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

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Messages from the Assistant Secretary

Medicare: Providing More Choices and Better Benefits

On March 4, HHS Secretary Thompson joined President Bush in proposing a Framework to Modernize and Improve Medicare that builds on the principles that the President laid out in July 2001. The President's framework for reform will give all Medicare beneficiaries access to:

- **Prescription drug coverage** that enables seniors to get the medicines they need, without the government dictating their drug choices.
- **Choice of an individual health care plan that best fits their needs**--just like members of Congress and other federal employees enjoy today.
- **Choice of doctor, hospital, or place** they want for the treatment and care they need.
- **Full coverage for disease prevention** such as screenings for cancer, diabetes and osteoporosis.
- **Protection from high out-of-pocket costs** that threaten to rob seniors of their savings.

The President's FY 2004 Budget Request for AoA

The President's FY 2004 request for the U.S. Administration on Aging represents an historic opportunity for the National Aging Services Network. It will provide the foundation for the efforts of Health and Human Services to rebalance our country's system of Long Term Care toward increased community-based services. AoA is requesting \$1.34 billion, an increase of \$2.4 million over the President's budget request for FY 2003.

For more information about the Medicare announcement and AoA budget request visit the AoA Website at www.aoa.gov.

Josefina G. Carbonell

What's Happening at AoA

AoA invites you to join us at the 2003 Joint Conference of the National Council on Aging and the American Society on Aging in Chicago, Illinois, March 13-15. The Assistant Secretary for Aging will participate in the conference in a number of ways. They include:

- Addressing the role of the National Aging Services Network in reshaping the long-term care system for the 21st Century during at the Plenary Session. Friday, March 14, 6:15 – 7:30 pm.
- Participating in the Second World Assembly on Ageing Symposium. Friday, March 14, 2:00 – 4:00 pm.
- Chairing a Town Hall Listening Session to hear from older people, families, caregivers and members of the National Aging Services Network about how to strengthen our long term care system. Saturday, March 15, 2:00 – 4:00 pm. **To pre-register to give oral comments at the Town Hall meeting** www.aoa.gov/press/town_hall_meetings/thm.asp.

AoA workshops at the conference will include sessions about model long term care services on March 13 and about the National Family Caregiver Support Program on March 13-14. Visit the AoA Website for more information about AoA activities at the conference www.aoa.gov/press/news/2003/03_mar/archive_030303.asp
For more information about the NCOA/ASA Conference www.agingconference.org/jc03/index.cfm.

Policy and Program Updates

Join us in Celebrating Older Americans Month

The theme of Older Americans Month 2003, “What We Do Makes A Difference” provides us with the opportunity to honor the contributions of older Americans. We also are highlighting how the National Aging Services Network makes a difference in the lives of millions of older persons and caregivers every day. Soon you will receive a kit with a variety of materials and a CD designed to assist you in promoting OAM and Older Americans Act services. All materials will be available on the AoA website shortly. Please look for updates and information at <http://www.aoa.gov/press/oam/oam.asp>. For more information, contact Sherri Clark, <mailto:Sherri.Clark@aoa.gov>.

Joint Action Promotes Coordination of Transportation Services for Older Americans

On January 9, 2003, Josefina G. Carbonell, Assistant Secretary for Aging, and Jennifer Dorn, Federal Transit Administrator, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to make it easier for local transportation providers to serve older people and help them remain independent and participating in their communities. Regional transportation workshops are scheduled in each FTA/HHS region to bring together state-level program administrators to explore opportunities and strategies to better coordinate transportation systems. The first of these workshops are scheduled for:

Region I Boston—March 20
Region III Philadelphia—June 25
Region VI Dallas—June 18-19

For more information about regional workshops, contact Bob O’Connell <mailto:Robert.O’Connell@aoa.gov> (Region I and III workshops) or Larry Brewster <mailto:Larry.Brewster@aoa.gov> (Region VI workshop). To learn more, go to: http://aoa_future/press/multimed/photos/Asst_Sec_Visits/2003/01_Jan/01_09/01_09.asp. For other information, contact John Wren at John.Wren@aoa.gov.

HIPAA Privacy Rule and Access to Nursing Home Residents' Records

On February 4, 2003, the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) issued an information memorandum clarifying the effect of the HIPAA Privacy Rule on access to residents’ records and other information by representatives of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) under the Older Americans Act. The memorandum states that the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office for Civil Rights, the Federal agency administering the Privacy Rule, concurs with AoA’s determination that since ombudsman programs have oversight responsibilities authorized for a component of the health care system, they are health oversight agencies, as defined in the Privacy Rule. Therefore, the Privacy Rule does not preclude release of residents’ clinical records to the LTCOP, with or without authorization of the resident or resident’s representative. Also, nursing homes and other “covered entities” may, in response to appropriate ombudsman inquiries, share other information without fear of violating the Privacy Rule. The memorandum also addresses access to residents’ files by residents and their representatives. The memorandum is available on AoA’s website home page, www.aoa.gov. For more information contact, Sue Wheaton, <mailto:Sue.Wheaton@aoa.gov>.

AoA Issues Ombudsman Reporting Instructions for 2002-2005

On January 28, 2003, AoA issued a program instruction (AoA PI-03-02) outlining procedures for submitting the State Annual Ombudsman Report to the Administration on Aging. The revised reporting form and instructions, which have been approved by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget for Federal Fiscal Years 2002-2005, include minor changes in the ombudsman complaint categories. They also include new narrative questions regarding ombudsman action in response to facility closures and in planning for alternatives to institutional care and/or helping residents move to less restrictive settings

of their choice. The instructions also include a new guide on how to use the 133 complaint codes in the National Ombudsman Reporting System (NORS). FY 2002 reports are due March 31, 2003. For more information, contact Sue Wheaton, <mailto:Sue.Wheaton@aoa.gov>.

Grantee Spotlight

Training the Pros

The Care-Pro project expects to train as many as 10,000 professionals about the needs of caregivers. In 2002, the Care-Pro project staff used Web and teleconference seminars to train 5,000 nurses, occupational therapists, and social workers. AoA funds the American Society on Aging Care-Project under the National Family Caregiver Support Program. View the first of a series of web learning CARE-PRO seminars, "Supporting Family Caregivers: A Single Case Study," by clicking on <http://www.asaging.org/webseminars/websem.cfm?EventID=5359>. For more information, contact Therese McNamee, <mailto:TMcNamee@asaging.org>.

News from the Field

Kudos to Working Caregivers and their Employers

Approximately one-third of the 22 million family caregivers in the U.S. are employed. They juggle a career and their caregiving responsibilities for older relatives and children. The AoA and the New York City Department for the Aging will recognize working caregivers and enhance the knowledge of resources available to support these caregivers at a Caregiver Recognition Breakfast. The American International Group will host this breakfast in Manhattan on April 10, 2003. For more information, contact Bob O'Connell, <mailto:Robert.O'Connell@aoa.gov>.

Of Interest

Healthy People 2010 Grant Opportunity

CDC has announced 2003 grant opportunities for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Programs. This grant program addresses the *Healthy People 2010* focus areas of tobacco use, physical activity and fitness, nutrition and obesity, public health infrastructure, oral health, arthritis, osteoporosis, back conditions, educational and community-based programs, cancer, diabetes, genomics, and surveillance and data systems. Its purpose is to support capacity building, program planning, development, implementation, evaluation, and surveillance for current and emerging chronic disease conditions.

Approximately \$91,700,000 is available in FY 2003 to fund some 194 awards. Applications are due on March 28, 2003. For more information, <mailto:> <http://www.cdc.gov/od/pgo/funding/03022.htm>.

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.

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