

ANNUAL REPORT



FISCAL YEAR
2021

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT
OF SENIOR SERVICES





The Honorable Kay Ivey
GOVERNOR, STATE OF ALABAMA



KAY IVEY
GOVERNOR

STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF SENIOR SERVICES

RSA Tower Suite 350
201 Monroe Street
P.O. Box 301851
MONTGOMERY, AL 36130-1851



JEAN W. BROWN
COMMISSIONER

(334) 242-5743
FAX: (334) 242-5594
www.alabamaageline.gov

Dear Governor Ivey and Members of the Legislature,

It is my pleasure to present the Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS) Fiscal Year 2021 Annual Report. The goal of ADSS is to promote the dignity and independence of those we serve through a comprehensive and coordinated system of quality services. ADSS strives to enhance and enrich the lives of Alabama’s senior and disabled populations by meeting a variety of needs, such as providing assistance with prescription drugs, ensuring that those eligible for the Elderly Nutrition Program receive nutritious meals, supporting Alzheimer’s and dementia initiatives, partnering with the UAB geriatric dental project, and a host of other ways.

Fiscal Year 2021 was challenging due to the many issues presented by COVID-19. But with the help of the dedicated ADSS staff and a network of agencies and volunteers across the state, our department continued to provide essential services across Alabama.

During Fiscal Year 2021, ADSS served 7.8 million meals through home deliveries and congregate settings. Through our SenioRx program, Alabamians saved more than \$37 million in prescription drug costs. ADSS provided information services to more than half a million people.

We deeply appreciate your strong support, which ensures that our senior and disabled populations have the resources they need to achieve their goals and to live as independently as possible.

With warmest regards,

Jean W. Brown
Commissioner



INTRODUCTION

The Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS) is the state agency responsible for coordinating state and federal programs that serve Alabama's senior and disabled populations. Since its inception, ADSS has been best known for its Elderly Nutrition Program; however, ADSS does much more. While its traditional focus is on the more than 1 million Alabamians who are age 60 and older, others who are eligible for ADSS programs and services are listed below.



- Caregivers of older people
- Caregivers of people of any age with Alzheimer's disease or a related disorder with neurological and organic brain dysfunction
- Grandparents or older individuals who are relative caregivers of children not more than 18 years of age or people of any age with a disability
- People of any age who are residents of a long-term care (LTC) facility
- People of any age with disabilities who qualify for the Medicaid Waiver Programs
- Unemployed people age 55 or older who live at or below 125% of the federal poverty level
- Individuals age 55 or older or deemed disabled by the Social Security Administration and who are in the 24-month gap for Medicare with income below 200% of the federal poverty level and who have no prescription drug coverage



ADVISORY BOARD

ADVISORY BOARD

ADSS operates with an Advisory Board that functions in accordance with the requirements of Section 38-3-2 of the Code of Alabama, 1975. This Advisory Board is composed of the following members: two members of the State Senate appointed by the President of the Senate; two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House; and nine members who are appointed by the Governor and represent the following groups: one representative of business, one representative of labor, one representative of the medical profession, three representatives of senior citizen organizations, and three responsible citizens of the state. The Alabama State Health Officer, the Secretary of the Alabama Department of Labor, and the Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Human Resources are ex-officio members of the board.

FISCAL YEAR 2021 ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

- Ann Anderson
- Elizabeth Anderson
- State Senator Billy Beasley
- Billy Bolton
- State Representative K.L. Brown
- Dr. Steve Donald
- Thomas Ray Edwards – Chair
- Jackie Goggins
- State Senator Jim McClendon
- Dr. Horace Patterson – Vice Chair
- Commissioner Rhondel Rhone
- State Representative Randall Shedd
- Candi Williams

EX-OFFICIO ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

- Dr. Scott Harris - Alabama Department of Public Health
- Secretary Fitzgerald Washington - Alabama Department of Labor
- Commissioner Nancy Buckner - Alabama Department of Human Resources

Alabama Department of Senior Services Fiscal Year 2021 Estimated Performance Indicators

