



Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

Director's Quarterly Leadership Meeting with Boards, Commissions and Committees (BCCs)

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Date: October 20, 2021 (FY21 Third Quarter Report)

BCC: Commission on Aging

BCC Representative: Barbara Selter

Montgomery County's Commission on Aging (CoA) continues to serve as an advocate for the health, safety, and well-being of the County's older residents by identifying significant issues where its voice on the needs of seniors can make a difference. The CoA appreciates the County's efforts to deal with the COVID-19 Pandemic and its resulting health and economic crises. The CoA stands ready to provide services and assistance in any way it can during these particularly difficult times.

While the CoA's work slows down in the summer (we do not conduct a Commission meeting in August), work continues apace as needed and as discussed below.

Age-Friendly Montgomery County

The CoA continues active participation in the Age-Friendly Montgomery County Initiative. A Commission alumnus is the Senior Fellow that staffs the Initiative, and individual CoA members participate on the various Committees. All have the ultimate goal of continuing to make the County a community for a lifetime.

The COA Chair works with the Age Friendly Home and Community Services Work Group on a series of Round Tables to address concerns associated with ensuring a sufficient supply of direct care workers to support Home and Community Based Services for Montgomery County citizens. Other participants include the provider community, Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery College, Maryland Association of Adult Day Services, Montgomery County Caregiver Support Program, African American Health Program, WorkSource Montgomery, Charles Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center, the Maryland Regional Direct Services Collaborative, and a variety of consumer groups.

Covid-19

The Commission is pleased that Montgomery County has one of the highest Covid-19 vaccination rates in the country. We are well aware of the hard work and infrastructure alliances that were required to achieve this goal. However, Covid-19 work for the Commission continues even as the County begins to open up and provide services in person. The Commission monitored which Senior Centers opened and what services were being provided and we were particularly relieved when lunches and activities were finally available in Senior Centers. These

Senior Centers are important places to help alleviate social isolation and loneliness, which had gotten so much worse during the height of the Pandemic.

Over the summer, the CoA finalized its Social Isolation Fact Sheet. This Fact Sheet was released to the public so that ramifications of social isolation would be more widely understood.

CoA Advocacy

Training

Advocacy is one of the Commission's most important functions. To improve its effectiveness, on September 1, The Community Action Board provided valuable training to the CoA tailored specifically for the CoA's advocacy and letter writing efforts.

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Montgomery County Budget

The CoA began its work on the budget in July when it held a meeting to determine budget priorities. This important meeting replaced the Commission's usual monthly meeting. It afforded every Commissioner the opportunity to provide input on funding recommendations. Following this meeting, Commissioners voted on priorities and based on this vote, a budget priorities paper was prepared and discussed at the September Commission meeting.

Also at the September Commission meeting, guest speakers explained the time frame of the County budget process and provided other useful insights on how to increase collaboration with the County. These helpful speakers were:

- Gabe Alborno, then MC Council Vice President;
- Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst; and
- Lindsay Lucas, Budget Analyst.

Letter

The Commission wrote a letter to the Department of Transportation providing recommendations for the Transportation Services Improvement Fund. This fund was created for transportation initiatives that benefit older adults, residents with disabilities, and people with low incomes.

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Commission's Task Force on Racial Equity, Dementia Services, and Policing

The Final Report of the CoA Task Force on Racial Equity, Dementia Services and Policing was completed and includes, we believe, useful recommendations for the County. The report went to: County Executive Marc Elrich; County Council President Tom Hucker; Tiffany Ward, Chief Equity Officer; Earl Stoddard, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer; Marcus Jones, Police Chief; Darren Francke, Assistant Chief; Raymond Crowel, and Director, Department of Health and Human Services. It was also sent to Officer Laurie Reyes, Montgomery County Police Department's Autism/IDD and Alzheimer's Outreach Program.

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Assisted Living Regulations

One Commissioner attended the September 19 meeting, held by the MD Department of Health, on its draft Assisted Living regulations. The Agency plans three additional meetings and the Commission plans to participate in every meeting in order to offer its recommendations regarding the regulations. The CoA believes that the protection of residents in assisted living facilities is very important and regulations must reflect the needs of the residents.

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Health and Wellness and Aging in the Community Committees

- Home-based care is the major focus of the CoA's Health and Wellness Committee (HWC) who currently are defining specific areas in which to concentrate. HWC is exploring what neighboring jurisdictions are doing and the possibility of collaboration.
- The CoA's Aging in Community (AIC) Committee hosted speakers on Vision Zero and Pedestrian Safety Master Programs. Housing models, e.g., home-sharing, are also being studied by this Committee.
- Home-and Community-Based Services is one of several topics that the Public Policy Committee has been addressing.

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Communications Committee

- After a lengthy and involved search, a new name was agreed upon for "Seniors Today." The new name is "50+ in Montgomery County."
- A new Commission Operations Handbook was developed and approved.
- The orientation program for new Commission members was revised.
- Work has begun on a new briefing book.

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Commission on Aging Strategic Planning

To better respond to the expected exponential growth of the older adult population in Montgomery County, the COA considered potential new ways to support the County Council in planning for and developing programs to meet this growing need. A planning group, comprised of several members of the Executive Committee, met many times over the summer to work on this.

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Collaboration with Other Boards, Commissions, and Committees

- CoA collaborates with other Boards, Commissions, and Committees, as appropriate. CoA also welcomes representatives of other Boards, Commissions and Committees at its standing Committee meetings. These representatives are invited to report on their activities at CoA's monthly meetings.

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