

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE KANSAS FUTURES COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Bob Bethell at 1:30 p.m. on March 15, 2001 in Room 526-S of the State Capitol.

All members were present except: Representative Karen DiVita - excused
Representative Deena Horst - excused
Representative Carl Krehbiel - excused
Representative Brenda Landwehr - excused
Representative Carlos Mayans - excused
Representative Mike O'Neal - excused
Representative Bonnie Sharp - excused
Representative Tom Sloan - excused
Representative Valdenia Winn - 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:

Maria Russo, Executive Director, Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Topeka
Susan Wheatley, Executive Director, Community Action, Inc., Topeka

Others attending: See attached list.

Elderly Services - Jayhawk AAA

Ms. Russo described the mission and clientele of the agency, noting that approximately 47,600 (or about 17% of the area's population) are served. Federal regulations state that the "Area Agency on Aging shall be the leader relative to all aging issues on behalf of all older persons in the planning and service area." In fulfilling that mandate, Ms. Russo noted their efforts of coordination and cooperation with other area agencies who also serve seniors. Some current issues before the agency are:

- How to help coordinate the State Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas (SHICK). Demand has outgrown the current system.
- How to coordinate SHICK's prescription drug program with the new program coming from the federal government and the state's Pharmacy Assistance Program.
- Coordination of in-home services for individuals who are at or near the eligibility criteria for nursing home placement.
- Funding for the Income Eligible program. A supplemental allocation of \$700,000 is included in the current state budget to serve existing clients through June 30, 2001. Currently there is a state-wide waiting list of about 500 eligible persons. If funding is cut, it will reduce services for existing clients and the ones on the waiting list will not be served.

Ms. Russo indicated the cost-effectiveness of the Senior Care Act in Kansas. It has been documented that \$25.33 was saved each day the services kept one Medicaid-eligible person out of a certified nursing facility, for a total of about \$2.2 million. She challenged committee members to consider their own expectations of the programs serving the elderly when they become seniors. (See full testimony, Attachment 1.)

Elderly Kansas - Urban and Rural Issues

Ms. Wheatley described Community Action as a private, non-profit organization providing services to low income people from infancy to seniors who reside in Shawnee and Wabaunsee counties by mobilizing resources and providing services to improve the quality of life and promoting self-sufficiency through education. Plans are in motion to expand services to Geary, Dickinson, Saline and Clay counties. There

CONTINUATION SHEET

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are affordable housing projects being operated in Leonardville and Clay Center. Community Action is a comprehensive Housing Development Organization (CHDO) and is authorized to develop housing projects in 12 north-central Kansas counties.

The organization receives major funding grants from several state, county and city agencies, as well as from a regional medical center and private sources.

By its service history, the organization has found that frail, low income elderly persons increasingly are threatened by social isolation, failing health, inadequate nutrition, deficient home upkeep, insufficient financial resources, neglect of necessary records, lack of access to transportation, and inadequate access to community-based services. It has developed several programs, some of which are:

- A Health and Nutrition program to provide nutrition supplements to an average of 15 persons each month; to distribute food commodities to 125-135 homebound clients; and to promote durable medical equipment to about 100 frail elderly persons each year.
- Home/Personal Maintenance Programs that provide home repairs and maintenance, utility assistance, limited prescription assistance, and personal management services.
- A Special Needs Program for the rural elderly that delivers commodities to support nutritional needs and provides information about the various services available throughout the area.
- School-based programs for students, parents and grandparents of low-income families to provide education, medical assistance, parenting and discipline strategies, home weatherization kits for Topeka area areas; and legal issues.

Ms. Wheatley listed several critical issues confronting the aged: increasing needs for community and in-home services; maintaining personal independence; low income causing the aged to deny themselves of needed services, especially because of increasing costs of prescription drugs, food, utilities and general living expenses with choices being made between paying for utility bills or buying prescription drugs. Another recent emerging issue in Shawnee County is non-seniors with mental disabilities entering senior housing- - and the seniors wanting only seniors.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 20, 2001.