Total Persons Served: 139,924

Total Registered Persons Served: 67,122

Congregate Meals

Meals Served: 452,442
Persons Served:..... 17,995

Home-Delivered Meals

Meals Served: 7,384,140
Persons Served: 25,443

Total Meals Served: 7,836,582

Total Persons Served: 43,438

Transportation

Persons Served: 15,284

Assisted Transportation

Persons Served:..... 57

Legal Assistance

Persons Served:..... 4,850

Case Management

Persons Served: 37,483

Chore Services

Persons Served: 227

Adult Day Care

Persons Served: 43

Homemaker

Persons Served: 5,151

Personal Care

Persons Served: 3,101

Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP)

Persons Served: 18,326

State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)

Persons Served: 48,017

Senior Employment

Persons Served: 182

Number of Hours: 89,016

Evidenced Based Health Prevention

Persons Served: 567

SenioRx

Persons Served: 6,400

Prescriptions/Refills submitted: . 51,213

Savings: \$37,511,045.18

Caregiver Program (CARES)

Caregivers Served: 8,611

Access Assistance

Persons Served: 10,079

Units: 202,787

Education Persons Served:..... 5,423

Units: 154,499

Respite Persons Served: 1,498

Units: 146,549

Supplemental Service

Persons Served: 1,134

Units: 25,830

Information Services: 537,948

Units: 3,534

Long-Term Care Ombudsman

Cases Opened: 670

Complaints addressed: 1,034

Consultation to Individuals: 2,437

Consultation to Facilities: 5,219

One Door Alabama (Aging and Disability Resource Centers – ADRC)

Persons Screened: 31,266

Contacts: 53,846

Information/Referral Units: 284,625

Note: Persons served are unduplicated except for ADRC information and referrals.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW: FISCAL YEAR 2021

In Fiscal Year 2021, the Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS) expended approximately \$160 million on aging and disability programs. Approximately 22% of these expenditures came from Alabama's State General Fund. The remaining 78% of expenditures came from federal funds (77%) or other sources (1%). The primary funding source was federal grants. The grants were from the Administration for Community Living (ACL), US Department of Labor, and programs administered by ADSS as the Operating Agency for the Alabama Medicaid Agency.

During Fiscal Year 2021, over 95% of the department's expenditures went toward providing services to older Alabamians and individuals with disabilities. The majority of these services were provided statewide through 13 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). Through funding provided by ADSS, the AAAs provided services focused on keeping Alabama's citizens healthy and independent. While the services provided through the Alabama Aging Network benefited Alabama's citizens, they also benefited the state economy as the AAAs contract directly with service providers in every Alabama county.

ADSS was awarded federal stimulus funding for Older Americans Act (OAA) programs to help respond to the exigent circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic. These awards from DHSS-ACL totaled \$24.8 million and were part of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA). Awards from the ARP made up \$21.8 million of this total, with \$11 million going towards ADSS's Elderly Nutrition Program (ENP). The remaining ARP funds were awarded for Title III Part B Supportive Services, Part E Family Caregiver Support Program, and Title VII Ombudsman Program. ADSS's Elderly Nutrition Program also received funding of \$2.5 million through the CAA. Additionally, as part of the CAA, ADSS received funding to address and increase vaccination efforts

among older adults and those with disabilities. ADSS awarded over 94% of these stimulus funds directly to local AAA partners for use in Planning and Service Areas.

Under the OAA, ADSS provided services with the goal of promoting the independence and dignity of those it serves through a comprehensive and coordinated system of quality services. ADSS's ENP was the largest program funded under the OAA. In Fiscal Year 2021, ADSS served approximately 7.8 million eligible meals at a cost of \$21.9 million. Included in the amount was funding ADSS received through the "John L. Buskey Senior Meals Program." These funds came from fees on distinctive car tags. In Fiscal Year 2021, ADSS received \$925,000 for the Buskey Senior Meals Program.

Alabama's seniors provided over \$1 million in voluntary contributions toward meals and other services. These contributions were reinvested into local programs in areas where the donations were received and were used to help expand services.

ADSS also received additional federal subsidies from the Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP) by serving meals that meet one-third of the Dietary Reference Intake. In Fiscal Year 2021, ADSS received NSIP funding of \$3.2 million. In total, costs related to ENP accounted for 14% of ADSS expenditures.

Other aging programs comprised about 15% of Fiscal Year 2021 expenditures. These included such services as senior employment, ombudsman, legal services, transportation, and family caregivers, as well as the Independent Living Services Program.

