistance development, and benefits outreach, counseling and assistance programs. The emphasis was on the four programs coordinating their efforts.

In 1995, the 30th anniversary of Older Americans Act was celebrated. This same year there was a call for a White House Conference on Aging.

The 2000s

The reauthorizations and amendments established the new National Family Caregiver Support Program. The kick off of the 30th Anniversary of OAA's Nutrition Program was in March, 2002. Amendments also included the embedding of principles of consumer information for long-term care planning, evidence-based prevention programs, and self-directed community-based services to older individuals at risk of institutionalization.



In the years between 1967 and 2007, OAA was amended a total of 11 times, spanning eight different presidential administrations. The amendments were largely made to streamline the Act. OAA is now viewed as the primary vehicle for the organization and delivery of social and nutrition services to seniors and caregivers.

Today OAA programs focus on elder justice and elder abuse, mental health, benefits counseling, civic engagement, nutrition services, healthy aging, and caregiving, as reflected in the seven titles of the Act.

- Title I is a declaration of objectives.
- Title II establishes the AoA to carry out the provisions of the act.
- Title III provides federal funding for state agencies on aging and establishes the nutrition program. The nutrition program provides nutritional services, such as congregate and home-delivered meals, and is the largest expenditure of the OAA, and mandates the creation of corresponding state agencies before states may be eligible for this funding.
- Title IV creates a number of specific projects related to the objectives of the act, including healthcare service in rural areas, computer training, civic engagement, and Native American programs.

OAA's Title III-C which includes the Nutrition Program is probably the most familiar title to aging service providers in Florida. This program aims to reduce hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition, as well as promote health and well-being, and socialization among older adult aged 60 and older who are in social and economic need. All meals served using OAA funds must follow dietary guidelines for Americans, provide at least one-third of the dietary reference intakes, adhere to state and local food safety guidelines, and appeal to older adults.

In 2024 the Older Americans Act is scheduled to again be reauthorized, which will continue funding to provide essential services allowing individuals 60 years and older to remain healthy, active and independent for years to come.



May is Older Americans Month

Older Americans Month is a time to acknowledge the contributions that past and current seniors have made to our country



Older Americans Month History

A meeting in April 1963 between President John F. Kennedy and members of the National Council of Senior Citizens led to designating May as “Senior Citizens Month,” the prelude to “Older Americans Month.” When Older Americans Month was established in 1963, only 17 million Americans had reached their 65th birthday. Today (2022 data), 58 million adults in the United States are 65 years of age and older.



Observance of Older American’s Month

Since 1963, every president has issued a formal proclamation on or before May asking the entire nation to pay tribute to older persons in their communities. Older Americans Month is celebrated through ceremonies, events, fairs, and other such activities.

Every year, the Administration for Community Living (ACL), leads the nation’s observance of Older Americans Month. The theme for 2024 is “Powered by Connections” which recognizes the profound impact that meaningful relationships and social connections have on our health and

wellbeing. This includes the vital role that connectedness plays in supporting independence and aging in place by combatting isolation, loneliness, and other issues.

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