

Maryland Commission on Caregiving

September 4, 2025

10:30 AM -12:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

Agenda Google Meet joining info

[Video call link: https://meet.google.com/hev-nfhr-qci](https://meet.google.com/hev-nfhr-qci)

Or dial: (US) +1 775-442-4189 PIN: 786 637 297#

Meeting Minutes

- Commission Members Present: Julia Abate; Mary Ann Kane Breshi; Dawnita Brown; Patricia Morris; Theresa Robertson; Greg Sesek; Chalarra Sessoms; Ann Squire; Trina Townsend; Kathy Wehr; Molly Wisniewski
- Guests: Dorinda Adams; Wendy Buendia; Teresa Jeter-Cutting; Pearl Harmon; Terri Johnson; Ruth Kershner; Yetunde Olobatuyi; Dolapo Olomo; John Scott; Leslie Smith-Ray; Brenda Williams; Hilary Wiseman
- Approval of August Meeting Minutes
  - Motion to Approve: Mary Anne
  - Second: Kathy
  - Result: Approved

National Family Caregivers Month

- Events Call: Members are encouraged to share events within their networks. Events will be collected and distributed by the end of September.
- Department Updates:
  - Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) is preparing materials to share once approved.
  - Montgomery County AAA is awaiting approvals before sharing their event information.
- National Theme: Caregiver Action Network has not yet released a theme; last year it was announced in October (per Yetunde).
- Statewide Caregiving Campaign:

- Leslie shared that efforts are underway to develop a year-round campaign to recognize caregivers, not just during November.
- Patricia emphasized the importance of celebrating caregivers year-round, noting their accomplishments extend beyond National Family Caregivers Month.
- Leslie noted that with Delegate Woods' participation in the Commission, there may be opportunities to engage legislators in the campaign and explore the possibility of a statewide caregiver award.
- Outreach & Engagement:
  - Kathy highlighted an opportunity for the Maryland Commission on Caregiving (MCC) to table at events and further promote caregiving initiatives.
  - Discussion on hosting a Town Hall in partnership with AARP Maryland.
    - The previous virtual event on Longevity Ready Maryland, hosted with AARP, was very successful. Mary Anne noted that a Town Hall would need a clearly defined purpose.
    - Members suggested aligning the Town Hall with a National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers.

#### ACL Lifespan Respite Grant Update

- Greg reported that DHS has successfully applied for and received the ACL Lifespan Respite Grant twice in the past.
- This year, ACL only provided a two-week application window. He noted that even a 30-day turnaround is difficult due to internal approval processes, making the shortened window unworkable.
- In past years, 100% of award funds went directly to respite services.
- Greg raised these concerns directly with ACL.
- Mary Anne asked whether the Commission could support advance preparation to strengthen next year's application.
- Greg confirmed that a coordinated effort could be made in anticipation of the next grant cycle.

#### Subcommittee and Workgroup Updates

- Legislative Subcommittee – Chair, Leslie Smith-Ray
  - The Commission is fortunate to have a Delegate engaged in its work.
  - The Governor requested that bills be submitted by July, resulting in a busy 30-day legislative preparation period.
  - The Legislative Subcommittee is tracking bills that may affect caregivers, including:

- Job-sharing legislation (introduced last session), which may impact caregiver flexibility.
    - Other labor-related bills that could touch on caregiving issues.
  - The Subcommittee will meet monthly in November and December and weekly during session to review legislative activity.
  - Mary Anne highlighted that some bills may not explicitly reference caregiving but still impact caregivers. Example:
    - A proposal (through the DDA Council) requiring the installation of adult-size changing tables.
    - Though not labeled as “caregiving legislation,” such bills directly support caregivers and present opportunities for Commission advocacy.
  - The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 16th.
  - Departmental Introductions – Dorinda Adams
    - Dorinda introduced Sara Westrick, who began this week as AARP Maryland’s Advocacy Director.
    - Sara was selected following a volunteer interview process.
- Adult Survey Review Workgroup – Chair, Teresa Jeter-Cutting
  - The workgroup met for several sessions to review the 2023 Caregiver Survey results and identify key topic areas, including:
    - Mental health
    - Financial and emotional strain
    - Care competence
  - These topics will inform new caregiver training to be implemented by *Living Well Center of Excellence*, which will also manage registration.
  - The preliminary survey data provided by the School of Social Work revealed some response discrepancies. For example:
    - Some respondents indicated they were stressed but did not report “emotional strain.”
    - The survey covered the full spectrum of caregiving, which will help inform adjustments for the next survey.
  - Discussion:
    - Mary Anne asked how training will be shared and suggested involving DDA to ensure the caregiver section reaches a broader audience.
    - She emphasized that all individuals providing care should be recognized as caregivers.
    - Molly noted that the Living Well Center for Excellence has acknowledged the work of the Commission in their efforts to market the training.