In Fiscal Year 2021, ADSS continued to be the Operating Agency for the Alabama Medicaid Agency for three Medicaid Waiver programs. These programs include the Elderly and Disabled Waiver (E&D), Alabama Community

Transition Waiver (ACT), and the Technical Assistance Waiver (TA). The E&D Waiver represented the largest of the waiver programs with 10,740 slots filled during the fiscal year.

The Personal Choices self-directed option continued to be a popular program under the three Medicaid Waiver programs. Enrollment grew by over 24% in Fiscal Year 2021. Statewide, this option was chosen by over 4,300 E&D Waiver participants.

Total expenditures for all Medicaid programs operated by ADSS totaled over \$112 million, with \$24.7 million coming from state funds. Medicaid Waiver expenditures represent the largest portion of the ADSS budget, at over 70% of agency expenditures.

The Alabama SenioRx program provided the highest rate of return for its \$1.7 million annual budget. In Fiscal Year 2021, the SenioRx program assisted 6,400 older and disabled Alabamians, resulting in a savings of over \$37.5 million in prescription drug costs.

On Oct. 1, 2019, ADSS became the Designated State Entity (DSE) for the State Independent Living Council (SILC). As the DSE, ADSS received, accounted for, and disbursed Rehabilitation Act Subchapter B Independent Living Service Grants funds received under the State Plan on Independent Living (SPIL).

In Fiscal Year 2021, ADSS received a \$338,717 grant from the ACL for independent living services. These funds were used to provide grants to the three existing Centers for Independent Living (CIL).

ADSS also provided funding for the establishment of a new center in north Alabama. On Oct. 1, 2021, this center (Disability Resource Network) became fully operational as a CIL. The center serves people with disabilities in Lauderdale, Limestone, Madison, Jackson, Dekalb, Marshall, Morgan, Lawrence, Colbert, Franklin, Marion, Winston, and Cullman counties.



The Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS) is a cabinet-level state agency with 50 employees. As a planning, development, and advocacy agency for senior and disabled Alabamians, ADSS advocates on behalf of its constituents and administers aging programs through 13 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). Each AAA provides comprehensive services through contracts, grants, and through more than 300 senior centers to:

- Secure and maintain the independence and dignity of older Alabamians and persons with disabilities
- Remove social and individual barriers to older Alabamians and persons with disabilities
- Ensure the provision of a continuum of care for older Alabamians and persons with disabilities
- Develop comprehensive, coordinated systems for older Alabamians and persons with disabilities



OUR MISSION

The mission of ADSS is to promote the independence and dignity of those we serve through a comprehensive and coordinated system of quality services.

