

Older Americans Act Review— Advocacy Programs

April 2026 Advisory Council Meeting



Area Agency on Aging

- Title III of the Act authorizes federal funds to provide the following services:
 - Supportive services (socialization, social supports, senior centers, transportation)
 - Nutrition services (congregate and home-delivered)
 - Evidence-based disease prevention and health promotion services
 - Family caregiver support services
- Title II of the Act authorizes federal funds to provide:
 - **Advocacy**
 - Administration



Advocacy in the OAA

- The area agency shall serve as the public advocate for the development or enhancement of comprehensive and coordinated community-based systems of services in each community throughout the planning and service area.



Advocacy in the OAA

- The area agency shall:
 - Monitor, evaluate, and comment on policies, programs, hearings, levies, and community actions which affect older persons and family caregivers.
 - Solicits comments from the public on the needs of older persons and family caregivers.
 - Represent the interests of older persons to local level and executive branch officials, public and private agencies or organizations
 - Consult with and support the state's long-term care ombudsman program
 - Coordinate with public and private organizations to promote new or expanded benefits for older persons
 - Undertake a leadership role in targeting resources from all appropriate sources to meet the needs of older persons with greatest social and economic need



Public Policy Advocacy

- Advocacy is required by the Older Americans Act.
- Empowers older adults to speak out about their own priorities at the local, state, federal, or program level.
- Advocacy and outreach events including the Senior Leadership program, policymaker gatherings, and Aging Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C. and Madison.

COA Advocacy Committee

- Responsible for setting annual legislative priorities, monitoring and developing response to legislative activities.
- Develop relationships and outreach with legislators.
- Build strategies to impact the legislative process.
- Encourage advocacy amongst older adults throughout Milwaukee County.
- Collaborate with statewide aging network partners.



Legal Advocacy

There are times when older adults need someone to advocate on their behalf.

Organizations dedicated to individual advocacy:

SeniorLAW through Legal Action of Wisconsin

- No fee legal services for older adults 60+
- Housing, Public Benefits, Consumer Protection

Elder Benefits Specialist Program through the ADRC and SeniorLAW

Medicare Outreach Specialist

- Unbiased Medicare Outreach and Education
- Medicare Counseling & Plan Choice

Legal Rights Protection

- Disability Rights Wisconsin
- Wisconsin Board on Aging and Long-Term Care



2025-2027 Goal

SMART Measure

Expand the base of older adult advocates across Milwaukee County to grow influence and ensure representative voice with all local, state, and federal representatives.

By 2027, we will have members on the Advocacy Committee from approximately 75 percent of all Milwaukee County state legislative districts, 90 percent of all Milwaukee County Supervisory districts, and 100 percent of all federal representative and senate districts.

Develop relationships with local, state, and federal legislators to impact positive policy change.

By 2027, we will have met with 80 percent of all Milwaukee County local, state, and federal legislators twice to discuss policy priorities adopted by the Advocacy Committee and Commission on Aging. These meetings can be individual meetings, at WAAN Aging Advocacy Day, at an In-District Event, or other Milwaukee County advocacy events.

Identify and advocate for three specific policy proposals with legislators that advance racial equity and the health and well-being of older adults.

In 2025, the Advocacy Committee and Commission on Aging will identify the three policy proposals to advance. In 2025 and 2026, we will create our action plan for advocating on our proposals. In 2027, we will have successfully advocated for enactment of at least one of the proposals.

Expand our common cause on public policy issues with other nonpartisan older adult groups, such as labor unions, retiree groups, or the AARP, and develop intentional relationships with media partners to bring awareness to older adult advocacy issues and policy positions.

For each year of the plan period, we will partner with at least one older adult advocacy group to host twice per year advocacy events that bring together older adult residents, advocates, and Milwaukee County's local, state, and/or federal legislators.
By 2027, we will work with media partners on three occasions to highlight the Advocacy Committee and/or Commission on Aging through featured articles, interviews with committee members, or by providing quotes in related articles.

2025-2027 Goal

SMART Measure

Nurture and educate Seniors through hosting the Senior Leadership Program annually, instruct participants on effective communication with policymakers and leaders, and convene all Senior participants on a regular basis to carry advocacy messages to their legislators and policymakers.

All participants in the Senior Leadership program demonstrate an increased understanding of the policymaking process and comfortability talking with policymakers and leaders. At least 50 percent engage in advocacy within six months of attending the program through attending WAAN Aging Advocacy Day, an In-District Aging Advocacy event, enrolling in a Commission committee/council, or another self-identified method.

Increase involvement of current Milwaukee County Area Agency on Aging program and service participants on the Advocacy Committee and in the Senior Leadership Program.

For each year of the plan period, we will recruit at least one participant of our programs/services to the Advocacy Committee. For each year of the plan period, we will aim to have 25 percent of Senior Leadership Program participants be current program/service participants.

Promote awareness of the Commission on Aging, Advocacy Committee, and advocacy opportunities and events through improved website accessibility and functionality.

By 2027, the Area Agency on Aging will have developed and implemented a full project plan and timeline for accessible website improvements for the Commission on Aging and Advocacy Committee, in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.