

Amendment to Milwaukee County AAA 2019-2021 Area Plan

What has necessitated the change in oversight of the Department on Aging?

In 2019, Milwaukee County was the first local unit of government in the U.S. to declare racism a public health crisis. In April 2020, Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele and the County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved an ordinance that committed Milwaukee County to advancing racial equity and eliminating health disparities. For the first time in a quarter century, Milwaukee County now has a unified vision of becoming the healthiest county in Wisconsin.

County Executive David Crowley, who took office in May 2020 and is the first African-American elected to this office in Milwaukee County's history, has built upon these efforts by advancing a "No Wrong Door" customer service approach for human services (which includes services for people with disabilities, older adults, people with mental health issues, youth, veterans and those dealing with homelessness and housing insecurity). The County Executive's No Wrong Door approach is built upon the premise that any customer, regardless of age, disability, or status, can get the help they need at any time. This requires an integrated service delivery system that meets customers where they are and gets them the help they need as quickly as possible. No Wrong Door is a best-practice utilized by human service systems throughout the rest of the U.S. and is the standard in every other community in Wisconsin.

County Executive Crowley's 2021 Recommended Budget included a plan to fully integrate Aging services (and Veterans services) into the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The County Executive's plan is tied to the County's strategic vision which is that by achieving racial equity Milwaukee County will become the healthiest county in Wisconsin. The County Executive has proposed this bold plan because Milwaukee County is currently ranked 71st (out of 72 counties) in the state in terms of the overall health of its population – and in order to improve this ranking, the County Executive believes that consolidating all human services into one organizational unit is a critically important first step.

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, it will also provide greater access to a wider array of services for people of all ages and abilities. Specifically, the County Executive's proposed integration plan connects to the County's strategic plan in the following ways:

- **Creates Intentional Inclusion:** The plan aims to improve customer experience for all older adults through inclusion in the No Wrong Door model. As the population over 60 years of age grows in Milwaukee County, older adults will be able to interact with County staff without stigma or silos.

- **Bridges the Gap:** The plan provides a more direct connection to services for older adults, which will improve health outcomes. The plan also adds staff on the frontlines to help those who need help the most and provides direct access to other “wrap-around” services such as eviction prevention, mental health, and energy assistance.
- **Invest in Equity:** As part of a larger department, programs for older adults will be cushioned from direct tax levy target reductions which have been, and will continue to be, a fiscal reality for Milwaukee County.

For more information, please click on the following link to the County’s website which provides additional details on the No Wrong Door approach: <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/Vision>

The County Executive’s Office also created a “Frequently Asked Questions” document relating to the integration plan, that document can be found here:

[https://county.milwaukee.gov/Vision1/DHHS-MCDA-VSIntegration FAQ 10.15.20 10am.pdf](https://county.milwaukee.gov/Vision1/DHHS-MCDA-VSIntegration%20FAQ%2010.15.20%2010am.pdf)

Describe how public input has been solicited related to the change of the current AAA/Aging Unit plan, and the results of that solicitation.

The timeline below identifies the dates on which the integration plan was communicated to various stakeholders:

September 25: The County Executive’s office presented its integration plan to the Commission on Aging. Members of the ADRC Governing Board were also invited to attend this meeting. There was a lot of conversation about this topic, and several Commissioners expressed concern that they were hearing about this plan too late in the decision-making process. The County Executive’s Chief of Staff attended the meeting and explained that the County Executive had only recently made his decision to include the integration plan in his 2021 Recommended Budget. Once that decision was made, the County Executive’s staff reached out to the Chair of the Commission on Aging, and the Chair of the ADRC Governing Board, to tell them about the plan. (NOTE: The Department on Aging 2021 Budget Request materials, which were submitted to the County Executive’s Office in mid-July, did not include the integration plan).

October 1: The County Executive presented his 2021 Recommended Budget to the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors. On October 2, the County Executive’s staff, DHHS Director, and MCDA Interim Executive Director coordinated a meeting with all Aging staff at which the integration plan was shared and staff had the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the plan.

October 5: The Commission on Aging Advocacy Committee discussed the County Executive’s 2021 Recommended Budget, and specifically discussed the County Executive’s integration plan. Several Committee members were disappointed that older adults were not involved sooner in the integration plan discussions. The Advocacy Committee passed a motion opposing the integration plan and asked Aging staff to send a letter to the County Board of Supervisors that

outlined their position (NOTE: There was one Advocacy Committee member who voted to oppose this letter and spoke in favor of the integration proposal).