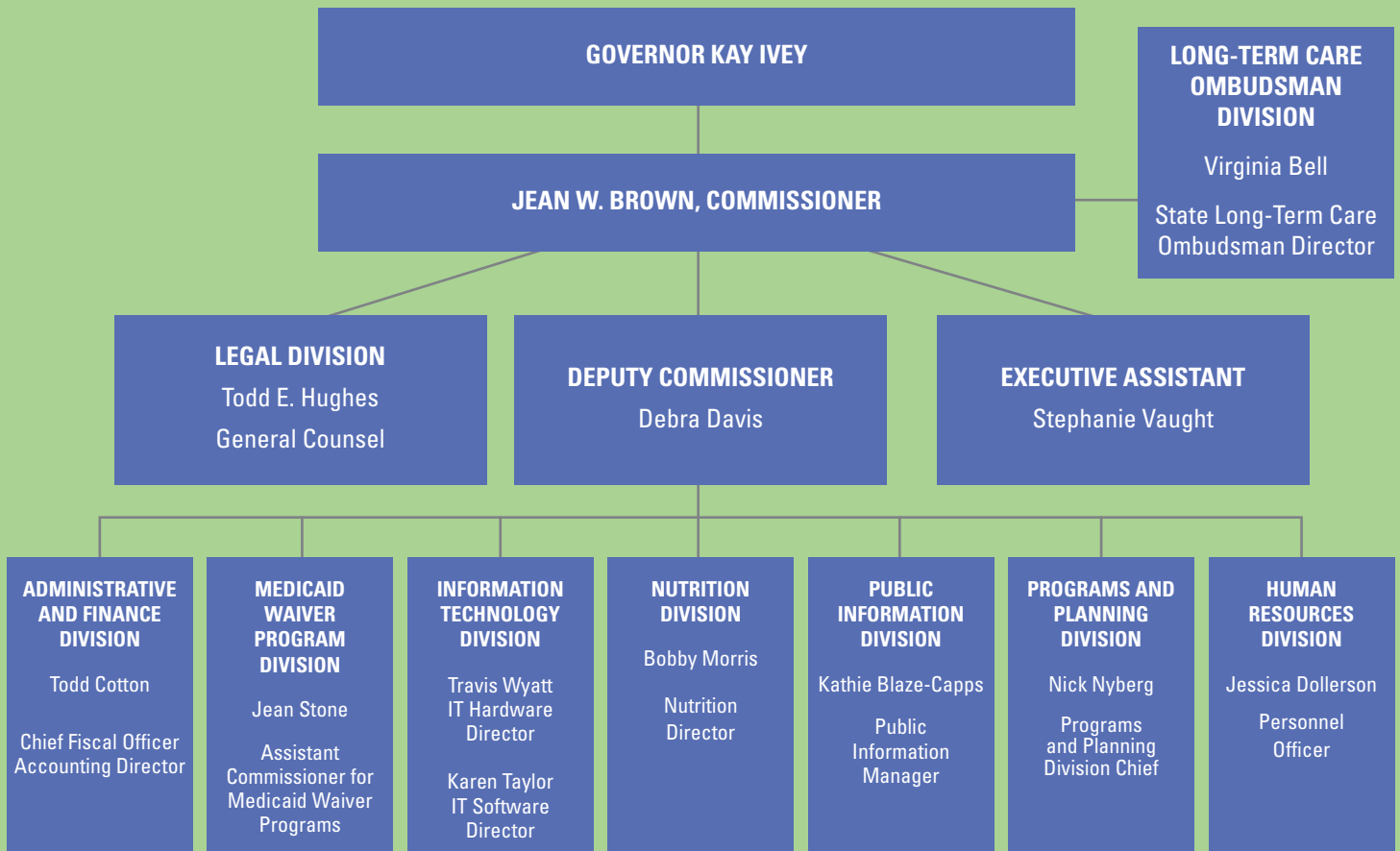
OUR VISION

ADSS seeks to help society and state government prepare for Alabama's changing aging demographics through effective leadership and stewardship.

OUR VALUES

- To promote the worth, dignity, and rights of older and disabled persons
- To promote the independence and self-determination of older and disabled persons
- To promote the efficient and effective management and utilization of resources
- To promote public support and input

ADSS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



ELDER JUSTICE AND ADVOCACY



Elder Justice & Advocacy

Abuse Prevention ★ Rights ★ Economic Security

The Alabama Legislature has given ADSS the duty of establishing and overseeing the work of the Interagency Council for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. The council's mission is to strengthen partnerships to protect elders and raise awareness of elder abuse issues through education, advocacy, and outreach. The council is responsible for empowering, protecting, and advocating on behalf of the state's aging population, and it provides education and awareness to seniors, their caregivers, professionals, and the public on the rights of elders and elder abuse prevention. The council meets bimonthly and invites speakers who discuss topics related to elder abuse and elder justice.



Through the collaboration and work of the Interagency Council for the Prevention of Elder Abuse over the past 11 years, Alabama has adopted some of the most stringent criminal elder abuse laws in the nation. In 2017, the council worked to pass the Elder Abuse Protection Order and Enforcement Act, which created an expedient method by which elder abuse victims can obtain a civil protection order against their abuser/exploiter. The act contains an enforcement mechanism allowing criminal prosecution for violation of an elder abuse protection order, and it authorizes arrests for violators of elder abuse protection orders.

In Fiscal Year 2021, the council supported the passage of the Elderly and Vulnerable Adult Financial Protection Act of 2021. As its name suggests, this act provides banks and other financial institutions with tools to help protect the financial assets of elderly and vulnerable citizens.

