PA Department of Aging Long-Term Care Council Established 2015 

Image Header

# Meeting Minutes

Meeting: Pennsylvania Long-Term Care Council

Date: October 14, 2021

Start & End Time: 10:00 a.m. to 11:22 a.m.

Location/Format: WebEx Meeting w/ Dial-In Option

## Council Members in Attendance

Sec. of Aging Robert Torres Council Chair

Sen. Michele Brooks (Designee: Joan Bradbury) \*

Heshie Zinman, Consumer Advocacy

Vini Portzline - LTSS Consumer

Teresa Osborne - Consumer Advocacy

Shona Eakin - LTSS Consumer

Janice Cameron - PA Council on Aging

David Nace, MD - LTSS Physician

Acting Sec. of Human Services, Meg Snead (Designee: Jennifer Hale) \*

Rep. Steve Samuelson (Designee Charles (Chuck) Miller) \*

Maria Collett, Senator (Designee, Tom Holroyd)

Acting Sec. of Health Allison Beam (Designee: Susan Coble, Deputy Secretary) \* (Designee: Megan Barbour, Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Health)\*

Anne Henry - Nonprofit SNFs

PA Housing Finance Agency Executive Director/CEO Robin Wiessmann (Designee: Gelene Nason) \*

Kimberly VanHaitsma, PhD - Academic Research

State Veterans Commission (Designee: James Ulinski) \*

\*Attended on member’s behalf

## Council Members Not in Attendance

Eric Beittel, LTC Insurance

Insurance Cmmr. Jessica Altman

Mark Gusek - LTC Managed Care

George Hartwick III – County Commissioners Assoc. of PA

Kenneth Potter, Esq. - PA Bar Association, Elder Law Section

Sec. of Transp. Yassmin Gramian (Designee: Danielle Spila)

Mike Sokoloski - Homecare

Lydia Hernandez-Velez - Consumer Advocacy

Nicole Pruitt - Adult Day Centers

Robert Marino – Caregiver Representative

Diane Menio – Caregiver Representative

## PDA Staff in Attendance

Jack Eilber, Deputy Communications Director

Emily Holladay

Steven Horner, Deputy Secretary

Susan Neff, Director of PA MEDI

Stephanie Cole, Special Assistant to the Secretary

Carolyn Green, Legislative Director

Beth Gerber, Aging Services

Karen Gray, Communications Director

Maria Dispenziere, Deputy Legislative Director

Julie Seby, Aging Services

Glenda Ebersole, Policy Director

Susan Neff, Aging Services

Denise Getgen, Director of Protective Services

Tom Snedden, Director of PACE

## Committee Members & Guests in Attendance\*

Lindsey Snyder, P4A Host

KKelly

P4A Host Margot Troutman

Carl Berry

Jeff Iseman – PA SILC

Pam Auer

G. Beckenbaugh

Carl Feldman

Patrick O'Rourke (Chairman Dan Frankel)

Kate Mohr

Jay Pagni

Seth Benge

Katie Dotto

Jennifer Ebersole, Alzheimer’s Association

Rick Levis

Zack Zobrist

Kathy Cubit, CARIE

OC = Outreach Committee; AC = Access Committee; QC = Quality Committee; WC = Workforce Committee

\*Only the attendance of guests who logged into the meeting via the WebEx platform was able to be captured unless the individual indicated otherwise.

# Discussion Items and Summary

## Commonwealth Updates

### PA Department of Aging (PDA) - Secretary Torres reported on the following:

* Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorder Forum (ADRD) –
  + Stephanie Cole distributed an email update about the Annual Virtual Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorder Forum that will take place on November 4, 2021 from 9:00am -12:30pm.
  + The focus will be on Physician and Consumer Education in Early detection diagnosis and treatment. Invitation was extended to the Council for those who are interested in attending.

### Slippery Rock Pilot Program – Stephanie Cole, Special Assistant to Secretary Torres.

* Intergenerational University Connections Program. Now in its second year, expanded and added four additional programs.
  + This program came into fruition in the onset of the pandemic, knowing that we were looking for opportunities to help older adults stay connected, especially with senior centers being closed and to address social isolation like the great work that has been done by PCOA. This would help to provide opportunities to both students and older adults.
  + Selection process was through data of risk factors for social isolation such as older adults over 60 living with a disability, living alone, living in poverty, with one or more ADL difficulty, and individuals with any other status besides married. Over 400 individuals statewide displayed all five factors.
  + Slippery Rock University was the first school to engage with PDA.
  + Started with 2 AAA and expanded to 11 AAA in the second semester.
  + College engagements expanded to Penn State Harrisburg, West Chester, and Widener University.
  + Encouraged referrals of any existing relationships the council may have with universities, etc.

Please contact Stephanie Cole with any questions or interest at [stcole@pa.gov](mailto:stcole@pa.gov) or 717-772-0193.

### PDA Communications Campaign – Promoting Careers in Aging

* Workforce – How can we promote careers in Aging? (i.e., Public Messaging, Social Media, etc.)
* Blueprint will be reviewed for this campaign.
* Matt Yarnell is willing to assist in any way.
* Looking to begin this campaign in the next couple of weeks.

