

PENNSYLVANIA  
DEPARTMENT OF AGING

# LONG-TERM CARE COUNCIL

EST. 2015

## Meeting Minutes

Meeting: Pennsylvania Long-Term Care Council (LTCC)

Date: December 9, 2021

Start & End Time: 10:00 a.m. to 11:28 a.m.

Location/Format: Hybrid PDA and WebEx Meeting w/ Dial-In Option

## Council Members in Attendance

Insurance Commissioner Jessica Altman (Designee: Katie Merritt)\*

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

Eric Beittel, Long-Term Care (LTC) Insurance Representative

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

Janice Cameron, PA Council on Aging (PCOA) Representative

Representative Gary Day (Designee: Shannon Walker)\*

Glenda Ebersole, Executive Director LTCC

Anne Henry, Nonprofit SNFs Representative

David Nace, MD, LTSS Physician Representative

Robert Marino, Caregiver Representative

Teresa Osborne, Consumer Advocacy Representative

Vini Portzline, LTSS Consumer Representative

Nicole Pruitt, Adult Day Center Representative

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

Missy Shupe, LTSS Consumer Representative

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

Sec. of Aging Robert Torres, Council Chair

Kimberly VanHaitsma, PhD - Academic Research Representative

Lon Wible, Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Representative

Matt Yarnell, Consumer Advocacy Representative

Margie Zelenek, Assisted Living/Personal Care Home Representative

Heshie Zinman, Consumer Advocacy Representative

\*Attended on member's behalf

## Council Members Not in Attendance

Maria Collett, Senator (Designee, Tom Holroyd)

Shona Eakin, LTSS Consumer Representative

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

Mark Gusek, LTC Managed Care Representative

Lydia Hernandez-Velez, Consumer Advocacy Representative

Nancy Hodgson, PhD, RN, Academic Representative

Samella Hudson-Brewton, Senior Community Center Representative

George Hartwick III, County Commissioners Assoc. of PA Representative

Diane Menio, Caregiver Representative

Shane Nugent, For-Profit Skilled Nursing Facility Representative

MG Mark Schindler, The Adjutant General (Designee: BG Maureen Weigl)

Mike Sokoloski, Homecare Representative

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

## PDA Staff in Attendance

Angela Bixler, Digital Director

Maria Dispenziere, Executive Assistant to Deputy Secretary

Jack Eilber, Deputy Communications Director

Denise Getgen, Director of Protective Services Bureau

Carolyn Green, Legislative Director

Karen Gray, Communications Director

Emily Holladay, Deputy Legislative/Policy Director

Steven Horner, Deputy Secretary

Sasha Santana, Executive Secretary to Secretary Torres

## Committee Members & Guests in Attendance\*

Michael D. Murphy, III

Caroline Beohm

Angela Biesecker

Jennifer Ebersole

Carl Feldman

Kathy Gillespie

David Griffith

Natalie Krak

Rick Levis

James Martini

Elizabeth McCloud

Patrick O'Rourke

Shane Rice

Matt Seeley

Lindsey Snyder

Linda Walker

Lou Wolkenstein

Zack Zobrist

\*Only the attendance of members and guests who logged into the meeting via the WebEx platform can be captured unless the individual indicated otherwise.

## Discussion Items and Summary

### Welcome

Secretary Torres opened the meeting with a welcome to members and attendees and made the following announcements:

- Secretary introduced Retired Lt. Mr. Michael Murphy, State Veterans Commission and State Commander of PA American Legion, as pending LTCC nominee representing PA State Veterans Commission.
- Kenneth Potter, PBA, Elder Law Section, submitted his resignation to the council due to personal conflicts impacting his availability.
- Secretary thanked Anne Henry for her commitment to the Council as she will be resigning her position on the LTCC at the end of December 2021 due to her retirement. A nominee has been submitted for consideration and is going through the approval process.

### Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the October 14, 2021 minutes was made by Matt Yarnell and seconded by Dr. David Nace. The minutes of the October 14, 2021 meeting were unanimously approved.

