

AoA e-news

The U.S. Administration on Aging

July 2003, Volume I, Issue 5

The U.S. Administration on Aging is pleased to send you the **AoA e-news**, an e-newsletter filled with key information and news for the National Aging Services Network.

Please pass this e-newsletter on to staff in your organization and let them know that they can now subscribe online at www.aoa.gov. Information about how to unsubscribe is located at the end of this newsletter.

For previous issues of the **AoA e-news** visit the AoA Web site at www.aoa.gov/press/enewsletter/enewsletter.asp.

Table of Contents

Message from the Assistant Secretary

Proposed New Benefits to Strengthen Medicare

What's Happening at AoA

Upcoming Town Hall Listening Session at N4A Conference

Register Now for the AoA National Summit on Creating Caring Communities

Policy and Program Updates

AoA Awards New Ombudsman Cooperative Agreement

Promising Practices in the Field of Caregiving

New Medication, Alcohol, and Mental Health Resource

NIH Launches Pilot Program to Prevent Kidney Disease in African Americans

Making A Difference

Bringing Enabling Technology to Homebound Older Americans

Notes from the Field

Staying Active at 60 Plus

Of Interest

Promoting Health Literacy

World Health Organization Adopts Violence Prevention Resolution

Message from the Assistant Secretary

Better Benefits through a Modernized Medicare

The modernization of Medicare options is now in conference committee in Congress. President Bush's plan provides older Americans with better Medicare benefits, including prescription drugs and preventive care. The President and HHS Secretary Thompson are calling upon members of both political parties to work together to pass legislation this year. President Bush, Secretary Thompson, Florida Governor Jeb Bush, and I met with older Americans to discuss this issue in Miami, Florida on June 30. During this visit, President Bush expressed his confidence that members of Congress will resolve their differences in a constructive way to modernize Medicare and provide prescription drug coverage to older Americans for the first time.

The President's proposal gives seniors the choice of three distinct options, and under all options seniors get more benefits – including prescription drug assistance.

- ◆ Seniors can stay in Traditional Medicare and get:
 - The fee-for-service system they currently enjoy.
 - More benefits, including help with prescription drugs.
 - Protection from high out-of-pocket drug costs.
- ◆ Seniors can choose Enhanced Medicare and get:
 - Comprehensive prescription drug coverage.
 - Full coverage for disease prevention, including screenings for cancer, diabetes and osteoporosis.
 - Protection from high out-of-pocket costs associated with lengthy hospital stays or lengthy care.
 - The same health care choices and benefits that members of Congress and federal employees have.
- ◆ Seniors can choose Medicare Advantage and get:
 - Benefits of low-costs, high-coverage managed care plans, which many seniors currently prefer and receive.
 - A subsidized drug benefit.

The President's plan offers seniors more choices:

- ◆ Seniors can choose any doctor, hospital or place they want for the treatment and care they need.
- ◆ Seniors can choose an individual health plan that best fits their needs – just like members of Congress and federal employees.
- ◆ Seniors can choose more benefits in the form of prescription drug assistance and – depending on which option they choose – more preventive care and better protection against high hospital costs.
- ◆ Additionally, we are providing immediate help with prescription drugs through a discount card for all seniors, as well as a \$600 annual subsidy for low-income seniors for drug coverage.

Josefina G. Carbonell

[What's Happening at AoA](#)

Register Now for the AoA National Summit on Creating Caring Communities

AoA invites you to attend the National Summit on Creating Caring Communities this September 21-23 in Orlando, Florida. Position your organization to meet the needs of today's older Americans and the coming wave of aging Baby Boomers. Be prepared to respond with consumer choices that foster independent living. Join us this September at the National Summit!

We encourage you to register now for the National Summit if you are:

- An aging, health, and long-term care provider, practitioner, or professional;
- An educator;
- A policymaker; or
- Represent a consumer organization.

Participant registration is now available online. Interested in exhibiting at the Summit? Visit the AoA Summit Registration Site to find out more about Exhibiter registration. For more information or to register visit www.aoa.gov.

Upcoming Town Hall Listening Session at N4A Conference

Join us and be heard at the next Administration on Aging Town Hall Listening Session. The session will be held on July 16 at the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging Conference in Baltimore. The Assistant Secretary for Aging invites older people, their families and caregivers, and members of the National Aging Services Network to comment on critical issues. We want to hear from you about:

- What we can do to empower older people and their families to make informed decisions about their care options;
- Ways to build on the success of the National Family Caregiver Support program and the new AoA/CMS Aging and Disability Resource Center grants program; and
- State and local innovations that address access and service delivery that may serve as models for others states and communities.

