



NOW

Your Update from AgeOptions

November 2015

A Letter from Jonathan Lavin AgeOptions President and CEO

AgeOptions is working on a number of fronts to continue to meet our obligations to older persons in the region and their service networks. We have asked our dedicated staff to help us through a time when our workload continues but we have limited opportunity to replace staff and to add staff where there is need. We are grateful to their flexibility, commitment and skill in helping us to achieve our goals in a difficult time.

AgeOptions has participated in advocacy for our elected state officials to adopt a budget that pays for the essential services offered by our senior service network. I chair the Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging Legislative Committee which has offered weekly updates to the Governor's Office and our state legislators across Illinois on how the budget impasse impacts older persons, communities and service provider agencies.

AgeOptions independently requested that mayors and elected officials in local municipalities reach out to the governor and their state representatives and senators to ask for resolution of the budget impasse. We provided the specific numbers of older persons in each of their communities who are served home delivered meals as an example of how the community and the aging network rely on each other to serve our elders. Seven municipalities sent letters (and shared them with AgeOptions). Recently, we received notice that the governor is asking for funding of home delivered meals (and ombudsman services) in a "sweep" bill being negotiated with legislators.

At the national level, we asked our congressmen and senators to reauthorize the Older Americans Act, eliminate sequestration that would have required severe cuts in 2016 funding



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(luckily this was avoided through a recent agreement by Congress and the White House), and now to reinstate preventive health funding for evidence based service programs, assure full funding for SHIP (Illinois Department on Aging network of community based insurance counselors), and increase funding for the Older Americans Act programs (all up in the air at this writing). On a possible positive note, there are rumors that discussions in the U.S. House of Representatives related to re-enactment of the Older Americans Act are proceeding.

AgeOptions also provides support and statewide leadership on Chronic Disease Self-Management and other evidence based health promotion/disease prevention programs. This includes a new statewide collaborative of organizations committed to assuring a network of services will be available and used by older and disabled persons with chronic conditions. We also have had success in obtaining Administration for Community Living support for the program through AgeOptions (see our article).

We continue to carry the torch for:

- Local responses to family caregiver stress and assistance in offering needed support to them (Caring Together/Living Better)
- Increased access to SNAP benefits to pay for essential food
- Reduction of economic insecurity
- Provision of support and direction to those seeking help with long-term care planning and supports
- Addressing elder abuse and neglect
- Stopping financial exploitation
- Offering the finest information on Medicare and health care plans to our community, region and the state.



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It has been a trying time for our network and for older persons. We are working to sustain initiatives that benefit the entire suburban Cook County region. It is most upsetting when Adult Protective Services are provided by our partners, but no state funding is being offered to pay for them; when agencies cut back on service days with people who need to work five days only allowed to work three or four; when direct help for older persons is impacted by reductions in the numbers of caring staff needed by our elders; and other reductions that are not visible to us at this time.



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