## Commonwealth Updates

**PA Department of Aging (PDA) - Secretary Torres reported on the following as a year in review and current ongoing initiatives:**

- Aging Sub Committee – continues to meet monthly to stay connected with stakeholders on issues related to Covid-19.
- Financial Exploitation Taskforce – will be meeting in January 2022 to report out on progress made in implementing recommendations.
- ADRD Forum was held a few weeks ago and was well attended and overall a successful event.
- Intergenerational University Connections Program – Press conferences took place on expansion and benefits of this program leading to inquiries from several news stations. Several universities currently in discussion with PDA that will further expand this program.
- PACE – call center was successful with supporting vaccination efforts, continues to leverage enrollment files and support outreach to older adults, supporting the Department of Agriculture’s Senior Food Box Program, enrolling over 6,000 seniors in PA.
- Share Program, our housing program, has received positive attention and other states are reaching out to learn about and potentially model this system.
- Caregiver support program – Passage of Act 20 improving the administration of this program was a big deal. A lot of promotion and outreach work has been conducted with AARP.
- Rebranded APRISE program, now called PA MEDI – rebranding transition has been successful to date.
- Protective Services – PDA continues to work on strengthening the PS function with new federal funding. Looking to enhancing technology, data capture and analytics to improve functions.
- PDA is working on promoting careers in aging. The intergenerational program is assisting with this as students have expressed interest in aging

sector careers and we have encouraged students to reach out to the AAAs or Department to explore options.

**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:**

**American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA):**

- Department received conditional approval from CMS on December 1<sup>st</sup> for the spending plan. Qualifies PA for Temporary 10% increase to Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for certain home and community-based services.
- OLTL plans to do a rate increase for personal assistance services for both participant directed and agency model of services. Enhanced payment rates expected to start January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022. Public notice published for the OBRA waiver (fee for service program), 8% increase for personal assistance.
- Initiative - Strengthening the Direct Care Workforce payment – working on letters to go out to providers, sometime late next week. Providers will be asked to submit an attestation form by January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Information will be posted on OLTL website and sending a listserv detailing the information. Payments to participant directed DCW will go out in February 2022. Funding can be used for sign-on bonuses, retention payments, leave benefits, related paid time off, vaccination and purchase of PPE and supplies. Stakeholder meeting scheduled for December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021 with Secretary Snead. Additional information will be provided at this meeting.
- Hope to have funds to grant opportunities to strengthen and improve home and community-based services. Such as remote support, development and training of infection control practices, implementation of electronic health records, etc.

**Effort to increase behavioral health services in nursing facilities:**

- OLTL, CHC, Behavioral health MCO’s and nursing facilities associations have been meeting to design series of webinars to be presented to nursing facilities throughout the state to address provision of behavioral health.
  - Webinars tentatively planned for the first quarter of 2022.

- Nursing facilities will be able to learn what services are available and how to access services.
- Facilities will be able to hear from peers about best practices and examples of innovative programs related to provisions of behavioral health services and nursing facilities.
- Webinars will allow MCOs and nursing facilities to further their networking and collaborative efforts.

**Q:** ARPA - How much is going out statewide? Is it equally distributed by population or is it a grant that the facilities have to apply for?

**A:** Don't have the amount to be distributed statewide. This information will be updated in the stakeholder meeting with Secretary Snead on December 13<sup>th</sup>. The Home and Community based grants – will be a designated amount and home and community-based providers can apply. The update is only based on home and community-based providers.

Comment: Various OBRA waiver/OLTL issues were raised as concerns relating to a consumer and a family member.

**Covid-19 Nursing Workforce Initiative-Nursing Loan Forgiveness Program – Elizabeth McCloud, Vice President PA State Grant and Special Programs, PHEAA**

- PA Student Loan Relief for Nurses (SLRN) Program
  - This program is funded by \$5 million of Covid-State Fiscal Recovery funds.
  - Provides federal and private student loan relief to selected, qualified licensed nurses.
    - Up to \$2,500/year for up to 3 years/\$7,500
- PHEAA.org/SLRN includes a link for nurses to get on a mailing list.
- Application window is January 1-March 1, 2022. The demand for the program will most likely exceed the available \$5 million allocated. Collecting information based on regions/counties to ensure they include selected nurses throughout the state.
- The program began in late September 2022. Directed by the Governor's Office and backed by several policy makers to benefit nurses to enhance

nurse workforce, especially during the pandemic. Meant to provide an incentive for nurses.

- Eligible applicants for student loan relief – Residents of the commonwealth, licensed as nurses by PA Department of State to work as an eligible nurse at a qualified nursing facility. Employed by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021, and past that date to continue receiving relief.
- Annual certification process will take place.
- PHEAA will make payments directly to the loan servicers on behalf of nurses to ensure monies are used as intended.
- Already have over 5,500 nurses interested.



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**Q:** Have there been any discussions for relief for nurses who have already paid off their loans?

**A:** Not heard of anything to date, so far, it's been structured around relief for current nurses as well as being used as a retention tool.

