

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: January 5, 2022

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Director, Department of Health and Human Services

Subject: An informational report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, providing an update on the status of the integration between DHHS and Aging

File Type: Informational Report

REQUEST

An amendment to the 2021 Budget for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) requests that the department provide quarterly reports on the status of the integration of the Department on Aging as a division within DHHS. The reports were to include updates on the merging of the Aging and Disability Resource Center and the Adult Protective Services and the Elder Abuse Units as well as any other program and administrative changes, along with community feedback that has been received due to the integration of the two departments.

POLICY

2021 DHHS Adopted Budget Amendment 1A037

BACKGROUND

Over the past few years, DHHS has been implementing a “No Wrong Door” customer service approach meaning that anyone, regardless of age, disability, race, gender, or socio-economic status can and will be served no matter a person’s entry point into the system. A fully integrated human service model will not only align Milwaukee County with the rest of the state and country in terms of how people are served across the lifespan, but it will also provide greater access to a wider array of services for people of all ages and abilities.

The 2022 Adopted Budget created a newly formed Aging and Disabilities Services which includes services for persons with differing abilities and older adults. These populations were previously supported by the Aging Division, Disabilities Services Division, and Office for Persons with Disabilities. Programs are now operated under one umbrella and primarily include Adult Protective Services, recreation for persons with disabilities, a combined Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), and various supportive services for older adults, including,

caregiver support, transportation services, senior center operations, case management, and caregiver respite. These services enable people to live in the community as independently as possible and avoid expensive institutional placements.

DHHS has made significant progress toward the full integration of Aging. The work undertaken and completed since the last report to the County Board is identified below:

Area Plan (2022-2024) Development

Development of the Area Plan for the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is on track. The Commission on Aging Advisory Council and full Commission on Aging approved the 2022-2024 Area Plan at separate meetings held on December 17, 2021. Pending Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors approval, which is being requested in this January/February cycle, the 2022-2024 Area Aging Plan will be sent to the Wisconsin DHS Bureau of Aging and Disability Services (BADR) for its final approval. The Wisconsin DHS BADR office has requested that Milwaukee County submit the final Area Plan to them by February 11, 2022.

ADRC State Application

The formal application to combine the Aging Resource Center (ARC) and Disability Resource Center (DRC) into an Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) was submitted on September 30, 2021 to the State Department of Health Services. On December 8, 2021, DHS approved the department's application. As of January 1, we are officially the ADRC of Milwaukee County.

APS Program Update

The Adult Protective Services (APS) team serves Milwaukee County residents in various capacities to ensure safety, well-being, and stability for individuals with differing abilities, ages 18-59, and older adults, age 60 and over. This program was originally operated separately by DSD and Aging and in the 2021 Budget, the two separate programs integrated into one. Since January of 2021, the adult protective services team has assisted over 1,800 families impacted by abuse, neglect, financial exploitation or needed guardianship. The team works to ensure safety as a primary intervention but often provides preventative support by connecting families to resources that can support them in long-term stability.

We have a triage team which consists of two full-time team members to respond to referrals submitted via our online referral from the public as well as internal transfers to their phone lines from the ADRC. Online referrals have been consistently coming in at a rate of 20-60 per week. The triage team respond to the online referrals within 24-48 business hours. As of November 2021, the ADRC Information and Assistance team have assumed the role of receiving all calls that come in requesting support from the APS team. The ADRC team continues to receive high volumes of calls for APS support.

Please note that the decrease in live answer rate, returned calls and assignment of cases have been significantly impacted due to staff shortages, changes in staffing due to COVID, and other medically-related staff leave. At the time of this writing, staff is being hired and trained to increase ability to manage the incoming caseload. The APS team is currently entering their 5th round of hiring since July of this year. There have been some barriers to increasing the staffing in the program due to lack of candidates as well as lack of acceptance of offered positions. The APS team is currently active in an overtime project to allow current team members the opportunity to support the cases coming in during evening and weekend hours. Traditionally, the team does not provide service during these hours.

Communications

The following activities are being conducted by our staff around communication:

- Department leadership provides regular integration updates to all staff.
- DHHS Rebranding—DHHS worked closely with the Department of Administrative Services to rebrand DHHS to align with the County's vision logo. The new DHHS visual identity reflects the No Wrong Door vision and our collective work as one department.
- Website--Incorporated the Division on Aging and Veterans' Services sites into the DHHS site. Staff is currently working on improving accessibility and organization of the site.
- Training Communication--Developed a new email marketing product to promote integration-related trainings.

Cross Training

To ensure staff from different program areas who have touchpoints with older adults is cross trained, a team has been charged with identifying, developing, and implementing trainings for staff in the ADRC, AAA, and Veterans' Services.

2021 Training Schedule:

We have coordinated a training schedule for 2021 and will add additional trainings as topics come up as we work toward the ARC/DRC merger.

- May Topics: Hear Wisconsin and Vision Forward
- June Topic: Trauma Informed Care with Leanne Delsart of BHD
- July Topic: CARS and CART/Crisis Services with Jim Feagle, Pauline Young, and Lisa Kaczmarek
- August Topic: Dementia Care Specialist Services with Candice LeGros and Cristina Huitron
- September Topic: Youth Transition with Hazel Miller
- October Topic: Senior Dining, Meals on Wheels, and MCDA Transportation (and application/referral process) with Kayla Steinke and MCDA staff

- November Topic: Aging and Ageism with Helen Bader School of Social Welfare staff and Disability and Ableism with Center for Independence Staff

Related File No's:	20-733 , 21-107 , 21-366 , 21-501 , 21-920 , 21-916
Associated File No's (Including Transfer Packets):	
Previous Action Date(s):	

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

This item is aligned to the strategic plan because it focuses on breaking down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered.

FISCAL EFFECT

This item is informational and has no fiscal effect.

TERMS

N/A

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

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