In Fiscal Year 2021, there were 99 civil cases filed under the Elder Abuse Protection Act resulting in 77 protection orders being issued. There were also 19 criminal cases filed for violation of protection orders, which resulted in eight convictions. In Fiscal Year 2021, statistics showed that approximately 327 criminal cases were prosecuted under Alabama's elder abuse statutes, leading to 72 convictions.

In Fiscal Year 2021, the council adopted and approved the Elder Abuse Resource Guide publication for distribution to all levels of state and local law enforcement. This guide is intended to help law enforcement officers identify and handle situations that might be encountered while helping victims of elder abuse.

The council continued to distribute the updated Elder Abuse Protection Toolkit/Pamphlet throughout Alabama communities. The informational toolkit helps individuals recognize elder abuse and presents bullet-point summaries on the following topics: "Get the Facts" about elder abuse; "The Red Flags" to look for; "Questions to Ask;" "Resources;" "Know the Four" regarding financial scams; and "Power of Attorney."

ALABAMA ELDERLY NUTRITION PROGRAM



The Alabama Elderly Nutrition Program (ENP) is one of the largest and most beneficial programs provided by the Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS).

ADSS is acutely aware of the various needs of recipients, and for many, these meals may be the only nutritious meal a person receives that day. Nutrition program services includes hot meals served in group settings, such as senior centers and faith-based locations, and home-delivered meals. Nutrition services are designed to promote the general health and well-being of older individuals. The services are intended to reduce food insecurity, hunger, and malnutrition; promote socialization; assist individuals in gaining access to nutrition and other disease prevention and health promotion services; and to delay the onset of adverse health conditions resulting from poor nutritional health or sedentary behavior.



One AAA assembled May Day Bags for each Senior Center and the theme was "Teamwork makes the dream work." The pandemic made everyone realize how important a team can be to serve the elderly population.

Alabama and other states receive grants through the Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Program. This Administration On Aging (AOA) program grant helps support nutrition services for older people.

The COVID-19 Pandemic continued into Fiscal Year 2021, keeping an increased focus on hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition. Many individuals who were added to the Nutrition Program in 2020 remained in the program for 2021. Through strong state and local partnerships with Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), nutrition service providers, thousands of dedicated volunteers, caregivers, and the private sector, more than 7 million congregate, curbside and home-delivered meals were provided to thousands of seniors. In Fiscal Year 2021, the number of meals served increased by 337,706.

Alabama's ENP depends on local community support to help provide financial resources, volunteers for meal delivery, program activities, and staff support. As with other OAA programs, participants are given the opportunity to make voluntary financial contributions, which are used to enhance the local senior center nutrition program. Stimulus funds from the federal government and state funds helped cover the cost of the increased number of meals.

The ENP operates under a statewide contract with GA Foods for meal service to senior centers and home delivery. This contract provides flexibility of meal type, efficiency of delivery, and allows more people to be served. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the food supply chain was interrupted and food sources were reduced. Through ADSS's contract with GA Foods, meals continued to be served without interruption. Shelf-stable emergency meals and frozen meals were available whenever a senior center had to close unexpectedly for COVID-19, bad weather, or other unforeseen emergencies.

ADSS and its team of three registered dietitians have worked closely with the statewide meal vendor to ensure all meals provided are varied, nutritionally

balanced, safe, and palatable. Meals must comply with US Dietary Guidelines and provide at least one-third of the Dietary Reference Intake level of key indicator nutrients. Hot, frozen, breakfast, shelf-stable, picnic, and liquid replacement meals are provided to over 300 senior centers and home-delivered meal clients, serving approximately 23,029 meals per day.

The homebound meals program is intended to serve frail, homebound, or isolated individuals who are age 60 and over, and in some cases, their caregivers, spouses, and/or persons with disabilities. During Fiscal Year 2021, as the pandemic continued, some of the congregate meals were provided as home-delivered meals because individuals were afraid to come together to eat, or senior centers were closed due to precautions. Frozen and shelf-stable meals are available for

order is received. These in-person contacts were sometimes modified in Fiscal Year 2021 and continued through telephone or virtual counseling.

Senior centers across Alabama are the congregating sites for nutritious meals, health promotion programs, social activities, crafts, games, meeting new people, staying active, and having fun.

