



Connecticut Association of Area Agencies on Aging, Inc.

Testimony – Select Committee on Aging 3/3/09

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Positions

Governor's Bill No. 841, An Act Concerning the State Department on Aging, and Raised Senate Bill 993, An Act Concerning the Functions, Powers, and Duties of the Department on Aging

In considering the above bills, C4A respectfully urges the Select Committee on Aging to consider and affirm the following core principles of design and delivery of service to Connecticut's older adults:

- **Principle 1: the structure should ensure that consumers are easily able to identify where they should go for help and that they receive high quality services.**

C4A calls the Committee's attention to the existing, highly successful work of the CHOICES program, and its associated 1-800 number. In 2008 alone, CHOICES:

- made **36,886** contacts with individuals and caregivers to provide information and referral on Medicare, Medicaid, financial assistance, benefits, housing, adult day care and services for people with disabilities
- staffed **18** enrollment events at which countless people were screened for and connected with the Medicare Low-Income Subsidy benefit
- counseled over **5,500** individuals on the federal Medicaid Savings Programs (QMB, SLMB, QI)
- sponsored **364** outreach presentations
- provided meaningful volunteer opportunities to **371** trained counselors
- provided expert training to social services professionals to help them keep current

- used radio, cable television, billboards, local newspapers and expert materials from the Center for Medicare Advocacy and other sources to educate the public

In light of CHOICES' demonstrated success, C4A does not feel that a new, 1-800 information line is needed.

Further, consumers and caregivers can be connected to extensive resource information about long-term care by using the existing Connecticut Long-Term Care Services & Supports web site: www.ct.gov/longtermcare/site/default.asp.

- **Principle 2: the structure should ensure that the department has sufficient authority, funding and opportunities to effectively collaborate with other State entities (e.g. the Commission on Aging, DSS, DOT, DECD).**

Serving older adults more effectively will require coordinated, State-level efforts among various departments, multiple funding streams and different tiers of government. Any entity responsible for aging services must be equipped with the resources, administrative authority and degree of influence necessary to fulfill this role. Strong consideration should therefore be given to grouping programs (e.g. CHOICES, the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders and other Medicaid waivers, ConnPACE) in one structure.

An example of a specific concern with respect to coordination is that both the state-funded and the Medicaid components of the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders (CHCPE) should remain located and administered together.

- **Principle 3: the structure should ensure that the department builds on national trends and the important work of the Connecticut Long-Term Care Planning Committee and Long-Term Care Advisory Council to locate programs for older adults and those with disabilities in the same structure.**

Historically, long-term care services and supports have been provided through a fragmented system that has treated people with similar physical and other needs differently just because of age. Recent trends in federal policy and funding opportunities emphasize instead that programs should be designed to serve individuals with disabilities across the life spectrum.

Further, C4A urges the Committee to consider administrative spending in light of recent proposals to make severe cuts to essential programs of support to older adults and those with disabilities (e.g. to restrict participation in the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders, to radically change the structure of the ConnPACE program, and to restrict Medicaid covered services and impose cost-sharing on participants).