

**Los Angeles Aging Advocacy coalition**

**2010 Aging Summit Report**

**March 24, 2010**

**Sponsored by:**

**The SCAN Foundation, The Archstone Foundation, The California Wellness Foundation**

## **Los Angeles Aging Advocacy Coalition**

### **2010 Aging Summit Report**

#### **Introduction**

The roots of the newly formed Los Angeles Aging Advocacy Coalition (LAAAC) germinated as a collective response to identified threats to the aging service system. It organically coalesced and filled a void at the local level of a unified entity organized to advocate on behalf of the aging community. LAAAC's mission is to preserve, protect and strengthen access to quality care for older persons, their families and caregivers in Los Angeles County by forging joint advocacy efforts to influence fiscal and public policy in the field of aging. AltaMed Health Care Services, Partners in Care Foundation, and St. Barnabas Senior Services represent LAAAC's core leadership. Summit staff and operations were established at St. Barnabas Senior Services.

LAAAC convened its first meeting in December 2009. At that time, it was decided that LAAAC would host a countywide Summit to bring the aging community together to learn about current and future proposed policy developments and implications, and seek commitment to short-term advocacy strategies linked to ongoing coalition building. In January 2010, a Summit Planning Committee was formed to organize and plan the Summit. The Planning Committee included representation from the following organizations: AARP California, AltaMed Health Services Corporation, Braille Institute of America, Los Angeles Department of Aging, County of Los Angeles - Community and Senior Services, East Valley Multipurpose Senior Center, Edward R. Roybal Institute on Aging, Los Angeles Caregiver Resource Center, Jewish Family Services of Los Angeles, Partners in Care Foundation, Personal Assistance Services Council, and St. Barnabas Senior Services. The Aging Summit date was set for March 24, 2010.

#### **2010 Aging Summit**

On March 24, 2010, LAAAC hosted the 2010 Aging Summit at the Braille Institute of America in Los Angeles, California. The Summit was sponsored by The SCAN Foundation, The Archstone Foundation, and The California Wellness Foundation. A copy of the program is attached.

The purpose of the daylong countywide Aging Summit was to bring together local service providers and stakeholders to launch a long-term sustainable coalition building strategy to advance advocacy and policy action for the aging community. One-hundred twenty (120) persons representing the broad range of the aging service network, consumer advocacy groups, public and private sectors, and philanthropy attended the Summit. A cross-section of health and human service disciplines serving the aging community included AltaMed, Partners in Care Foundation, St. Barnabas Senior Services, Los Angeles County and City Area Agency on Aging, adult day health care centers, hospitals, clinics, caregiver resources, and housing. Consumer advocates, such as AARP, Alzheimer's Association, and the Congress of California Seniors, participated, as well as representatives from academia. An LACCC membership list is attached.



The Summit launched a process of a united alliance committed to a long-term sustainable coalition building strategy. This event forged new relationships, strengthened existing connections, identified interrelated issues and solidified firm commitment to work as a collective body on common efforts associated with legislative and policy issues currently impacting the system of care.

During the first part of the program participants learned about Federal, State and local policy developments and implications, legislative and service threats, and changes affecting older adults and their families from experts in their respective fields.

Castulo De La Rocha, J.D., President and CEO, AltaMed Health Care Services Corporation, set the tone for the day with his opening remarks. He emphasized the power of unity, and the importance of a coalition as a mobilizing mechanism to advance advocacy and public policy. Two expert panels followed highlighting current policy developments and implications.