In Fiscal Year 2021, the COVID-19 Pandemic continued to impact how meals were provided at congregate sites. Most senior centers reopened, but Nutrition Coordinators at each AAA worked with their towns and communities to determine how senior participants would be served meals based on location, storage, transportation, and staffing. Congregate meals were sometimes replaced with curbside pickup and/or home-delivered meals at a moment's notice.

FISCAL YEAR 2021 ELDERLY NUTRITION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- In Fiscal Year 2021 a total of **5,573,041** meals were served to **39,747** meal participants.
- Of those meals, **452,442** were served in a congregate setting at senior centers.
- **5,120,599** meals were either home-delivered or provided by curb-side pickup at senior centers.
- An additional **2,263,541** meals were served to Medicaid Waiver clients through the Elderly and Disabled and ACT Waiver programs.

Elderly and Disabled Medicaid Waiver clients throughout Alabama. These clients receive meals with the same nutrient standards as the OAA program meals. The frozen meal statewide delivery program allows ADSS to meet the needs of the target population in all rural areas.

Nutrition education, screening, and counseling are required services of the OAA. ADSS provides quarterly nutrition education to the senior centers through colorful flyers and fact sheets, which center managers use to provide education to congregate and homebound participants. Each AAA also contracts with a local dietitian to provide nutrition counseling after a participant is screened and indicates they want to see a registered dietitian, and a physician's

WELCOME BACK EVENTS

Many of the usual large congregate gatherings in May for Older Americans Month were not held due to COVID-19 precautions. However, many of the AAAs came up with innovative ideas and activities to celebrate and to welcome folks back to the senior centers.

One AAA hosted a virtual event. With the help of volunteers and countless hours of work, 3,000 reusable goody bags were prepared. The bags were printed with logos from the event sponsors and were stuffed with resource guides, hand sanitizers, jar openers, eyeglass cleaners, notepads, and other useful items. Small jars of jam were included in each bag to keep with the theme "Getting Our Jam On." Volunteers and AAA staff distributed the bags to each senior center. A local band performed a virtual concert, which was uploaded to YouTube for viewers, and picnic meals were served from each senior center.



Many senior centers held activities to welcome back local participants following the pandemic. From left are ADSS Commissioner Jean Brown with Mobile County Commissioner Connie Hudson at the grand reopening of the Connie Hudson Mobile Regional Senior Community Center.



Some AAAs held smaller outdoor events such as cookouts and fishing trips to provide socially distanced activities with a limited number of attendees.

SENIORx



SenioRx is a state-funded, prescription medication assistance program that helps thousands of Alabamians obtain free or low-cost prescription medication from pharmaceutical companies. The program assists disabled Alabamians of any age and Alabamians over age 55 who have a chronic medical condition.

SenioRx coordinators provide outreach at doctors' offices, health departments, churches, community centers, health clinics, senior centers, hospitals, health fairs, and workshops across Alabama. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the majority of outreach in Fiscal Year 2021 was conducted through websites, social media, magazines, newspapers, radio, and television announcements.

SenioRx provided assistance to the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) during the Medicare Open Enrollment period. Additionally, SenioRx partnered with hospitals to distribute SenioRx information at COVID-19 vaccine clinics and in food boxes at churches.

In FISCAL YEAR 2021, SenioRx:

- Assisted with 30,518 prescriptions
- Saved Alabamians over \$37.5 million



ALZHEIMER'S AND DEMENTIA INITIATIVES

Alzheimer's is the fastest growing, most critical health crisis facing America. It is the sixth leading cause of death and currently cannot be prevented, cured, or slowed.

Alabama continues to promote a statewide program of dementia-friendly communities known as Dementia Friendly Alabama (DFA). Through a state grant provided by ADSS, the Central Alabama Aging Consortium (CAAC) has sustained efforts promoted by the national movement, Dementia Friendly America. The goal of DFA is to create welcoming, comforting communities where those diagnosed with dementia and their caregivers feel respected and supported to live, age, and thrive.

CAAC has been recognized for contracting with the Alzheimer's Foundation of America to provide specialized "Partners in Care Training." DFA continues to raise awareness and decrease the stigma to the range of conditions collectively known as dementia. DFA seeks to provide quality programs within communities as well as public dementia-friendly forums. CAAC successfully enhanced these opportunities through many social media resources, including Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn. In Fiscal Year 2021, there were 222 Dementia Resource Guides distributed through the DFA website.