**Q:** Adult Day Providers/LIFE Providers- They don't fall into any category – can they be added?

**A:** Encourage licensed nurses to use the website to fill out the form and share information based on specifics for nurse eligibility. Available through the end of December 2021 to avoid confusion.

**Q:** If they hire someone today as nurse, do they still qualify?

**A:** Yes, when employer documents which years would depend on how many hours in a particular program year.

**Healthcare Group Sponsor Apprenticeship Industry Partnership - James Martini, Executive Director, PA Workforce Development Board, Labor and Industry**

- Legislature dedicated \$1 million for L&I used to support industry partnership and apprenticeship programs around nursing.
- Apprenticeships can be sponsored by industry associations, unions, community-based organizations and other training providers.



- Apprenticeships offer many benefits to the individuals and employer:
  - Individuals start earning a wage immediately
  - Individuals won't accumulate student loan debt and gain skills on the job
  - Specific emphasis on reaching underserved populations

**Q:** Timing on availability of program?

**A:** Hopeful for the first half of next year. No hard timeline but will keep the Council updated.

**Temporary Nurse Aides (TNAs) Update - Eric Levis, Deputy Policy Director, PA Department of Education**

- Application updates: Approx. 470 Attestation application forms received;
  - approx. half of applications returned because they are incomplete. i.e.- Boxes unchecked, wrong forms attached, etc.
  - 215 applications completed and reviewed, which means applicants are ready for testing.
- Issues: Applications have been received from 28 counties but not being received from rural counties.
  - Seeking assistance from LTCC and partners in getting applicants from those counties.
- In follow-up to questions from last meeting, concerning how applications are being handled from special focused facilities –
  - Two facilities have been labeled by CMS as not improved.
  - Only one application received so far.
  - PDE will work with DHS to review application and determine eligibility.
- Issue of instruction for TNAs– Senator Judy Ward and Representative Curt Sonney requested that LPN's be approved to become FT licensed

instructors. PDE is receptive to this idea and is currently reviewing guidance and drafting language around this request including:

- What kind of parameters need to be in place?  
i.e.- Ratio of Supervisors RNs to LPNs or # of Students to LPNs, etc.
- Staff looking at CMS regulations.
- Working with healthcare association, they will be providing information surrounding what other states have done so we can increase the number of students going through the program.

**Q:** How many workers went through the TNA program?

**A:** No exact numbers. Approx. 900 individuals in queue, 500 attestation form applications have come in. Not sure what the reasons are exactly. Can follow up after looking into it.

**Q:** How many workers are still around? May be a dual question for PDE and DOH?

**A:** Will follow up with additional information.

**Q:** Tech supports for applicants?

**A:** Weekly email reminders in progress

Comment from Rick Levis: Can follow up with how many individuals took the online training, checking with DHS and staff for data. Will include a map of PA that shows by county the # of forms received.

**Secretary:** Requested any follow-up information be sent to Glenda Ebersole to share with the council.

**Direct Care Worker Recruitment, Communications Update – Karen Grey,  
Director of Communication, Pennsylvania Department of Aging**

- Developing model to help address staffing challenges highlighted in LTCC Blueprint Report and that many including AAAs are facing. Working on coming up with a consistent message for recruitment and promoting careers that support older adults.
- Focused on messaging, creating a public awareness campaign.

- Diversity, such as age, gender, etc.
- Develop and build on models
- Facebook ads have assisted with messaging reaching 1,000s



Recruiting for the  
Aging Services Workf

**Comment:** Hiring process is terribly slow for workers and greatly impacts consumers.

## Open Session

*Matt Yarnell:* Incredible work DHS is doing to be able to support the workforce and will be meaningful to lift the wages and improve conditions for workers.

*Margie Zelenak:* Expressed issues with personal care and assisted living being left out, small homes closing... as they don't have staffing. Reimbursement is only \$37 a day. Can't place people. Also, shared concerns with Senator Casey's office.

*Secretary Torres:* The next LTCC meeting will take place on Thursday, February 10, 2022.

## Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:28 a.m.

## New Action Items

Action Item 1:

**Q:** How many people went through the program?

**A:** No exact numbers. Approx. 900 individuals in queue, 500 applications have come in. Can follow up after looking into it.

**Q:** How many are still around? May be a dual question for PDE and DOH?

**A:** Eric Levis 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: 2/22

Update: As of 2/1: 788 submissions, 522 (66%) processed for testing, 266 (34%) in returned status for corrections/resubmissions

As of 1/23 there were 209 TNAs scheduled to test and waiting for test results.