The first panel was moderated by Rigo Saborio, President and CEO, St. Barnabas Senior Services, and provided an overview of recent policy developments and implications at the State and Federal level regarding policy changes affecting older adults and their families in Los Angeles County. Panelists included the following people:

- Ernie Powell, Manager of Advocacy, AARP: Key Ballot Measures; Re-Districting, and Health Care Reform
- Gary Passmore, Executive Director, Congress of California Seniors: 1115 Waiver
- Lydia Missaelides, Executive Director, California Association for Adult Day Services: Adult Day Health Care Proposed Elimination
- Steve P. Wallace, Associate Director & Professor UCLA School of Public Health: Impact of 2010 – 2011 State Budget Cuts on Older Adults

As the proposed elimination of community-based services such as Adult Day Health Care, In Home Support Services, additional Medi-Cal optional benefits, and the 1115 Waiver are urgent pressing issues, this panel's discussion was timely and very educational. Further, the panel clearly articulated that there currently is a dearth of champions on aging issues serving on the State legislature, and that there is a need to identify some or there will likely be a continuing erosion of service delivery system for the aging community.

A second panel was moderated by W. June Simmons, CEO, Partners in Care Foundation, and highlighted local impact and implications on the service system in Los Angeles based on current proposed State and Federal policy developments. Panelists included the following people:

- Cynthia D. Banks, Director, Community and Senior Services, Los Angeles County
- Laura Trejo, General Manager, Los Angeles Department of Aging

The proposed realignment of the City of Los Angeles Department of Aging (DOA) represented the most urgent local issue. The DOA had been under threat to be merged with another City Department, thus diluting the system of care for the aging.

The afternoon session, facilitated by Adama Dyinziak, Director of Strategic Programs, Braille Institute of America, was devoted to a small group exercise. Based on the information presented by the panelists, the attendees were charged to identify immediate action strategies to *inform, educate, and advocate* targeted audiences about current and relevant issues.

In the post-group report session, the following strategies were presented:

Inform – execute culturally appropriate public awareness campaigns via Media (including ethnic media): print, radio, TV, social networking to older adults, families, caregivers, and public

- Editorials
- Letter to the editor campaign
- Meetings with publishers
- Facebook page: for each program
- Twitter: Senior tweeters, Blogs
- Videos: lives of seniors, post to YouTube and Facebook
- Develop Public Service Announcements
- Identify personal stories and connect with media (earned media opportunities)

Educate – execute current, accurate and culturally sensitive educational series to target constituencies, older persons, families and caregivers, public and other alliances

- Develop culturally sensitive, interactive, visual tools
- Develop a clear, accurate message and talking points
- Use personal stories to show impact
- Capitalize on older adults skills to communicate with others and caregivers
- Combat apathy from local to global
- Provide expert updates
- Mobilize 900,000 older adults MediCal and caregivers

Advocate – organize and execute targeted legislative State, County and City advocacy efforts

- Tool kit: data (outcome driven), talking points and training
- Identify key policy makers and stakeholders
- Delegation city/county to Sacramento
- Connect issues to Council members, include tours of programs
- Identify specific State committees, target those on the fence
- Create phone banks in different languages
- Seek solutions to increase revenue
- Fix policy process: super majority 2/3 vote, simple majority
- Follow Ballot measures
- Build coalitions



The next section of the program, led by W. June Simmons, Marie S. Torres, and Rigo Saborio, called for a commitment to establish an organizational framework for LAAAC by adapting an agreement around its collective purpose and action plan to advocate, influence, and advance public policy in the aging field.

Dr. Fernando Torres-Gil, UCLA, Associate Dean, Academic Affairs, Professor of Social Welfare and Public Policy, closed the Summit with a “Call to Action” around the identified strategies.

The Summit served to galvanize the aging network to commit to immediate and short-term strategies to advance policy in the field of aging. LAAAC’s advocacy and policy agenda was set with a decisive agreement around two main policy issues:

1. State Budget Cuts to Older Adult and Caregiver Programs
2. Preservation of the City of Los Angeles Department of Aging as an independent entity

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The LAAAC is currently formalizing its operational structure, developing a sustainability plan, and moving forward to achieve its advocacy and policy agenda.

Organizational Structure: In May 2010, the LAAAC’s core leadership is meeting to accomplish the following:

- Transition from the Summit Planning Committee to an LAAAC Steering Committee.
- Formalize Steering Committee & Co-Chairs to set vision, cultivate leadership, set goals, carry out action plan, and act as a fast-track decision-making body.
- Establish Strategy Workgroups and propose Chairs to carry out identified strategies regarding inform, educate, and advocate.
- Create operational process.