DFA has a strong network of supporters as it continues to address the needs of communities across the state, developing over 100 partnerships with various agencies, organizations, and businesses. DFA provides important resources to assist older adults, caregivers, families, and professionals within these communities, empowering individuals as they continue to live well in their homes and communities. While 2021 proved to be another challenging year because of COVID-19, dementia friendly communities continued to grow.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Legal Assistance Program is a statewide system of legal professionals who assist older adults with personal legal issues. These legal professionals provide advice and counseling, legal representation, legal research, preparation of legal documents, negotiations, legal education, and community outreach to Alabama's senior adults. The Legal Assistance Program works on a non-fee-generating basis and strives to protect and secure the rights, benefits, and dignity of adults 60 and older.

Senior adults, especially those living in poverty, are less likely to seek the advice of an attorney because they may not have financial resources to pay for legal services, or they do not realize they have a legal issue.

The top-needed and most-requested services provided by the Legal Assistance Program in Fiscal Year 2021 were:

- Decision-making and individual rights for end-of-life planning
- Long-term care
- Estate planning
- Landlord/tenant issues
- Health insurance matters/public benefits

In Fiscal Year 2021, the COVID-19 Pandemic continued to greatly impact the legal providers' ability to engage in face-to-face meetings for most of the year. However, providers continued to serve seniors by providing virtual meetings with clients so legal services would not be disrupted.

HOME AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICE WAIVER PROGRAMS (HCBS)

ADSS is the operating agency for three Medicaid Waiver programs. These programs provide home and community-based services to individuals whose needs would otherwise require care in a nursing facility. The services provided through these programs allow individuals to remain in the community. In order to access waiver services, individuals must meet financial, medical, and program criteria.



ELDERLY AND DISABLED WAIVER PROGRAM

The Elderly and Disabled Waiver Program provides services to the elderly and individuals with disabilities. Case managers work with clients to develop a person-centered plan of care based on the client's medical needs. Depending on their plan of care, individuals in this program may receive personal care, homemaker, respite, adult day health, companion services, or home-delivered frozen meals. In Fiscal Year 2021, ADSS served 10,740 individuals in this program.

PERSONAL CHOICES

Personal Choices provides self-directed home and community-based services. It is designed to offer the elderly and individuals with disabilities more choices and flexibility in the type of care they receive. Clients enrolled in the program use their allotted budgets to get the personal care they need, and they can also save for other items that improve their health. This program continues to grow, and at the end of Fiscal Year 2021, there were 4,331 individuals enrolled in the program.

ALABAMA COMMUNITY TRANSITION (ACT) WAIVER PROGRAM

The ACT waiver provides services to individuals with disabilities or long-term illnesses who live in a nursing facility and wish to transition to a home or community setting. The Plan of Care and Case Management services are based on individual client needs. Individuals approved for the program are usually moved into the community within 180 days after the application date. ADSS works with Medicaid Transition Coordinators to facilitate the transition of clients from the nursing home back into the community. In Fiscal Year 2021, there were 292 individuals served in this program. ADSS continues to refine the transition process, so that more individuals are given every opportunity possible to return to the community.

TECHNOLOGY ASSISTED WAIVER FOR ADULTS (TA)

The TA waiver provides services to individuals age 21 or older with complex skilled medical conditions who are ventilator dependent or have a tracheostomy — and who would otherwise require care in a long-term care setting — to remain in the community. The Plan of Care and Case Management services are based on individual client needs. ADSS provides targeted case management for the TA program. This program is approved to serve up to 80 individuals. Services include private duty nursing, personal care/attendant service, medical supplies,

assistive technology, and targeted case management. In Fiscal Year 2021, there were 41 individuals in this program. Outreach continues to expand waiver services to eligible individuals.

