COUNCIL, TASKFORCE & WORKGROUP UPDATE

PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL ON AGING

On July 10, the Pennsylvania Council on Aging (PCoA) held a membership meeting. The PCoA heard from Sam Robinson, Deputy Chief of Staff, around the Restore Pa initiative. The PCoA determined that the initiative would have a positive impact for seniors, and that the passage of Restore Pa legislation is in line with the PCoA’s priorities, in particular as they relate to social isolation through broadband access and emergency preparedness. The PCoA voted to support the initiative. A formal letter of support will be drafted and circulated in the coming weeks. The council also heard from a panel of leaders in telehealth. The PCoA is interested in supporting telehealth measures that assist older adults with easier access to quality healthcare. The panelists included:

Andrew R. Watson, MD, MLitt, FACS, Gaspere C. (Gus) Geraci, MD, Autumn A. Altieri, MAHEd, Gina Perez, MD, Steven H. Williams, PhD, Jessica Lehman, Jack Cahalane, PhD, MPH

PENNSYLVANIA LONG-TERM CARE COUNCIL

The Pennsylvania Long-Term Care Council met on June 12 at the Pennsylvania Farm Show’s Keystone Conference Center. During the meeting, members were updated on the reauthorization efforts for the federal Older Americans Act, including an opportunity to provide feedback on a bipartisan bill draft, and the continued rollout of Community HealthChoices. Members also received an overview of the Department of Aging’s oversight of protective services for older adults, including actions taken by the department both prior to and after the release of the Office of the State Inspector General’s report on protective services, as well as presentations on the Pennsylvania Council on Aging and the enrollment process for both the OPTIONS and the Medial Assistance Long-Term Services and Supports (MALTSS) programs. The OPTIONS and MALTSS presentations included discussion of an infographic Secretary Torres had staff develop as a resource for the council to both understand the enrollment process for these programs and to identify potential opportunities for improvement, etc. The council’s August 29 meeting will be held at the Governor’s Residence and will include a strategic planning session.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Pennsylvania Cultural Diversity Advisory Council (CDAC) met on May 9, 2019. Acting Secretary of Aging Robert Torres introduced himself and spoke to the council about the importance of developing and sustaining an aging network that is culturally sensitive, responsive to needs, and inclusive of all older people and people with disabilities in the commonwealth. CDAC serves as a statewide forum, clearinghouse, and advocate for the rights and interests of diverse older adults and advises and provides recommendations on cultural diversity and inclusivity to the department. Acting Secretary Torres addressed questions and emphasized that diversity is a prime goal of the department and reiterated his support of CDAC.

CDAC’s top priorities for 2019-2020 are:
Survey the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) on cultural diversity activities, successes, and challenges
Fill membership vacancies
Improve the collection, awareness, and accessibility of cultural diversity materials and resources
Identify best practices for cultural diversity

A summary of the results of the April survey of AAA directors was presented. AAAs submitted best diversity practices, resources, and challenges in establishing and sustaining a diversity-friendly aging network.

Executive directors of the Governor’s Commissions on Latino Affairs, African American Affairs, Asian Pacific Affairs, and LGBTQ Affairs attended and provided an overview of their commission.

Three prospective CDAC nominations for membership were approved and recommended for the secretary’s confirmation for the NW AAA region, Central AAA region, and a stakeholder representative.

The next CDAC webinar meeting is September 12, 2109 at 10 a.m.

**PENNSYLVANIA’S ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE & RELATED DISORDERS TASKFORCE**

The task force, committee members, and PDA staff are meeting on August 1 for a special training on becoming Dementia Friends Champions.

**GRANDFAMILIES WORKGROUP**

The Grandfamilies Workgroup convened for a third and final session on July 25 to discuss education and childcare. In addition to stakeholder groups, our grandfamilies were joined by Secretary of Aging, Robert Torres; Secretary of Education, Pedro Rivera; and Secretary of Human Services, Teresa Miller; as well as policy representatives from the Department of Health and Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs. Representative Eddie Day Pashinski of the 121st Legislative District in Luzerne County, a long-time advocate for grandfamilies in the commonwealth, also joined the discussion.

Secretary Rivera updated the group on three new Department of Education initiatives that are designed to be responsive to the needs of all families, including grandfamilies. The Family Engagement Framework, the Community Schools Model, and Trauma-Informed Practices provide support to schools and families. Each of these programs address the unique circumstances of grandfamilies, as well as the trauma and stress children face as a result of the opioid crisis.

Secretary Miller discussed the need to have multiple resources available for grandfamilies to navigate to family-serving systems. The recently launched KinConnector can be reached at 1-866-KIN-2111, or via the Facebook page by searching @KinConnector. The website is expected to be operational later this year.

Although this was the last planned workgroup meeting, Secretary Torres assured the group that efforts initiated to remove barriers for grandfamilies through the raising of voices during these sessions will continue. Updates will be shared as work moves forward.