



Testimony to the Senior Services Task Force September 2021

Thank you, Chairperson Concannon and members of the committee, for the opportunity to introduce the eleven Area Agencies on Aging to the Senior Services Task Force. The network of Area Agencies on Aging was created by the 1973 reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA) to coordinate publicly funded and private pay services for older adults.

Area Agencies on Aging are the leaders on aging issues on the local level and the network designed to help Americans aged 60 and older age in place. In the spirit of the Act, each AAA is unique according to the specific needs and resources available in their communities (Planning Service Area), and to advocate for older adults at the local, state, and national level. The Act, reauthorized in 2020, is a major vehicle for the organization and delivery of social and nutrition services. The Act mandates AAAs to provide a set of core home and community-based services, including in-home services, caregiver supports, nutrition, health and wellness, elder rights, and supportive services, such as transportation and legal services. However, AAAs are charged with responding to the needs of older adults in their communities and respond by providing other services to connect older adults community resources. In addition to providing services under the OAA, Kansas AAAs contract for the following statewide services:

1. Pre-Admission Screening for Resident Review (PASRR) CARE Level I assessment required by federal law before any person is admitted to a nursing facility. As the statutorily designated contractor with KDADS, the AAAs provide community-based information and assessments through the CARE (Client Assessment Referral and Evaluation) program.
2. Aging and Disability Resource Center, utilizing a No Wrong Door principle for older adults, persons with a disability, caregivers, and professionals to access information, assistance, and referral; Options Counseling and assessments for the BI, FE, PD waivers and PACE; and the management of the statewide call center (855-200-2373).
3. Administrative Case Management, 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 exception and waiver applications; and ensure supporting documentation is accurately completed and submitted.
4. Senior Care Act, a legislative-governed program of in-home services, which includes attendant care, homemaker services, case management, personal emergency response services, and/or respite care are delivered through subcontracts with local providers. Since 1989, AAAs are the statutory sole contractor for services to Kansans aged 60 and over facing difficulties maintaining independence in their homes and wanting to avoid premature nursing home stays. The SCA is a cost-share program, where on average, a client contributes \$75.60/per month towards a \$280 plan of care.

Forecasts indicate that by 2050, the population of adults over the age of 65 is expected to almost double, growing from 47.8 million to 88 million. The number of adults over 85 is expected to more than triple over the same time period, from 6.3 million to 19 million. However, numerous older adults receive informal support from family members; the largest source of long-term services and supports in the nation. Maintaining the health and well-being of caregivers is an important priority of the OAA.

The Area Agencies on Aging provide direct support to caregivers through the National Family Caregiver Support Program under the Older Americans Act. Services include respite care (temporary supervision of the care recipient to provide rest for the caregiver); individual counseling and support groups; caregiver education classes/training; and emergency assistance. The wide range of services provided by unpaid caregivers, such as transportation, food preparation, housekeeping and personal care. Among “caregivers whose recipient was not living in a nursing home or assisted living facility, only a third report their recipient received paid help from aides, housekeepers, or others in the past year” (https://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AARP1340_RR_Caregiving50Plus_508.pdf)

The statistics illustrate the changing demographics in home and community-based care, derived from Caregiving in the U.S. 2020: A Focused Look at Family Caregiver at Family Caregivers of Adults Age 50+:

1. Older caregivers tend to be providing care to someone similar in age to themselves, usually a spouse/partner or a non-relative (like a friend or neighbor)
2. The average duration of caregiving is 3.9 years, although up to 10 years in some instances
3. The average caregiver of an older adult is 50.1 years of age
4. Alarmingly, the stress associated with caregiving may exacerbate declines in health that occur with age (1 in 5 report their health to be fair or poor)

Employment growth for home care workers is primarily driven by a continuing demographic shift. There are “more people age 65 and older than 5 years old” (<https://ourworldindata.org/population-aged-65-outnumber-children>). It may seem there is adequate time to plan for the drastic shift, but considering the limited number of caregivers and workforce crisis, immediate response will mitigate unpreparedness.

An essential workforce in crisis will severely impact the quality of services and delivery setting. Engaging in strategic development is vital to appropriately respond to the aging population, especially as more people want to age in place. The critical lesson learned during the pandemic is that infrastructures were not durable enough to support significant needs. The opportunity to design an optimal framework to deliver consistent and quality care will require decreased fragmentation, strengthened single point of entry, and a prepared workforce to deliver services.

Despite the allure of senior communities that offer plenty of amenities, such as pools, gyms, coffee bars, and cooking classes, most older adults—76 percent of Americans age 50 and older—want to remain in a home throughout their golden years, according to an AARP survey .

The Area Agencies on Aging are fully aware of the challenges within home and community based services, including the decline of family caregivers, who acquire age-related chronic conditions which lessens the ability to provide daily, consistent care. The Senior Care Act can respond with a limited Plan of Care to focus on meeting needs that delay or prevent utilization of higher cost services. Purposefully, the 1989 legislators passed the Act in response to change the status quo of aging and entering a nursing facility. Older Kansans rely on the program to protect hard-earned resources and assets. House Bill 2114 includes a focus on “the funding and implementation of the Kansas senior care act,” and we recommend such exploration include the purpose and outcomes of the cost-effective program that serves roughly 4,000 older Kansans.

Leslie A. Anderson
Executive Director