Sustainability Plan: Also in May, the LAAAC’s core leadership will assess options for continued financial support, will commit to create a viable long-term sustainability plan, and will discuss future work with other county and/or regional coalitions throughout the State. With the recent success of the LAAAC Summit and subsequent results, it is clear there is a great need for a united voice to represent the needs of the aging community. However, for the LAAAC to build upon the tremendous progress to date and take its efforts to the next level, financial resources will be necessary. While the sustainability plan is being created and financial resources are being identified, St. Barnabas Senior Services has reaffirmed their commitment to provide in-kind office and administrative assistance, and Carmen Reyes has reaffirmed her commitment to provide volunteer staff services. The sustainability plan will outline the required budget for the next phase of operations.



Advocacy and Policy Agenda: The immediate goal is to advocate and mobilize around two urgent legislative issues related to LAAAC's policy position on existing Federal, State and local threats to the service system:

- 1) Proposed 2010-2011 State Budget Cuts and Federal issues impacting the aging network:
  - Community-based programs long-term care proposed for elimination
  - Reinstatement and restoration programs under the Older Americans Act
  - Health Care Reform

Action/Results: As a direct result of the Summit, LAAAC (in collaboration with AARP, the Congress of California Seniors, and the California Association for Adult Day Services) has established weekly conference calls to keep abreast of the almost-daily developments and implications of State level issues, (i.e., court decisions, legislative hearings, proposed cuts and ballot measures), and to formulate appropriate advocacy efforts aligned with those of its collaborating statewide organizations based in Sacramento. Efforts are targeting current issues outlined in this report, ballot measures, and candidate forums designed to inform, educate and advocate.

- 2) Proposed realignment of the City of Los Angeles Department of Aging (DOA)

Action/Results: During the past two months, LAAAC developed and implemented a targeted strategy designed to inform and educate elected officials and their staff, consumers, providers, and the public about the proposals to merge the DOA with another City department. A principle strategy included constituent visits to offices of Los Angeles City Council members, coupled with a strong presence at City Council hearings where the issue was being discussed. Expanded efforts include regional community and consumer education and mobilization, continued monitoring of DOA status, and education of elected officials. At the Summit, broader participation was galvanized by giving the issue visibility and increasing knowledge regarding the cost-effectiveness of current integrated services and the impact of changing demographics in an aging society. A copy of the fact sheet that was distributed is attached. Coordinated and targeted visits to City Councilmember offices, and discussions with their staff, then ensued.

Based on LAAAC's efforts, proposed merger plans have been rescinded. The Mayor's budget recommends keeping DOA intact and independent. While this is a dramatic victory for LAAAC, the LAAAC will continue to monitor the situation, analyze cost-effectiveness, and seek innovative solutions to enhance the aging service system.

## Conclusion

LAAAC has created a rapid response, grassroots mobilization model linked to ongoing advocacy efforts, has strengthened and forged new relationships, and has established concrete meaningful advocacy and policy goals as it builds its operational structure.

At the 2010 Aging Summit, LAAAC not only launched a united alliance committed to a long-term sustainable coalition building strategy, but also set its policy and advocacy agenda, focusing on two main policy issues:

1. State Budget Cuts to Older Adult Programs
2. Preservation of the Los Angeles Department of Aging as an independent entity

The LAAAC has already had immediate and positive impact on the aging service realignment, with the successful outcome securing the Los Angeles Department of Aging as an independent entity. This progress is largely attributed to the Coalition's education campaign targeting Los Angeles City Council members.

As LAAAC continues to build, support, and sustain this coalition, it will require financial resources and in-kind support. Funding from the three leading foundations that sponsored the Summit (Archstone, California Wellness, and SCAN) is a testament to the strength and importance of the Coalition. The LAAAC seeks to broaden this base of funders to capitalize on the current momentum and to effect meaningful change in the lives of seniors.