

Proposal from the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups to the
Wisconsin Department of Health & Family Services for
Wisconsin Family Care Consumer Corps Training

Organization Name: Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups

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Project Objective:

The Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups (CWAG) requests funding to launch the **Family Care Consumer Corps** campaign to educate Wisconsin citizens on issues involved in implementing Wisconsin's Family Care long-term care delivery system and mobilize them to provide input into the implementation process. In addition to raising awareness of critical issues, we will work toward the creation of an on-going means of educating and motivating older people and people with disabilities to provide consumer input into the new system.

Total Project Budget: \$ 60,040

Project Duration: October 1, 2006 – September 30, 2007

Tax-exempt status: 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization

About CWAG

The Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups (CWAG) was created as a result of civic action on the part of older people in Wisconsin. In 1977, a group of over 4,000 seniors marched on the state capitol in Madison asking the governor and their legislators for provisions in the state budget for senior centers, nutrition sites, long-term care, property tax relief, and transportation services. They were successful. As a result, they recognized that they needed to stay organized to be effective – and CWAG was born. Twenty-nine years later, CWAG remains a movement, rather than an institution. A non-profit, non-partisan, grassroots advocacy organization, our mission is to educate and empower older people to advocate on issues that concern them.

CWAG's role in Family Care – CWAG has long advocated a long-term care system in Wisconsin that gave older people and people with disabilities access to home and community based care options. Since 1986, CWAG members worked tirelessly to increase funding for the Community Options and Community Integration programs. In 1999, CWAG organized its members and other groups to rally at the state capitol in support of a systemic change in the way Wisconsin provides long-term care services to its citizens. The result was the passage of Family Care legislation – the culmination of over 20 years of advocacy for community-based long-term care options.

CWAG's role in educating and training advocates: the Wisconsin Senior Statesmanship Program – An example of CWAG's commitment to civic participation and education is the Wisconsin Senior Statesmanship program. Each year, CWAG operates this program dedicated to education and leadership development. Each intensive session brings groups of 20-25 people to Madison to learn about the operations of state government and the Legislature and how they can play a role in the process. They leave empowered to actively participate as informed citizens. Since 1980, there have been over 850 graduates of the Senior Statesmanship Program. To build on the program's success, we initiated the County Senior Statesmanship Program in several counties to give participants an insider's look at the operations of county government and how they can play a role at that level of government. Also, as a result of the success of our flagship program, we now offer a Graduate Senior Statesmanship Program for those who want even more intensive training on specific issues and to work on their public speaking skills so that they can effectively testify at public hearings.

The proposal

Overwhelmingly, older people have told us that health and long-term care issues top the list of their concerns. Because Governor Doyle has called for the statewide expansion of Family Care and because CWAG has strongly supported this expansion, we feel it critical that older people and people with disabilities be educated and able to participate in the process of structuring Family Care locally. Consumer input during the planning and implementation phase will be critical to ensuring that the needs of all citizens remain at the forefront. It is essential that consumers (older people and people with disabilities) have a strong voice in each of the multi-county regions during the implementation process. Educating consumers on the issues that will shape the Family Care system

regionally, and identifying the opportunities for consumer participation in the process (e.g., advisory committees, public meetings, etc.) are critical components of successful implementation.

Building on our many years of experience operating the Senior Statesmanship program, we propose to launch the Family Care Consumer Corps to recruit consumers and train them to have a positive impact on the outcome of the Family Care planning process. This will include intensive, on-going education on the issues surrounding Family Care implementation, organizing strategies that capitalize on opportunities for input and leadership development to maintain regional citizen input during the implementation phase. From its inception, Family Care has demonstrated a great potential to provide consumer choice in receiving long-term care services, and also cost-effective services from the state (Medicaid) perspective. But consumers must be educated and ready to provide input at the early stages of this statewide implementation to accomplish desired outcomes. The Family Care Consumer Corps will provide that leadership.

Methods and Reach

CWAG will work with partners in the aging and disability networks to identify older people and people with disabilities who have an interest and a stake in the Family Care implementation. We will hold one day-long training session in each of the Family Care implementation regions where participants will learn about the issues and the process for having input into the development of the new system. We will follow up each one-day session with a second session in each region where additional information will be distributed and participants will hone their advocacy skills. We will further maintain contact with participants alerting them to new developments as the process unfolds.

We estimate that a minimum of 200 people will be directly involved in this project (20 people per region x 10 regions).

Partners

The following organizations have endorsed this proposal and have expressed interest in partnering to help assure its success:

Disability Rights Wisconsin
Wisconsin Area Agencies on Aging
Wisconsin County & Tribal Offices on Aging
Wisconsin Counties Association

These organizations will work with CWAG to 1) recruit consumers; 2) develop the curriculum; 3) identify key leaders, such as Human Service Directors and others that should participate in the training program; and 4) evaluate and adjust the training as needed.