

Executive Summary

The Area Agency on Aging 1-B (AAA 1-B) is a non-profit agency responsible for services to over 420,000 persons age 60 and older residing in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair and Washtenaw counties. Through the provision of home care and community-based services, older adults are given options that can help maintain their independence in their homes and communities.

The national Older Americans Act created a network of federal, state and local agencies to assure service provision enabling older adults to live in a setting of their choice with dignity, safety and supportive care. The AAA 1-B, established in 1974, is part of this national network.

There are certain activities that are expected of an Area Agency on Aging in fulfilling its mission:

- Identifying the greatest needs of older adults and persons with disabilities and preparing plans for meeting those needs through an array of home and community services.
- Advocating on issues of concern to older adults and persons with disabilities.
- Allocating and administering federal, state and private funds to support home and community-based services.
- Identifying unmet needs and developing new service programs.

The AAA 1-B secures services for older adults and persons with disabilities through contracts and purchase of service agreements with local organizations, and then monitors these providers for the quality and effectiveness of the care given.

The AAA 1-B supports the following services in the six counties of Region 1-B:

Home-based Services

- Personal Care
- Homemaking
- Home Delivered Meals
- Respite for Caregivers
- Home Chore Assistance
- Home Injury Control

Community-Based Services

- Adult Day Services
- Senior Congregate Meal Sites
- Out of Home Respite for Caregivers
- Legal Assistance

- Senior Center Programs
- Employment
- Elder Abuse Prevention
- Vision and Hearing Impaired Services
- Long Term Care Ombudsman
- Resource Advocacy
- Counseling
- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
- Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers

Community Care Services helps frail older adults and persons with disabilities to continue living at home by planning and securing supportive health and home care services.

Information and Assistance (I &A) helps older adult and caregiver callers to locate available services in southeast Michigan.

The **Medicare Medicaid Assistance Program (MMAP)** provides trained older adult volunteers who help others to understand and receive the benefits to which they are entitled.

The Senior Community Services Employment Program provides part time work and job training in community service activities for persons who are age 55 or older and meet income guidelines.

Rapid Response Program offers a quick response for older people with an immediate need for shore-term home care services; also for older or younger disabled people with a need for caregiver relief.

Testimony

Hello, my name is Amy Mills. I am the Social Services Contract Manager at the Area Agency on Aging 1-B (AAA 1-B). One of the Contracts that I manage is Home Injury Control. This program provides adaptations to home environments of older adults in order to prevent or minimize the occurrence of injuries in the home. Home injury control does not involve home restoration or structural renovation, or home maintenance chores that must be repeated. Allowable tasks include installation or maintenance of the following:

- Safe (enhanced) lighting
- Ramps (portable and non-portable)
- Bathroom chairs and grab bars
- Non-slip treatments for steps/ramps
- Vision or hearing adaptive devices
- Stairway handrails
- Smoke alarms/carbon monoxide detectors
- Ceiling fans/air conditioners
- Other items identified by AAA 1-B Care Managers

Preventing injury and falls has long been an important component to the mission of the AAA 1-B. We have been fortunate to have partnered with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan (BCBSM) for the past 5 years in an effort to reduce the number of falls, in senior's homes, by installing safety devices. The types of devices installed include: grab bars, raised toilet seats (with and without rails), bath chairs, transfer benches, hand railings, hand held showers, canes, and walkers (with seat).

The installation of these devices has prevented falls and helped older adults feel more secure. In fact, the majority of older adults surveyed indicated that they feel more secure with the devices and have not fallen since they were installed. Although the frequently requested items like transfer benches and grab bars were once again a continuing theme this year, we did see a strong need for items like outdoor railings. We find this to be a growing need for today's seniors as they strive to remain mobile while remaining in their own homes. Providing these items abates the fear of falling that so many seniors have as they grow older.

Over the course of the five-year period, the AAA 1-B in partnership with BCBSM's health agenda funding of \$20,000/year, was able to assist over 2,000 senior homes and install over 3,500 devices. It is remarkable how many lives were improved and made safer throughout the 1-B region (Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair and Washtenaw) as a result of this partnership. The special funding ended in FY2004 at no fault of BCBSM or AAA 1-B. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan simply changed its focus to other health and nutrition areas. We have been incredibly fortunate to have received this funding. As one can see, just a small amount can make a very large difference in the lives of seniors.

We must continue to give older adults options as they age. They should not be faced with only one option, such as a nursing home, because they no longer feel safe in their own home. It is our responsibility to ensure there are alternatives such as offering assistive devices and home modifications to our seniors. It is through my testimony today that I request the Commission continue to advocate and identify funding, that allows older adults to remain safe and independent in their own homes for as long as possible. I thank the Commission for their time and consideration.