

Older Americans Act Funding and ADRCs

There is considerable overlap between the functions of most county aging units and the functions of the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC). The design of the ADRCs in Wisconsin incorporated many vital consumer services that have long been part of the Older Americans Act network, because they are integral to what older people and people with disabilities need to maintain independence. The challenge is to discover the best way for local governments to incorporate the expertise and financial resources of the aging units into the development of ADRCs while maintaining the vision and values of the aging network. At the same time, the ADRCs must develop the expertise and cultural competence to serve people with disabilities in the same ADRCs, as well as to provide information and benefits counseling to persons with mental health and substance use concerns. This paper addresses only the issue of the relationship of the Older Americans Act to the ADRCs.

Older Americans Act (OAA) Resources Can Strengthen ADRCs

- A majority of persons served in the ADRC are over age 60.
- The OAA is not means-tested and its mission is consistent with the ADRC mission to meet the informational and support needs of a wide array of individuals.
- The OAA promotes advocacy for older individuals within service and benefits systems.
- The OAA requires strong consumer leadership, with 51% board membership over age 60.
- The OAA requires legal assistance, provided by benefit specialists in Wisconsin.
- The aging network conducts regular community needs assessments and planning.
- Aging Units provide Information and Assistance; a majority of county aging units have AIRS certified I&A staff and Beacon software, essential to the ADRCs.
- The aging network has strong working relationships with the private non-profit and voluntary sectors of the community and routinely collaborates with local entities.
- The aging network is funded to provide support, referral and education for family caregivers.
- The aging network has a strong corps of older volunteers in every community.
- It is permissible to use OAA funds for most ADRC functions benefiting older persons.
- Some 15 of the 18 ADRCs incorporate the aging unit in a lead role. Only three ADRCs do not have aging units in the ADRC.

Considerations and Limitations When Using Older Americans Act Resources in ADRCs

- OAA funds cannot be used to match Medicaid.
- When OAA funds are commingled with other funds (state or local), federal authorities consider all to be governed by rules for the OAA (e.g., no federal MA match).
- Medicaid match earned through 100% time reporting for I&A or benefits counseling cannot be used for the same activity as the OAA funds.
- The Older Americans Act requires local planning with public comment and oversight by older persons for all expenditures, including plans for use of funds in an ADRC.
- One quarter of funding in aging programs comes from voluntary contributions by older persons, and these funds are considered to be OAA funds also.
- Although the elderly benefit specialist program is funded with GPR, there is also some OAA money in the program that precludes capturing federal match, unless the OAA dollars are removed from the program to allow for Medicaid match under time-reporting.
- County aging units and their elders will be reluctant to contribute funding to an ADRC in which they have little control or responsibility.

Examples of How OAA Funds Can Support the ADRCs

- Support for telecommunications
- Support for outreach to older persons and to their health care providers
- Prevention programs
- Chronic disease self-management
- Support for caregivers
- Community needs assessments
- Support for older volunteers at the ADRC
- Elder abuse public education
- Financial abuse prevention and intervention
- Medicare information and benefits assistance

State Level Coordination

- The Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources (BADR) administers aging programs, categorical programs for adults with disabilities, employment initiatives for adults with disabilities and elders, and the Aging and Disability Resource Center initiative.
- The Bureau is active in all aspects of long-term care reform planning.
- The Bureau is providing planning and technical assistance to the aging network and to county planning consortia to facilitate the integration or collaboration of aging units and other county agencies forming an ADRC.
- The Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources is requiring aging plans to focus on the role of the aging unit and the OAA in the development of ADRCs.
- BADR is working with the Aging Leadership Council to develop a new vision for the aging network that is focused on the Aging and Disability Resource Centers.
- BADR is a partner with the Division of Public Health to foster prevention programming.
- Planning guidelines, rules and funding are being shaped to the extent possible to permit the involvement and leadership of the aging network in the expansion of ADRCs.

To bring about the development of ADRCs that are compatible with the mission of the OAA requires the involvement of local older persons as well as the aging unit in the planning of the ADRC, and mutual respect among the partners building the ADRC. It requires a genuine commitment by the aging network to the success of Aging and Disability Resource Centers for the burgeoning older adult population in Wisconsin.

It is in the interests of older people and people with disabilities or mental health issues to bring the strengths and experience of the aging network to bear on the statewide development of ADRCs. Wisconsin will be the first state in the nation to provide all of its citizens access to comprehensive Aging and Disability Resource Centers that provide prevention, information, counseling and access to long-term care. The one-stop for older persons should be the ADRC, with the full participation and commitment of the aging network. That includes commitment of appropriate aging dollars to strengthen the ADRCs for older people.