Other Town Hall Listening Sessions are being added. Continue to check the AoA Website for updates. Persons must pre-register in order to provide oral comments at Listening Sessions. For updates and to find out more about how to register to give oral comments go to www.aoa.gov/press/town_hall_meetings/thm.asp.

[Policy and Program Updates](#)

AoA Awards New Ombudsman Cooperative Agreement

AoA has awarded a new three-year cooperative agreement for operation of the National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center to the National Citizen's Coalition for

Nursing Home Reform. The National Association of State Units on Aging will be partnering with NCCNHR to provide services to the ombudsman network. The Center provides technical assistance to ombudsmen on a daily basis and through an annual training conference.

An important continuing project of the Center will be supporting ombudsman participation in the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Nursing Home and Home Health Quality Improvement Initiatives and collaboration with the state Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs). Changes in the new grant include:

- New center products summaries for easy ombudsman use;
- NCCNHR coordination of the state ombudsman conference;
- Re-establishment of a Center Advisory Committee;
- A NASUA focus on three "national dialogues" that will provide discussion and useful products on multi-cultural diversity, ombudsman work in the community, and resident transition out of nursing homes;
- Regional multi-state conferences with training provided by Center staff; and
- Work with the National Association of State Ombudsman Programs to implement public education about the ombudsman program and improve consistency in ombudsman case and complaint data.

For more information contact Sue Wheaton at Sue.Wheaton@aoa.gov.

Promising Practices in the Field of Caregiving

AoA is pleased to announce its new publication, "Promising Practices in the Field of Caregiving—28 National Innovations Programs and 11 Projects of National Significance." It highlights accomplishments and offers insights and direct contact information for projects that are part of the National Family Caregiver Support Program. AoA currently funds and administers 39 competitive research and demonstration projects across the country as part of the NFCSP. These projects enhance and encourage new approaches to caregiver support. They address a wide range of issues from developing new systems to offering caregiver support in communities and for special populations. To download a copy of this booklet go to http://www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprof/caregiver/careprof/nfcsp_projects/nfcsp_projects.asp and clicking on, "Promising Practices in the Field of Caregiving". For further information, please contact Mindy Freedman at Mindy.Freedman@aoa.gov or (202) 357-3589.

New Medication, Alcohol, and Mental Health Resource

The Administration on Aging and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration announced the availability of a new tool kit on June 30. The tool kit, *Get Connected! Linking Older Adults with Medication, Alcohol and Mental Health Resource*, is designed for providers in the aging services community. It will help providers better cope with issues they encounter related to medications, alcohol, and emotional problems

among older persons. Also, the kit will help providers learn how best to provide the knowledge and support needed to deal effectively with these issues. The toolkit was developed through a partnership among AoA and SAMHSA and the National Council on Aging to help service providers for older adults identify, educate, and screen older persons for potential emotional and substance use problems. The kit can be ordered by calling the SAMHSA Clearinghouse at (800) 729-6686 (use reference number GCKit). Components of the kit include: fact sheets, a video, consumer brochures, training guides and curricula and a services resource guide.

NIH Launches Pilot Program to Prevent Kidney Disease in African Americans

June 20 marked the launch of the first National Institutes of Health pilot education program to increase awareness about kidney disease and promote early testing among African Americans, who are among those hardest hit by kidney disease. The National Kidney Disease Education Program (NKDEP) and its partners held the kick-off in Bethesda, Maryland. *You Have the Power to Prevent Kidney Disease*, is a year-long pilot program in four cities -- Atlanta, Baltimore, Cleveland and Jackson, Mississippi. These cities were chosen in part for their relatively large African American communities. Local coalitions are working through the media, through dialysis patients and their families, and through other outlets to encourage people at high risk for kidney disease to be tested and to learn about treatments that can help them avoid the fate of so many others. For more information visit www.nkdep.nih.gov.

[Making A Difference](#)

Bringing Enabling Technology to Homebound Older Americans

The Monmouth County Office on Aging is working together with partnering organizations on a program designed to bring enabling technology into the homes of homebound older persons and their caregivers. Through the use of a camera and television, the TeleCare Connections Program offers ways to reduce the isolation of homebound older Americans in Monmouth County, New Jersey. The program seeks to enhance the quality of life for older members of the community by helping them remain in their homes for as long as possible. The program is partially funded by AoA. For more information visit: www.visitmonmouth.com/aging/programsservices.asp.