- Teresa noted that updates will be shared with the Commission on an ongoing basis.
- Youth Survey Review Workgroup – Chair, Molly Wisniewski
  - The budget for the survey exceeded available funds; additional grants are being explored to cover costs.
  - Discussion:
    - Kathy suggested highlighting caregiver identification throughout the year, not just during awareness months.
    - Trina emphasized the importance of ongoing caregiver education, proposing a “Did you know?” campaign (e.g., statistics on Alzheimer’s and caregiving impact).
    - Dorinda noted that in the upcoming resource mapping pilot, it will be important to ensure Lifespan caregiving is fully included.
    - Mary Anne expressed concern over the higher costs associated with older caregiver data collection.
    - Greg explained that the first survey had limited funding and technical issues, including spam responses that distorted results. Additional technical support at the university added hidden costs.
    - Leslie shared that DHS did not account for survey costs in the ACL caregiver grant. The School of Social Work was unwilling to cut its budget or offer pro bono support.
    - Mary Anne asked how the Commission can better support caregiver data collection given limited resources.
    - Theresa expressed disappointment, noting that funding should not be a barrier and suggesting broader partnerships to champion the survey.
    - Molly reported that 2,229 responses were collected, Julia noted that Montgomery also has county-level data uploaded so that the state could review.
    - Hilary suggested engaging universities (e.g., Schools of Social Work, Public Health) and student groups to assist on the backend.
    - It was noted that state agencies cannot solicit donors, but the Commission may be able to support grants or other funding opportunities.
    - Greg concluded that this issue will be further explored in a subgroup with agencies representing the population. A proposal with options will be brought back to the Commission.
- Ambassador Training and Respite Workgroup – Chair, Shari Bailey

- Special thanks to Shari, Mary Anne, Pearl, Ruth, Yetunde, and Ann for meeting weekly throughout the summer to develop the MDOA ACL Caregiver Navigation Grant initiative and the Respite Ambassador Program.
- The Respite Ambassador Program will officially kick off in November, and nominations for ambassadors are currently being received.
- With this phase complete, the workgroup will now transition to its next charge—focusing on the Commission’s respite mandates.
- This next phase will be led by Shari and will begin in September.

Presentation: Longevity Ready Maryland – Building Communities for All Ages

Presenter: Leslie Smith-Ray, Director of Community Client Services, Maryland Department of Aging

- Overview of the State Plan on Aging
  - Signed by the Governor in June 2023.
  - Developed with input from over 500 stakeholders across the state through multisector workgroups and advisory groups.
  - Full plan available on the Maryland Department of Aging website.
- Plan Structure:
  - Four primary focus areas:
    - Build a longevity ecosystem
    - Promote economic opportunity
    - Prepare Marylanders to afford longevity
    - Optimize health, wellness, and mobility
  - Each goal is supported by strategies and specific tasks.
- Caregiving Emphasis:
  - Plan addresses caregivers across categories:
    - Family caregivers
    - Direct care workers
    - Workers age 50+
  - Maryland now has more residents over 50 than under 18, highlighting the importance of preparing for longevity.
  - The Governor and Secretary of Aging have engaged other state secretaries to support the plan.
  - Two biggest challenges identified: caregiving and housing.
- Direct Care Worker Registry Discussion:

- One strategy under consideration is establishing a statewide registry for direct care workers, with state-supported training (not equivalent to home health aide certification).
- West Virginia recently launched a registry, becoming the 10th state with such a system.
- Maryland Department of Health (MDH) is currently studying the feasibility following a bill that did not pass; a report is due to the legislature by year-end.
- First workgroup meeting scheduled next week.
- Commission Discussion:
  - Dorinda: Expressed interest in how the registry would be structured and asked whether partners may attend upcoming meetings. This effort aligns with the resource mapping process, and that 16 volunteers are engaged in promoting caregiving.
  - Mary Anne: Asked if the registry would be lifespan-inclusive. Response: Yes.
  - It was noted that several national organizations provide lifespan caregiving training that may be relevant.
  - The workgroup will meet six times by October. Leslie will provide updates, and the Department of Health is heavily represented in the process.

#### Questions/Concerns/Suggestions/Announcements

- AARP Maryland Update
  - Nearing completion of a needs assessment.
  - The Commission on Caregiving is highlighted as a top partner in the report.
  - Three emerging priority areas identified (to be shared soon).
  - Emphasis on training and access to information as critical for caregivers.
  - AARP views the Commission as a strong partner in meeting statutory mandates, noting frequent and positive communication with Commission leadership.
  - Expressed appreciation to Commission members for their work and partnership.

Meeting Adjourned