

To: Planning & Budget Committee

From: Patti Little

Date: December 13, 2005

Question: How should the excess Older Americans Act III-D funds be allocated in the future? (“Excess funds” refers to those funds above the 23.6% which must be allocated to medication issues.) The allocation is approximately \$20,000 a year. By statute, III-D funds may be used for health promotion and disease prevention, including educational outreach to seniors.

Background:

For many years the excess OAA III-D funding have been allocated to the Senior Mental Health Counseling Program to provide peer counseling to seniors age 60+. Last year, the senior mental health counseling provider decided not to renew the contract. Given this development, the Senior Services Advisory Council (SSAC) recommended that the excess III-D funds be allocated for Medicare Part D outreach in FY 2005-06. The Council also asked staff to study options to determine the best use of these funds in future years.

Study Process:

I polled other Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) to determine how they are spending their excess III-D funds. I also surveyed members of the S&DS management team and selected line staff (Senior Connections’ Area Coordinators, Adult Protective Services Workers, and Oregon Project Independence Case Managers) to gain their perspectives of seniors’ needs as they relate to these funds.

Beginning on the next page, please find two charts, one indicating how other AAAs are currently utilizing their excess III-D funds, and the other listing the responses from S&DS staff.

Findings:

AGENCY	SERVICE
NWS&DS	Information packets relating to prescription drug safety and methods to lower RX costs; considering brown bag sessions to review medications
OCW	Psychiatric Nurse assessments, Level II PASR, consultations with nursing home staff and psychiatrists
RVCOG	Jackson Co.: Age Wise, Age Well peer counselor program---- Josephine Co: geropsych specialist to provide consultation to case managers to help determine whether the client is suffering from a mental illness or condition such as depression.
CLACKAMAS	Contract with senior centers to offer health and wellness programs such as exercise and blood pressure clinics.
DOUGLAS CO.	Community health education and promotions
MCCOG	Small amount of funds allocated to staff FTE; senior center exercise programs (yoga and senior size program)
MULTNOMAH	Medication management program; senior center wellness activities, primarily exercise related activities, health education programs and health screening services

S&DS Management Team Responses
Continue funding Senior Connections' Area Coordinators to assist with Medicare Part D and other RX drug needs (4 responders)
Fund a special diet consultant (dietician or RN) for seniors at meal sites and in their homes. (4 responders)
Fund cost of electronic pill box set ups (2 responders)
Fund peer counselors who go to the clients' homes
Fund RN medication assessments for non-XIX clients (2 responders)
Fund Medicare D assistance for OPI clients
Brown bag medication review sessions with pharmacists
Work with younger seniors and assist them in planning for future long term care (LTC) needs
Fund mini-mental assessments to determine capacity for guardianship for APS clients

Line Staff Responses
Continue to fund Senior Connections' Area Coordinators to assist with Medicare Part D
Electronic pill box with telephone reminder/monitoring/cueing system for all clients (OPI, XIX, APS, and Senior Connections)

Other information worth noting:

1. The Cascade Health Solutions Foundation is currently reviewing a proposal for a peer counseling program which would utilize the peer counselors from the now defunct Senior Mental Health Counseling Program. This proposal was instigated at the request of the peer counselors who have been meeting monthly since July in an attempt to develop a plan to re-start the program. S&DS supports the effort of the peer counselors, as does PeaceHealth's Center for Senior Health, the former provider of the program. Cascade Health Solutions has approached S&DS on several occasions to determine whether there would be any OAA funding to help support such a program in future years.

2. It is the opinion of S&DS staff that the vast majority of seniors over the age of 60 will continue to have questions about Medicare Part D and problems accessing prescription drugs. Medicare Part D and pharmaceutical prescription drug assistance programs are very complicated and, as a result, the majority of seniors need assistance to access them. If seniors are not able to obtain prescription drugs and/or have medication management problems, they are at risk of losing their ability to remain healthy and independent. Senior Connections' Area Coordinators target low income seniors who are not eligible for other state assistance. They are able to help seniors access available drug benefits, including Medicare Part D. In addition, they are able to coordinate care plans using community resources, thus preventing clients from falling through the cracks and, potentially, needing more expensive services, including those provided by S&DS' Adult Protective Service program.

It should be noted that the Senior Connections program is facing financial challenges next fiscal year (e.g., loss of Medicaid funds and the potential loss of OAA III-B funds). For this reason, and those stated in the above paragraph, the program would benefit from the receipt of the excess III-D funds.

Conclusions:

It appears from the information gathered that there are a variety of ways that excess Older Americans Act III-D funds could be used to benefit seniors.

Those with the most support locally include:

- Medication assistance, including Medicare Part D education and assistance, accessing pharmaceutical manufacturers' drug assistance programs, medication assessments, and managing medication dispensing devices. (This use is favored by staff members at Senior & Disabled Services.)
- Assisting with the funding of a peer counseling program for seniors. (One can assume that this use would be favored by the former peer counselors of PeaceHealth's Senior Mental Health Counseling Program, as well as by Cascade Health Solutions.)

Requested Action:

At the December 13th meeting, that the Planning & Budget Committee provide guidance on the use of excess OAA III-D funds to S&DS staff.