We encourage members of the National Aging Services Network to submit stories about how they make a difference in the lives of older Americans. The deadline for story submissions is the 15th of each month. Send submissions to e-news@aoa.gov.

[Notes from the Field](#)

Staying Active at 60 Plus

Today at 60 plus years of age, I am actively involved in activities at a stable in Brooklyn where I started riding horses more than fifty years ago. My most cherished horse is Rocky, a twenty something who has gradually lost his sight in the past three or four years. He was on stall rest for more than a year and was declining in spirit and health. I began riding him in the park two years ago. It was a chore since he was spooked by what he couldn't see. Gradually he learned to trust me and we are in the park now at every opportunity. What a thrill to establish this kind of communication and trust with a beautiful and sensitive animal! Also, thankfully I spend weekends teaching beginners to develop the basic skills necessary to enjoy riding a horse. Urban riding can be a challenge in a park with more than six million visitors a year. Buses and taxis have no sympathy as we try to time the traffic light and cross an enormous and confusing traffic circle in order to gain access to the bridle path in the park. I have horses to thank for helping me establish a relationship with my daughter. She grew up in Maryland and every summer visit found us in the Catskill Mountains at a dude ranch, riding and having a wonderful time together. I work for AoA in New York City as a Title V office support person and am delighted to be able to learn new skills that allow me to contribute to the work done by the professional staff. For more information contact Joel Vincent at Joel.Vincent@aoa.gov

Of Interest

Promoting Health Literacy

U.S. Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona discussed the importance of providing Americans with useful health information in his address to the American Medical Association House of Delegates meeting in Chicago on June 14. According to a recent study, low health literacy costs the health care industry \$73 billion a year in misdirected or misunderstood health care services. More than 90 million Americans cannot adequately understand basic health information. Dr. Carmona will continue to discuss the importance of health literacy during the next year. He will look for ways to assist minority populations become more health literate. "Health information campaigns must be developed by individuals with specific knowledge of the cultural characteristics, media habits, and language preferences of intended audiences," Carmona said.

For the millions of health-illiterate Americans, the problem goes beyond the ability to read or understand a doctor's orders, researchers said at an American Medical Association conference on May 7. Even the most educated patients can find themselves confused by the complicated information that goes along with modern medicine, they added. For Ann and Charlie Martin of Louisiana, who spoke at the conference, managing their health and the health of Ann's 94-year-old mother and 65-year-old brother is almost a full-time job. Ms. Martin showed off her checkbook calendar, which she calls her "bible," with its daily reminders to pick up pills and schedule appointments with the family's 11 different doctors. Betty Walker, another patient from Louisiana with multiple chronic conditions, said she often hid her problems with filling out forms and reading treatment pamphlets by pretending to forget her glasses or waiting until she was home where her children could read to her. But she added that she is no longer afraid to

ask for help. To learn more about the AMA Foundation's health literacy programs, go to <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/8577.html>

World Health Organization Adopts Violence Prevention Resolution

On May 28, the World Health Assembly (WHA), the decision-making body for the World Health Organization (WHO), adopted Resolution 56.24 implementing the recommendations of the *World Report on Violence and Health*." This report was released last October and is of interest because it includes a full chapter on elder abuse. Resolution 56.24 encourages member states to appoint focal points for violence prevention and to prepare national reports on this topic. It requests the WHO Director-General to assist member states in establishing science-based public health programs that prevent violence; to encourage research in this area; to provide technical support for trauma and care services for victims of violence; and to establish violence prevention networks. It also requests a report on the implementation of the *World Report on Violence and Health* at the WHA in 2005.

The text of the resolution can be found:

http://www.who.int/gb/EB_WHA/PDF/WHA56/ea56r24.pdf

For the *World Report on Violence and Health* visit:

http://www5.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/main.cfm?p=0000000117.

Last year WHO also collaborated with the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) to release the report *Missing Voices: Views of Older Persons on Elder Abuse*. For this report go to:

<http://www.who.int/hpr/ageing/MissingVoices.pdf>

About AoA

AoA works with a nationwide network of organizations and service providers to make support services and resources available to older persons and their caregivers. For more information about AoA, please contact us by mail at **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging**, Washington, DC 20201; by phone at (202) 619-0724; by e-mail at aoainfo@aoa.gov; or visit us on the Web at www.aoa.gov.

AoA e-news is a monthly publication that is distributed to organizations in the National Aging Services Network. **Please share this information with others on your staff.** To **unsubscribe**, reply to this e-mail and insert the word "unsubscribe" in the text box. You can now subscribe online at www.aoa.gov.