

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE KANSAS FUTURES COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Carlos Mayans at 1:30 p.m. on February 1, 2001 in Room 526-S of the State Capitol.

All members were present except: Representative Karen DiVita - excused
Representative Carl Krehbiel - excused
Representative Mike O’Neal - excused
Representative Dixie Toelkes - excused

Committee staff present: April Holman, Legislative Research Department
Lynne Holt, Legislative Research Department
Amy Kramer, Legislative Research Department
Lois Hedrick, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:
Deborah Donaldson, Director of COMCARE of Sedgwick County
Annette Graham, Executive Director of Sedgwick County’s Department
On Aging and the Central Plains Area Agency on Aging
Randy Class, Chairman of the Wichita/Sedgwick County Multicultural

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Carolyn Benitez, Executive Director, LaFamilia Senior/Community Center
Jim Beckwith, President, Kansas Association of Area Agencies on Aging
(K4A)

Others attending: See attached list

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Chairman Carlos Mayans. He then introduced Deborah Donaldson.

COMCARE and Sedgwick County’s Suicide Prevention Task Force

Ms. Donaldson described COMCARE, its Crisis Intervention Program, and the new Suicide Prevention Task Force. COMCARE offers the Crisis Assessment Program for Seniors, where a qualified mental health professional assesses the mental status of an individual and provides intervention or referral as required. The Task Force, formed as a result of an increasing suicide rate among the elderly, is developing a plan for suicide prevention to complement the work of COMCARE’s program. Ms. Donaldson suggested policy changes for consideration: (1) support program flexibility, (2) increase education about aging and mental health, and (3)

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develop a state plan to address these problems. (See testimony, [Attachment 1.](#))

Sedgwick County's Aging and Mental Wellness Coalition

Annette Graham described the County's 56-member Aging and Mental Wellness Coalition that has developed a guide for its members and physicians; and a pamphlet with information on suicide and the elderly for Coalition members, case managers and senior centers. Its mission is to identify issues facing elders, provide mental health education, assess and refer those in need of assistance to available resources, and advocate new resources based on identified needs. (See testimony, [Attachment 2.](#))

Representative Sloan noted the Oregon law on euthanasia and suggested that may be a pattern Kansas should consider for the "end of life" issue. Representative Bethell described the Oregon process for euthanasia and noted there are over 4,000 physicians in that state and to date, of 240 requests, only one in six has been approved.

Representative Miller suggested, that because of funding shortages, the possibility arises for development of a model project between fee-based organizations, volunteers, and professionals to address the needs identified by the Coalition; such as translation services for Asians and Hispanics, health insurance coverage for those disenfranchised from coverage, continued cultural diversity for service providers, and strengthening the infrastructure to obtain funding.

Wichita/Sedgwick County Multicultural Mobilization Coalition

Randy Class described the Coalition as a 50-member voluntary alliance of business, social, medical, and consumer provider organizations, for the purpose of mobilizing resources to address unmet needs and strengthen the integrity and stability of multicultural families. (See testimony, [Attachment 3.](#))

Carolyn Benitez described LaFamilia's mission to provide meals, home care services, medical services, and a variety of services for access to social services. She stated in Wichita there is a need for funds to train and certify accurate translators; and indicated the state must hire more bilingual professionals and provide funding for programs that will benefit the various cultures in Kansas. (See testimony, [Attachment 4.](#))

Kansas Association of Area Agencies on Aging (K4A)

Jim Beckwith presented an update on Services for Seniors in Kansas with a litany of programs and needs for services for aging Kansans, including:

- The population explosion of older Kansans and their needs for long-term-care.
- Cost-shifting by Medicare to local government, providers, and consumers.
- Severe problems to retain service providers.
- Funding.
- The major increase in the continuum of care needs.
- Growing waiting lists for services.
- Anticipated shortage of funding.

He then listed several recommendations for consideration:

- The Legislature determine a statewide long-term-care philosophy.
- Establish a Health Care Trust Fund with the Tobacco Settlement money.
- Provide a wage pass-through for HHA workers.
- Continue the Single Point of Entry for seniors.
- Examine long-term-care insurance concerning standardization of coverage and benefits and its compatibility with existing services.
- Fund a Prescription Drug benefit.
- Cut red tape.

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- Innovate programs (i.e., China's *Time Bank*).

The next meeting, a tour, is scheduled for February 5, 2001.