Also, on October 5th, the Commission on Aging Executive Committee met and discussed the agenda for the October Commission on Aging meeting. County Executive staff (as well as the MCDA Interim Executive Director) were invited to the meeting. The Committee briefly discussed the County Executive's integration plan and expressed reservations about the plan, particularly expressing that older adults should have been consulted earlier in the process as the integration plan was being developed.

October 7: The Chair of the Commission on Aging and the Chair of the COA Advisory Council met with the MCDA Interim Executive Director. The group discussed upcoming next steps in terms of the integration plan. The COA Chair and Advisory Council Chair asked the MCDA Interim Executive Director to create a more detailed document that outlined the specifics of the County Executive's integration plan. The Advisory Council Chair decided to schedule that body's next meeting for October 29th at which the Aging Unit's Area Plan Amendment (which would include the questions that the State DHS is asking the Aging Unit to answer) would be discussed and voted on. The COA Chair decided to schedule a special Commission on Aging meeting for November 6, and the sole agenda item for that meeting would be a review of the Aging Unit's Area Plan Amendment.

October 15: In terms of other public discussion of the County Executive's integration plan, on October 15th the County Board's Finance Committee reviewed the 2021 Recommended Budget for the Department of Health and Human Services (which contains the County Executive's plan to integrate the Aging Unit into DHHS, and the policy intent to integrate the Aging Resource Center and Disability Resource Center). This meeting, at which the public could attend and provide comment, involved several DHHS and Aging management staff. Finance Committee members asked several questions related to the integration plan; generally speaking, the questions related to whether services will be impacted, to what extent older adults were involved in the integration planning effort, what specific metrics will be employed to measure the success or impact of the integration, and to what extent funding will be impacted by the integration. There was one individual from the public who spoke at the Finance Committee meeting (Richmond Izard, the Chair of the Commission on Aging) and Mr. Izard voiced his opposition to the integration plan. Mr. Izard said that older adults were not involved in the integration planning effort, and that the County has not provided a clear picture of why the integration effort is needed and how it will actually improve outcomes for senior customers.

October 23rd: The Milwaukee County Commission on Aging discussed the County Executive's integration plan at their October 23rd meeting. The DHHS/Aging integration plan was the main focus of this meeting. County Executive David Crowley and some of his staff (including Chief of Staff Mary Jo Meyers, Deputy Chief of Staff Sarah Milnar McLaughlin, Director of Strategic Planning Isaac Rowlett, and Director of Community Relations Schinika Fitch) were all present at the meeting.

Other participants in this meeting included Pat Bruce, the Chair of the ADRC Governing Board, DHHS Director Shakita LaGrant McClain, Department on Aging Interim Executive Director Jon Janowski, and Neal Minogue, Older Americans Act Supervisor from the State of Wisconsin Office on Aging.

County Executive Crowley presented his “No Wrong Door” vision and integration plan and then he and his staff answered questions from Commission members for over two hours. Among the concerns raised by Commissioners were that older adults were not consulted as part of the integration decision-making process, that the County has not fully explained why this change is needed and why it is needed now, and that the voice of older adults will be lost as part of an integrated Aging unit. Other questions asked by Commissioners pertained to the evaluation of this integration effort, including what specific metrics would be utilized to measure the success of the plan; to what extent (if any) would funding or positions be impacted by the integration plan; and would the Aging unit continue to have a full-time Director under the newly proposed organizational structure. The Commission on Aging did not take a position on the County Executive’s plan and instead asked its Advisory Council to meet in emergency session on 10-26 to further discuss the County Executive’s plan and take a formal position on it.

October 26th: The Commission on Aging Advisory Council met on 10-26 to discuss the County Executive’s DHHS/Aging integration plan. County Executive Crowley attended the meeting, provided an overview of his integration plan, answered questions from Council members, and listened to Council feedback on his proposed plan. Also present at the meeting were County Executive staff (including Mary Jo Meyers, Isaac Rowlett, and Schinika Fitch), Neal Minogue from the state DHS-BADR, DHHS Director LaGrant-McClain, and MCDA Interim Executive Director Janowski.

Some Council members raised the same concerns that were raised at the 10-23 COA meeting. At the end of the meeting, the Council voted 7 to 5 (with three abstentions and five members missing) to support the following motion: *The Milwaukee County Aging Advisory Council opposes amending the 2019-21 Milwaukee County Area Aging Plan to incorporate the Milwaukee County Department on Aging as a unit within the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services for up to one year to allow further consideration by older adults in Milwaukee County in consultation with the Milwaukee County Executive’s office.*

The Advisory Council agreed that its motion should be taken up by the full Commission on Aging as soon as possible.

