COUNCIL, TASKFORCE & WORKGROUP UPDATE

PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL ON AGING

On November 13, the Pennsylvania Council on Aging (PCoA) held a membership meeting. The PCoA heard from Jamie Dunlap from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts around their Creative Aging program that addresses social isolation. They also heard from Christine Marcos from the Moses Taylor Foundation around their new grant to tackle social isolation in Lackawanna County. Senator Blake spoke to the group around long-term care regulations and the council’s legislative priorities around protective services, lottery preservation, and Restore Pa.

The PCoA has sent letters of support for SB 819 to both the Senate and House Aging Committees. The PCoA also attended a hearing on October 30th around potential regulation of games advertised as games of skill. The PCoA is advocating for these types of games to remain clearly illegal through legislation.

The PCoA’s next meeting is on January 15th in Harrisburg.

PENNSYLVANIA LONG-TERM CARE COUNCIL

The Pennsylvania Long-Term Care Council (LTCC) met on December 12 at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex and Expo Center’s Keystone Conference Center. During the meeting, council members learned about the upcoming 2020 Census. Norman Bristol Colón, Executive Director of the Governor’s Census 2020 Complete Count Commission, discussed the importance of ensuring an accurate census count as it directly impacts the number of congressional seats in Pennsylvania and the amount of federal funding the commonwealth receives for services and programs, including healthcare (Medicare Part B, Medicaid), food security, education, transportation, housing, community development, families, and more. In addition, Council on Reform (CoR) Executive Director Drew Wilburne provided an overview of the CoR’s recommendations, which were issued on November 1. Mr. Wilburne noted that the CoR will be reviewing the recommendations in light of the public comment period which ran through December 16. Lastly, the council unanimously approved several recommended changes (e.g., revising several service definitions, adding new services, etc.) to the Community HealthChoices (CHC) 1915(c) Waiver that it forwarded for consideration to the Department of Human Services’ Office of Long-Term Living (OLTL). OLTL plans on submitting a CHC 1915(c) Waiver amendment to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in September 2020. Click here to view the handouts from the LTCC’s December 12 meeting. The council’s next meeting will be held on February 13 at the Farm Show Complex.

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.