

Background Information on AAAs, Title VI Programs and the OAA

The Older Americans Act

Since its inception in 1965, the Older Americans Act (OAA) has been the foundation of services for older adults in the United States and forms the nucleus of our national system of home and community-based services for older Americans. The OAA provides funding to states for a range of community planning and service programs to older Americans at risk of losing their independence. Since its enactment, the OAA has been amended fifteen times, most recently in 2006, to expand the scope of services, increase local control and add more local control and responsibility, protections for the elderly.

The Aging Network

To develop and implement the wide array of OAA services, a system of federal, state and local agencies, known as the Aging Network was established. The core of the Aging Network is the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA), 56 State and Territorial Agencies on Aging, **650 Area Agencies on Aging**, 240 Title VI Native American aging programs, and over 30,000 service provider organizations. This critical aging infrastructure is the backbone of our nation's home and community-based care system offering support to older persons and persons with long-term support disabilities.

OAA Programs and Services

Through the aging network, each year more **than eight million older Americans** receive critical support such as nutrition, in-home care, transportation, disease prevention/health promotion, long-term care ombudsman, senior employment and other social supports essential to maintaining their independence.

One-half million families are provided assistance vital to their role as caregivers for older persons under the National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP), which was added to the Act in 2000. The NFCSP provides grants to AAAs/Title VI programs to help family members who are caring for their older loved ones who are ill or who have disabilities.

The wide range of OAA services administered by the aging network enables it to direct consumers to service choices that best meet their individual needs. In particular, AAAs/Title VI programs play a pivotal role in assessing community needs and developing programs that respond to those needs. They often serve as portals to care, assessing multiple service needs, determining eligibility, authorizing or purchasing services and monitoring the appropriateness and cost-effectiveness of services.

These federal dollars also leverage other sources of funding for AAAs/Title VI programs. According to the Administration on Aging (AoA): "In FY 2003 ...state and local communities leveraged approximately \$2 from other sources for every \$1 of federal funding; for intensive in-home services, the ratio was closer to \$3 to \$1."

The Challenges Ahead

Incremental funding increases in the OAA over the last several years have not kept pace with inflation or the growing population of individuals eligible for services for two decades. As a result unmet needs and growing waiting lists for services exist throughout the country.

In response, AAAs and Title VI agencies have skillfully managed care for vulnerable aging populations by maximizing private and public resources to ensure that essential services are available to millions of minority, frail and low-income older persons in need of comprehensive

long-term care. However, as the aging population grows - with more people living longer but facing chronic illness and frailty - and in the absence of significant funding increases, the aging - network will increasingly be unable to meet the demands for care.

These challenges will only grow. In 2006, the first of the 77 million baby boomers became eligible for OAA services. In 2030, one in five Americans will be over the age of 65. Significant increases in authorization levels and appropriations are crucial to assure the availability of OAA services and enhance the ability of older Americans to live with maximum health, independence and dignity.

Other Areas of Concern:

Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Benefit Program

Provide adequate resources for Medicare Part D enrollment assistance and counseling by providing \$10 million in FY '09 funding to AAAs and Title VI Native Americans aging programs and \$45 million to SHIPs for these efforts. n4a requests that Congress provide discretionary funding under the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to AAAs and Title VI Native American aging programs in the amount of \$10 million in FY '09. In recognition of their extensive work in support of beneficiaries on the Part D program, AAAs received the first dedicated funding for outreach and enrollment assistance efforts in the Medicare, Medicaid and SCHIP Extension Act of 2007 (Public Law No. 110-173). This legislation included \$5 million for grants to AAAs and Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs). n4a also requests that State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs) be funded at \$45 million in FY '09 in order to continue their Medicare enrollment assistance and one-on-one counseling efforts.

LIHEAP

Increase funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to \$5.1 billion as authorized under the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (\$2.57 billion in FY '08).

Transportation

Enhance funding for the Federal Transit Administration's Section 5310 Elderly and Disabled Formula Grant Program, which helps non-profit transportation providers meet the needs of the elderly and disabled, to the authorized level for FY'09 of \$133.5million, and fund the Section 5311 Rural Formula Grant Program and Section 5317 New Freedom Program at the authorized levels for FY'09 of \$538.1 million and \$92.5million, respectively.