

Senior and Disability Services Update

August 2015

Legislative Roundup

On June 22, the Department of Human Services Aging and People with Disabilities budget proposal for the 2015-2017 biennium was released. The majority of the news is good. Some highlights of the budget include:

- Oregon Project Independence (OPI) for seniors is funded at current levels.
- The OPI Pilot serving younger consumers with disabilities is funded at \$6 million for the biennium. These funds will continue to serve consumer in the pilot areas. This includes Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties.
- Money to support Evidence-based Mental Health Programs is included. Locally, COG uses this to run PEARLS, a program to reduce depression through goals-setting and social activation.
- Evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention is included. COG uses this to support multiple programs in the communities, including several Self Management Programs designed to improve long-term health for people with chronic conditions.
- Older Americans Act (OAA) funding that was reduced, because of sequestration, is being raised to previous levels due to mitigation funds contained in the budget bill.

Options Counseling and The Gatekeeper Program were initially not included for continuation in the 2015-17 fiscal biennium. However, we were successful in having the Options Counseling funding restored at \$1.8 million at the end of the session in the “Christmas Tree” bill, which contains the end of session adjustments or ‘gifts’ to the budget. Advocates, including Council members, were important voices leading to that restoration. Unfortunately, the Gatekeeper Program was not restored. While we and other stakeholders worked very diligently to maintain this program, because the funding was not continued, Gatekeeper will no longer be active in our area after July 2015.

Senior Meals Programs Face Substantial Budget Deficits in Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties and Regionally

Senior Meals staff continues to identify funding strategies to reduce the impact of a \$200,000 whole in the budget for FY2015-2016. As a team, we have increased requests for large grants in addition to researching companies who would increase revenue in the form of direct mail campaigns. We are not able to fix the budget deficit solely with this increased revenue, but are also considering ongoing strategies for program cost reduction including partnering with local non profits, meal route reduction, wait lists and/or meal site closures. These strategies are employed by other AAAs in the state with some success, though most programs are concerned

about balancing ongoing growing needs with flat program budgets. Recently we were informed that Northwest Senior and Disability Services in Salem is closing 2 meals sites and reducing services days at another meal site in order to cut costs and support the program. Though at Oregon Cascades West we would be sad to have to take these desperate measures, we need to keep our options open to keep the program as whole as possible.

Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments Awarded National and Community Service Grant for Foster Grandparent Program for Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties

Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments was recently awarded a grant to provide Foster Grandparent services in Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties. Foster Grandparents, who meet low-income eligibility guidelines, receive a small tax-free stipend, training, volunteer orientation, transportation reimbursement, supplemental insurance, and meals while on duty.

The Foster Grandparent Program provides loving and experienced mentors and tutors to children with special needs. Working one-on-one and serving between 15 and 40 hours a week, Foster Grandparents are individuals over the age of 55 who provide support in schools, community organizations, treatment programs, correctional facilities, and childcare centers. They review schoolwork, reinforce values, teach social skills, read with English Language Learners and are a friend, mentor, and role model in a variety of settings.

This grant not only helps the children of our community, but the older adults as well. Current research shows that volunteering helps one live longer and promotes a positive outlook on life. Established in 1965, the Foster Grandparent Program is celebrating its 50th Anniversary of community service and the OCWCOG is excited to continue its intergenerational legacy in our region.

Intake of Adult Protective Services Calls

Individuals who phone our offices in regard to abuse or neglect typically speak initially with someone in the Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) call center. However, in an effort to improve efficiency and services, that will be changing. Effective July 20th, we are referring all Adult Protective Service (APS) calls directly to an APS screener and/or the APS voice mail. By taking out the ADRC step, we feel that calls will be responded to more efficiently and callers will not need to repeat information, as the information will be given directly to an APS Specialist either through a live call or when responding to a voice message. We are hopeful that it will also alleviate some workload for our APS investigators since they will be the first contact for all APS referrals.