### Caregiver Support Program –

* Conducted successful promotion of caregiver support program changes.
* AARP has been very helpful with supporting through a Tele-Town Hall event and through their Focus on Aging TV program.

### PA Department of Education (PDE) - Eric Levis, Deputy Policy Director

* Update on Temporary Certified Nurse Aide Training
  + Project has been underway for a year and ran into some issues after the first launch to get TNA’s into the process to become nurse aides.
  + The process was restarted last week after doing a lot of work last summer to make sure the plan in place matched CMA and Act 138 requirements.
  + Update was sent to approx. 900 TNAs who previously submitted applications into a queue. Worked with LeadingAge and the Healthcare Association to notify their members that the process is underway.
  + Individuals fill out form, submit through the “Pierson View” portal and PDE reviews for approval. TNAs then receive a notification to take the exam.
  + All Individuals will have to take the state exam to get on the nurse registry.

Q: If an aide is going through the process, employed at a poor performing facility (for example 1 star). How does that impact the terms of their certification to become a TNA through this process?

A: Rick to follow-up with an answer to this question, sharing a response with Secretary Torres and the Council.

### PA Department of Human Services (DHS) – Jennifer Hale, Director of the Bureau of Policy and Regulatory Management for DHS’ Office of Long-Term Living (OLTL), provided departmental updates as follows:

• OLTL American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA):

* + Information is available on the HCBS Spending plan on the DHS website.
  + Waiting for final approval for CMS Spending Plan but working through tasks to be able to put initiatives in place in a timely manner.
  + Enhancing payment rates in the CHC and OBRA “waivers to increase employee wages for DCW starting January 1st of 2022. Will apply to both Agency and Participant directed models of PASS. Ensuring that increase in rates will be sustained after ARPA funds have been exhausted.
  + OLTL initiative – Dependent on CMS approval, funding to strengthen DCW, funding for recruitment and retention, providing one-time funding that will be sent in Fall/Winter to provide one-time benefit to recruit and hire DCW. i.e., Sign-on benefits, retention payment, leave benefits, COVID-19 PTO, incentive for vaccinations, purchase of equipment and testing supplies.
  + Funds to strengthen and improve quality within Home and Community Based Service system – Grant process for qualified HCBS service providers – currently being worked on. i.e., Items to address social determinants of health, purchase of remote support technology, develop and provide training, new software for electronic health records, etc.
  + Funding LTC Facilities – Funding started to be distributed. As of 9/15/2021, qualified and MA enrolled, including Assisted Living and personal care homes would start to receive this funding.
  + Information can be found on the DHS website under the LTC provider’s page.

**Q:** How much of an increase would DCW receive?

**A:** Still in progress, that information is unavailable currently.

**Comment:** Pay for staff has always been an issue recruiting, individuals need a sustainable wage, to make it competitive against big companies.

**A:** Will take that comment back to OLTL.

**Q:** Does the ARPA funding apply to personal care and assisted living?

**A:** No, Focused on Home and Community-Based services.

### PA Department of Health (DOH) – Susan Coble, Deputy Secretary for Quality Assurance.

* Hospital and Nursing Regulations have not been updated since the late 80s.
* Hospital Regulations updates are still in progress.
* Nursing Regulations – divided into 5 packages.
* The first package was released on July 31st, 2021
* Second package released October 9th, 2021 and that is in the public comment period for 30 days.
* Three more packages are in progress and anticipating completion by the end of the Governor’s Administration and also discussing opportunities for further stakeholder engagement with these regulations.
* Nursing homes – From January - June 2021, 2,403 surveys completed. 274 recertifications/licensure, 659 revisits, 2,011 were on-sites visits with complaints, covid surveys (478 covid surveys).
* Home Care – Home care application continue to be received at a high rate. Approx. 50 applications per month.
* Currently, 3,850 licensed Home Care in PA (Not all operating). 611 Home health Agencies and 189 Hospice.

### PA Department of Health (DOH) - Megan Barbour, Special Advisor to Secretary of Health for LTC

* Cases in long-term care (LTC) facility are starting to follow trends and beginning to see leveling off which is encouraging. Receive daily reports on information monitoring every morning and encouraging responsiveness.
* Consistently tracking outbreaks in facilities. The department works closely with other departments, Long-term care task force - which is a multi-agency team that assist in tracking and responding to outbreaks and facilities along with Regional Congregate Care Assistance Team (RCATS) - Health systems that partner with LTC facilities to respond to outbreaks. We meet with (RCATS) two to three times a week to review and discuss items as this continues to be a top priority.
* The RCAT program has been extended through the end of the year and notifications were sent to facilities to ensure they are aware of their availability and other services as well.
* Late July 2021, surveys were sent out to facilities to ensure they had access to a COVID-19 provider. If the facility did not have access, they were matched to one. Continuing to monitor.
* Continuing to push out proactive communication about guidance from the federal government as it pertains to boosters. Also utilizing standing community and stakeholder calls to make sure they have the most up-to-date information, and that information is clear.
* Vaccine hesitancy - Skilled nursing facilities per the federal government are required to report their staff and resident vaccination rates to a system called NHSN and the department has access to that database, making it possible to track that information.
* PA ranked at 87.5% skilled nursing residents fully vaccinated compared to the national average of 84.6 %. 67.1% staff are vaccinated compared to the national average of 67.1%, so right on target for that.
* Developed targeted efforts, like surveys to better understand staff hesitancy, challenges and barriers that they're facing.
* Released one pager that focuses on skilled nursing facilities and staff vaccination hesitancy based on what we learned. Also made it appropriate for other LTC facilities and shared with sister agencies.
* Developed a specific toolkit for having conversations with staff in LTC facilities and highlighted best practices and made it specific and responsive to barriers and challenges. This information will be posted online as well. Please feel free to reach out to Megan for additional information.

