



**Testimony**

**Robert G. (Bob) Bethell Joint Committee on HCBS and KanCare Oversight**

**September 28, 2020**

Chairwoman Landwehr and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the correlation between home and community-based services and the aging population. I am Leslie Anderson, executive director of the Kansas Association of Area Agencies on Aging and Disabilities (k4ad) representing the network of eleven Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), covering all 105 Kansas counties.

In response to the public health crisis, increased isolation and risk of potential exposure, AAAs joined numerous providers to protect the best interest of individuals needing services to safely remain in the community, which included partnering with managed care organizations to distribute personal protective equipment and meals, modifying meal programs, and providing virtual visits to families with loved ones in nursing facilities. To maintain a high-touch level of assistance and respond to the social determinants of health related to access and quality of care, the AAA network implemented telecommunications and continued operations: performing assessments and providing information & referral/assistance, options counseling, Medicare Counseling, meal service, and Administrative Case Management (ACM) services.

As the contractor of the ACM program, the Northwest Kansas Area Agency on Aging subcontracts with the 10 partnering AAAs to assist individuals seeking access to public health care services. Unlike Targeted Case Management, the ACM is a service exclusively for individuals functionally eligible for the BI, FE, PD waivers and PACE program, but need assistance navigating the financial eligibility process. Administrative case managers help complete initial and renewal Medicaid applications; collect documentation to accompany crisis exceptions and waiver applications; and ensure supporting documentation is accurately completed and submitted. Subsequently, case managers perform a significant amount of follow-up work with the Clearinghouse during the general 45-day approval timeframe. A chart of deliverables illustrates the importance of this service, especially during this time of uncertainty.

Month of Service	Consumers Served	Hours of Service
May	113	153
June	268	409
July	360	512
August	376	421

An Older Americans Act principle is that AAAs develop or enhance a comprehensive and coordinated community-based system, designed to assist older persons in leading independent, meaningful and dignified lives in their own homes and communities. Since 2012, the Southwest Kansas Area Agency on Aging contracts with KDADS for the Aging and Disability Resource Center. As a subcontracted ADRC service with the Central Plains Area Agency on Aging in Wichita, a Call Center responds to inquiries and performs a warm transfer to ensure the client participates in the communication about their inquiry prior to the handoff. This service is available to anyone seeking information, assistance, or referrals to access long-term supports and services.

Call center staff respond to inquiries about Medicare, Medicaid, transportation, nutrition, caregiver services, developmental disability services, nursing home assessments, and now COVID-19. ***In response to the growing service need, the call center reported a volume of 11,885 contacts during the last six months (March through September): an average of 436 per week.***

Similar to the other community-based organizations and all avenues of the healthcare system, AAAs allocate a substantial amount of time responding to the public health crisis. Through the Relief Funds for COVID-19 Pandemic Response, the ADRC was awarded funding to enhance the No Wrong Door System (NWD) infrastructure by streamlining the referral process, mitigating social isolation, expanding virtual access to services through telehealth technologies, and increasing awareness of the NWD system. As a subcontractor, the Central Plains Area Agency on Aging will assess social determinants of health and make appropriate referrals to Assistive Technology for Kansans, Topeka Independent Living Resource Center, and other community agencies to transition individuals from an institutional setting. Additionally, as the No Wrong Door system significantly impacts access to long-term supports and services, the grant will also fund a marketing campaign to increase awareness. We appreciate KDADS' acknowledgement of the coordinated system needed to ensure critical access to vital supports and services.

There's a reason more than 11 million older adults and caregivers are served through the Older Americans Act. Through a coordinated system of care and maintaining local control, the AAAs can respond to the unique demands identified in their communities to help older adults "age in place." The highlighted programs only provide a glimpse of programs and services to support an older adult's desire to remain in their home and connected to their community. Imagine how much more AAAs could do if flexibilities allowed contractual agreements with health care payers and other entities to increase availability of home and community-based services.

The AAAs commend the Committee members for monitoring access and quality of services and taking a personal interest in constituents' needs. The public health crisis has changed the way of doing business and has validated the necessity of innovation to identify and address social determinants of health and methods to maintain service delivery. We believe to mitigate the adverse effects of COVID-19 and prepare for enduring challenges; we respectfully offer the following recommendations that will contribute to the overall wellbeing of Kansans and the health care system:

- 1) Evaluate infrastructure to determine funding levels support the growing need for LTSS;
- 2) Support initiatives and pilot programs to develop and evaluate social determinants of health;
- 3) Monitor flexibilities to ensure Kansans have timely access to home and community-based services;
- 4) Support initiatives to educate the workforce and develop programs for direct care workers that include supportive services and career planning; and
- 5) Ensure the aging network is invited to participate in Commissions, Councils, and Task Forces to articulate the aging perspective related to programs, services, and policies.

Thank you for your interest and help *to ensure older adults and persons with disabilities maintain their independence and dignity through cost effective community services.* We look forward to working with you, State agencies, and other stakeholders to ensure concerns are heard from older Kansans, persons with disabilities, and caregivers.

Respectfully,  
Leslie A. Anderson  
Executive Director