

2010 - The Year in Review

The year 2010 will be remembered by advocates as the year when competition for limited state and federal funding continued, and aging services struggled to meet the needs of the growing population of older adults. According to the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), the number of older adults in the Region 1-B service area grew this year by over 19,000, to 565,000 individuals.

In Lansing

- State lawmakers, under mandate to pass a balanced budget, agreed upon a mix of funding cuts and increases to programs that serve Area Agency on Aging 1-B (AAA 1-B) consumers:
 - * The state's Office of Services to the Aging (OSA) received an 8% cut for FY 2011, an overall reduction of \$2.3 million. The AAA 1-B, which represents more than one quarter of Michigan's older adults, has absorbed a nearly \$500,000 loss of state funding.
 - * MI Choice was funded at \$205.9 million, a \$29.9 million increase over the previous year. This increase will be used to transition nursing home residents back into the community, however, and will not assist the 3,000+ individuals on the MI Choice wait list.
 - * Medicaid long-term care funding was increased for nursing homes, Home Help, and PACE – Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly, and restored for adult dental services and podiatry.
- Over \$5 million in federal grants were secured by OSA, with help from state Area Agencies on Aging and other aging network partners. Evidence-based disease prevention programs, MI Choice personal care aide training, and Medicare Part D low income subsidies are some programs receiving funding.
- **Despite vigorous advocacy from senior advocates throughout the state, none of the seven elder abuse bills supported by the AAA 1-B passed both chambers of the legislature.**
- Bills of interest which have been signed into law:
 - * "Complete Streets" (PA 134-135), requires authorities to consider drivers, public transit, bicyclists, pedestrians, and citizens of all ages when developing transportation projects. Economic incentives for public transit development were enacted (PA 241-244).
 - * Liquor licenses will be granted to 20 non-public continuing care retirement facilities (PA 279).
 - * Adult Foster Care facility owners with on-site responsibilities must meet the same requirements and restrictions as their staffs and volunteers (PA 380).
 - * Deadlines for deferral of some delinquent property taxes relaxed for certain individuals, including seniors and adults with disabilities (PA 311).

In Washington D.C.

- Older Americans Act (OAA) Funding: On December 21, 2010, the 111th Congress passed an extension of the Continuing Resolution for Fiscal Year 2011, which freezes the funding of many federal programs, including OAA programs at 2010 levels until March 4, 2011.
- Passage of national health care reform (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act): While efforts are underway to repeal all or parts of the legislation, key provisions for Medicare participants have taken effect in 2010: A \$250 rebate for Medicare Part D participants who are in the “donut hole”, free preventative screening services, and an annual wellness visit.
- The anticipated 25% cut in Medicare physician payments was given a one year delay.
- The National Alzheimer’s Project Act (NAPA) was enacted to create a national strategic plan.
- The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) adopted a policy change that requires aggressive bid reviews to protect beneficiaries of Medicare Advantage Plans from excessive increases in premiums and cost sharing. Nearly one million beneficiaries are expected to share an estimated \$150 million in savings for 2011.

Strengthening Our Advocacy Together for Region 1-B

- Presence in Lansing and Washington: The AAA 1-B staff made 472 contacts to state and federal legislators. The AAA 1-B’s five representatives on the Michigan Senior Advocates Council made numerous visits to legislators as well.
- Four testimonies were presented by Region 1-B staff at state legislative hearings.
- The first Senior Legislation Scorecard was developed and used by advocates to facilitate discussions with legislators.
- The Senior Advocacy Network grew by 108 members in 2010 to 438. The Network hosted two events in 2010, “AARP Listens to Senior Advocates from Southeast Michigan” and “Speak Out to Improve the OAA”.
- Older Michiganians Day: Over 160 advocates from Region 1-B met in small groups with 22 state legislators in Lansing on June 10 and were able to observe two senate subcommittee hearings on elder abuse and elder-friendly communities. The 2010 statewide attendance of 600 increased 33% over last year. In Region 1-B, hundreds of older adults and advocates learned about Older Michiganians Day at five local senior events.
- Seven thousand flyers asking advocates to call their legislators on Older Michiganians Day were included with home-delivered meals provided by the AAA 1-B nutrition vendors.

Looking Ahead to 2011

Advocacy work on behalf of older adults and adults with disabilities will continue in earnest in 2011, but with an added focus: solutions and outcomes. Governor Rick Snyder has made it his priority to support programs that show value for the public dollars invested. Home-and community-based programs are well-known by the aging network to provide cost-effective solutions, and work will be done to demonstrate this fact to state and federal legislators. Throughout 2011, the Area Agency on Aging 1-B’s Policy, Research Development and Advocacy department will develop and publish evidence to demonstrate that investing in Michigan’s seniors is good for Michigan.



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