## Older Adult Protective Services Update

### **PA Department of Aging (PDA) – Denise Getgen, Director of Office of Older Adult Protective Services:**

Protective Services is working on several grants, including 2018 ACL grant, 2019 - Office of Victims of Crime (OVC) grant, COVID-19 CARES Act and American Rescue Plan Act funding.

* Looking to use new technologies systems, streamline documentation, enhance ability to complete quality assurance, build algorithms into documents that will make services consistent with categorization and prioritization. Will also assist with service planning to ensure things are not overlooked. New quality assurance reports. Funds will be used for ongoing licenses and maintenance fees of new documentation system through WellSky.
* Procuring new system called HelpVul that allows PS to work with financial institutions to ensure direct and secure communication between PS and financial institutions.
* Enhancing supervisor training for all PS supervisors including but not limited to how to supervise and provide quality assurance.
* Mandatory reporter training module being created for all state employees.
* Legal Services and PSP– Brochures made available to public during training sessions.
* Developing online public facing report of need to be submitted electronically, without needing to call.
* Building dashboard so all PS can access, view and monitor caseload information in the same format.
* Funding from American Rescue Plan Act will be used on a 3–5-year plan.

Q: Will the dashboard be able to be viewed by multiple providers?

A: No, this is an internal dashboard to be used for caseload management.

Q: Does any of the funding address guardian abuse?

A: No, but this is an issue we would like to look into further and that we are discussing.

## Update on PA MEDI

### PA Department of Aging (PDA) – Susan Neff, Director, PA MEDI

* Effective July 1st, 2021, Pennsylvania State Health Insurance Assistance program, referred to as SHIP nationwide, was previously named APPRISE and was recently renamed Pennsylvania Medicare Education and Decision Insight (PA MEDI).
* In 2019, we received a customer service satisfaction survey conducted nationally that displayed a high level of satisfaction with interactions in APPRISE however identified an overall lack of public awareness of the program.
* To address lack of awareness, we worked on rebranding effort.
* Program assists all Pennsylvania Medicare/Medicare individuals with access to healthcare and benefits.
* Medicare Annual Open Enrollment opens tomorrow October 15th and continues until December 7th. Open enrollment is time for beneficiaries to choose options for the next year.
* Looking at different plans may save a consumer money. Over the past year the program has saved $1.2 million by just comparing plans.
* We encourage individuals to reach out to PA MEDI. There is an event finder on the PDA website at [aging.pa.gov/medicare-counseling](mailto:aging.pa.gov/medicare-counseling). Consumers can find events by searching by county or date.
* **Toll free number one 1-800-783-7067, Monday-Friday from 8:30am-5:00pm.**

## Overview of AAA Staffing Challenges

### Lancaster County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) – Lon Wible, Director of Lancaster County AAA

* Area Agencies on Aging is a network of 52 agencies in rural, urban, and suburban areas.
* AAAs are experiencing staffing issues – 34/52 AAA counties were reporting issues. 9 AAA counties are also expecting to experience issues in the future.
* Lancaster is currently experiencing staffing issues with compliment of 70 staff positions and 15 positions vacant (includes PS, managers, and supervisors). Taking longer to fill positions, anywhere from 3-6-9 months and fewer applicants applying, no-shows, etc.
* Why are people exiting? Individuals who planned to retire in a few years- are retiring early and there is burnout and interest in more flexibility.
* We have increased pay and seeing a bump in applicants.
* We’re advertising more aggressively (LinkedIn, etc.).
* Offering incentives to current staff for referrals of employment – who stay 6 months or longer and offering overtime. Staff from other agencies also having a hard time filling vacancy.
* Staff are carrying heavier caseloads.
* DCW shortage – Having difficulty finding in-home services.
* AAAs have different challenges with some experiencing waiting lists.

**Q:** Is there a way to share vacancies with universities.

**A:** Something PDA is working on. Looking for a more coordinated plan.

## Open Session

Secretary Torres: The next LTCC meeting will take place on Thursday, December 9.

## Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:22 a.m.

# New Action Items

Action Item 1: **Q:** If an aide is going through the process, employed at a poor performing facility (for example 1 star). How does that impact the terms of their certification to become a TNA through this process?

**A:** Rick to follow-up with an answer to this question, sharing a response with Secretary Torres and the Council.

Actionee(s): Rick Levis, Deputy Policy Director, PDE

Deadline: 12/9/21

Status: