



Aging Today Online

Vol. 1, Issue 4

Area Agencies on Aging Play Vital Role in Bringing About Better Outcomes for GLBT Elders

by Rajean Moone and Catherine F. Croghan

Given the extremely tight resources available to the advocacy movement, LGBT aging advocates regularly look for resources that will lead to better outcomes for LGBT elders. This ongoing effort involves forming strategic partnerships and capitalizing on benefits from existing structures whenever possible.

The 643 local Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) have become significant allies in achieving better outcomes. Of course, one must understand how a local AAA works before one can establish an effective alliance. By understanding the Aging Services Network, how AAAs fit into that network, and what they do, the benefits of pursuing relationships with these organizations become apparent.

AAAs Embody the Aging Services Network at Local Levels

Each AAA is tied to a state unit on aging that in turn is tied back to the federal Administration on Aging. Known as the Aging Services Network, this three-tier structure grew out of the landmark [1965 Older Americans Act](#).

The network functions as the primary structure for promotion and delivery of social service to elders. It serves as the conduit by which federal funds flow into states for programming that supports the needs and independence of older adults.

While the Aging Services Network offers structure at various governmental levels, there is extreme flexibility within each level. For example, there are eight states that do not have area agencies on aging at the local level. On the other hand, New York has 62.

An AAA Provides Three Critical Functions

First, AAAs offer information and assistance to older adults and caregivers. The agencies achieve this goal through hotlines, publications and other educational outreach.

Second, AAAs conduct planning initiatives to identify gaps in services within a geographic region.

Third, AAAs administer Older Americans Act funding. This funding is based on the needs at the local level. Among other services, this funding can finance homecare, transportation, adult day services, legal support, nutrition, caregiver support, health promotion and disease prevention, indoor and outdoor chore assistance, medication management, information and referral, and demonstration projects.

AAAs Serve All Individuals 60 and Older, With Special Focus on People With "Greatest Economic or Social Need"

Although AAAs cover GLBT elders as directed by the Older Americans Act, few GLBT-targeted programs (see sidebar listing of programs) and few GLBT educational opportunities have been offered nationally to Aging Services Network members (see Moone & Cagle in *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education (2009)*). Of 1,136 sessions offered at national conferences from 1999–2006, only eight addressed issues important to GLBT older adults.

In comparison, 44 sessions took place specifically for racial minority elders and 26 for rural older adults. Clearly, as advocates we need to do a better job of working with the Aging Services Network to focus resources on GLBT elders. The logical first step is building relationships with our local AAAs.

Partnering with a Local AAA Provides Access to the Great Depth and Breadth of Aging Services Network

The network's various partners fund more than 26,000 agencies and, in 2005,

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LAIN Editorial Conference Supports Placing This Table on ASA Clearing House Site, Linking to it From Newsletter

A November 2009 survey of American Society on Aging, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Aging Interest Group (LAIN) members identified the following AAA-funded LGBT programs. Click on the link to access the table summarizing the results.

Area Agency on Aging funded Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Programs (Select Examples)*

Location

San Leandro, California

Name/Type of Service

Lavender Seniors, Alameda County AAA – Friendly Visitors, Shopping, telephone assurance, LGBT senior service directory.

Contact(s)

www.lavenderseniors.org

Location

San Rafael, California

Name/Type of Service

Family Caregiver Support Program for LGBT Caregivers.

Contact(s)

Ana Bagtas:
abagtas@co.marin.ca.us

Location

Ventura County, California

Name/Type of Service

Ventura County Rainbow Alliance & AAA LGBT Caregiver support group.

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served more than 8 million older adults and 600,000 caregivers across the United States. Experts view the network as informed, reliable and unbiased. From a purely self-interest perspective, partnering with your AAA—and therefore partnering with the Aging Services Network—extends the reach of one's program, advocacy and/or initiatives.

For these reasons, the Aging Services Network—and specifically local AAAs—make logical partners for GLBT elder advocates. The companion articles in this issue can help advocates learn from the successes of their counterparts across the nation who have forged partnerships with local AAAs. This issue also includes tips for building relationships with local AAAs and placing allies on the governing boards of these important Aging Services Network members.

Getting started can be as simple as a phone call or e-mail. One can find a local AAA at: http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/OAA/How_To_Find/Agencies/find_agencies.aspx.

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