November 2: The Commission on Aging met on November 2nd to specifically discuss the Advisory Council’s position on the County Executive’s integration plan. County Executive Crowley and some of his staff attended this meeting, as did Neal Minogue from DHS, DHHS Director LaGrant, and MCDA Interim Executive Director Janowski. The Commission on Aging Chair limited debate to Commissioners, state and County administrators, and the public.

Commissioners debated the issue extensively and ultimately voted 7 to 2 to support the County Executive's integration plan.

Milwaukee County Board meetings

Throughout the month of October, several County Board members scheduled budget "town hall" meetings with their constituents. DHHS and Aging staff were invited to participate in those meetings and answer questions from the public. A summary of those town hall meetings is below:

October 19th – Supervisors Haas and Clancy (joint town hall meeting)

- There were no comments about the DHHS/Aging integration plan

October 19th – Supervisors Goodwin and Taylor (joint town hall meeting)

- There were no comments about the DHHS/Aging integration plan

October 20th – Supervisor Shea town hall meeting

- There were no comments about the DHHS/Aging integration plan

October 21st – Supervisors Cullen, Martin, and Taylor (joint town hall meeting)

- There were no comments about the DHHS/Aging integration plan

October 21st – Supervisors Sumner and Wasserman (joint town hall meeting)

- There were no comments about the DHHS/Aging integration plan

Also, on October 30th, the County Board of Supervisors held its annual public budget hearing. At this hearing, attended by all County Supervisors as well as the County Executive, members of the public shared their views on the County budget. There were four individuals who spoke about the County Executive's integration plan; three of those individuals (two of whom are current Commission on Aging members) spoke in favor of the integration plan, and one citizen spoke against it.

Finally, throughout the budget process, County residents were routinely encouraged by the County Executive's Office and County Board of Supervisors to submit questions or feedback regarding the 2021 County Budget to their individual offices.

On November 9th, the Milwaukee County Board adopted the 2021 Recommended Budget with no changes to the Milwaukee County Executive's integration plan. On November 12th, County Executive Crowley signed the 2021 Adopted Budget.

Name an individual who, regardless of title, will be assigned to carry out the full-time responsibilities of directing the Department on Aging on an interim basis, until a permanent Aging Director can be hired.

On August 21, Jon Janowski was appointed by the County Executive to be the Interim Executive Director of the Department on Aging. This appointment was made for 90 days.

Provide assurances that the County will reconcile the issue of the absence of a titled, full-time aging director as required under the Elders Act by a specified date.

County Executive Crowley appointed Jon Janowski to be the Interim Director of the Department on Aging on August 21. This appointment indicates the County's intent to fully comply with the Wisconsin Elders Act and Wis. Stat. s. 46.82.

Describe the effective date of the Area Plan amendment

The effective date of the Area Plan amendment is November 12th, 2020 which is the date that County Executive Crowley signed the 2021 Adopted Budget.

Provide start and end dates for the proposed changes

The Aging Unit will be officially merged into DHHS on January 1, 2021 as a division of DHHS, at which point the full-time, permanent Aging Unit Director (the official position title is Division Administrator – Aging) will begin reporting to the DHHS Director.

Beginning in January 2021, the Aging Resource Center and Disability Resource Center will begin planning (based on the state DHS application) for a fully integrated ADRC. DHHS and Aging staff will work with the Commission on Aging, Commission on Aging Advisory Council, ADRC Governing Board, and many other older adults and organizational stakeholders to create an integrated plan that is acceptable to both staff and the community-at-large.

The ADRC integration planning process coincides with the development of the Aging Unit's 2022-2024 Area Plan. Per state DHS direction, Milwaukee County will address all of the following items as part of the development of its 2022-2024 Area Plan for older adults:

- A description of the new structure of the aging services unit within Milwaukee County, including the roles and responsibilities of lead staff.
- The goals expected to be achieved under the new integrated structure
- Evidence the new structure will assure that the Area Agency on Aging shall be the leader relative to all aging issues on behalf of all older persons in Milwaukee County
- Evidence of public input
- A description of governance and oversight by a Commission/Advisory committee
- Provision of an organizational chart of Aging and ADRC Services under the Department of Health and Human Services of Milwaukee County, including a full-time position for an Aging Director.

Milwaukee County expects to submit its completed ADRC application to the state DHS in August 2021, with the intent of beginning full ADRC implementation in January 2022.

Signatories



Milwaukee County Executive _____

Milwaukee County Board Chair _____



Aging Unit Director _____

Chair, Commission on Aging Advisory Council _____

Chair, Commission on Aging _____