INTEGRATED CARE NETWORK

In Fiscal Year 2021, ADSS continued to work with the Alabama Medicaid Agency to implement the Primary Care Case Management (PCCM) system. The program promotes a person-centered approach to care delivery while assisting in the management of the medical and Long-Term Services and Support (LTSS) needs of Medicaid clients. PCCM supports clients receiving LTSS in the least restrictive setting of their choice. The program operates as a section 1915(b) waiver and covers participants in the Elderly and Disabled Waiver Program and the Alabama Community Transition Program, including individuals residing in institutional settings. The program is called the Integrated Care Network, and the provider selected to manage the program is the Alabama Select Network (ASN). ADSS works closely with ASN to refine processes that help clients receive the care they need in a timely manner and meet the goals of the program. Those goals are:

- Improved education and outreach about LTSS options
- More comprehensive and integrative case management
- Increased percentage of the LTSS population residing in the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) setting

PERSON CENTERED LONG-TERM CARE SUPPORT SYSTEMS

In October 2012, the Alabama Medicaid Agency was awarded a Money Follows the Person Rebalancing Demonstration Grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). This program is called Gateway to Community Living. Working in partnership with other long-term care providers and stakeholders, the services and

support for the transition of individuals from long-term care settings to community living are as follows:

- Transition coordination to assist those who choose to participate with development and implementation of an individualized transition plan
- Assistance with costs related to transition, such as utility and rent deposits
- Advocacy to increase the availability and easy access of safe, accessible housing and assistive technology resources
- Resources to promote employment opportunities
- Option of Self-Directed Care

ADSS works with the Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, and Targeted Case Management through the HCBS waivers for transition services as partners in the Gateway to Community Living Program.



ALABAMA CARES PROGRAM



For the thousands of informal family caregivers in Alabama, the need for support services continues to grow. More individuals and families are choosing for their loved ones with disabilities and chronic conditions to remain at home, rather than receive care in an institutional setting.



In 2021, the COVID-19 Pandemic continued to have a significant impact on family caregivers struggling to locate available respite care staff. Through continued support provided by Congress and the Administration for Community Living (ACL), the program added the flexibility of emergency respite care and a caregiver-directed personal choice respite option. The personal choice respite option allows family caregivers to identify, hire, train, and pay an in-home care worker of their choice. The individual providing respite care for the family caregiver must be over 18 years of age, and not living with the primary caregiver.

Every Area Agency on Aging (AAA) contracts with Alabama Lifespan Respite to act as an intermediary agency that manages reimbursements and compensation through a voucher program offered directly to the family caregiver. Family caregivers registered with the Alabama CARES program who select Alabama Lifespan Respite are allowed to choose an individual such as a friend, neighbor, church member, or relative as their in-home care worker for direct respite care that best meets their needs. Many areas of the state saw increases of up to 75% of caregivers utilizing this option due to service provider staffing shortages.

In Fiscal Year 2021, the Alabama CARES program provided 537,948 caregivers with program and related caregiving information. Below is a chart identifying the number of caregivers of the elderly, as well as the number of other relative caregivers of children served. This chart also identifies the number of units of core services provided to these caregivers.

	Number of Caregivers	Number of Service Units
Caregivers of the elderly access assistance	9,482	179,989
Relative caregiver access assistance	597	22,798
Caregivers of the elderly education, training & counseling	4,950	136,864
Relative caregiver education, training & counseling	473	17,635
Caregivers of the elderly respite	1,415	138,703
Relative caregiver respite	83	7,846
Caregivers of the elderly supplemental services	915	21,757
Relative caregiver supplemental services	219	4,073
Caregivers of elderly information	486,910	2,579
Relative caregiver information	51,038	955

For Fiscal Year 2021, the Alabama CARES Program

- Assisted 8,611 unduplicated caregivers receiving any registered service
- Helped 5,423 caregivers receive counseling, educational, and training services
- Had 1,498 caregivers who received 146,549 hours of respite care

ALABAMA LIFESPAN RESPITE



In 2009, the Alabama Legislature passed HJR 170, establishing Alabama Lifespan Respite as the lead entity for lifespan respite coordination in the state and designated Alabama Lifespan Respite as the coordinating agency for the Alabama Respite Coalition. Continuing from those efforts, the Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network (Act No. 2012-410) became law in 2012 and is codified as Code of Alabama 1975, § 22-5B-4.



ADSS received one of the first federal Lifespan Respite grants in the country in 2009. Through a contract with United Cerebral Palsy of Huntsville and Tennessee Valley, Inc., ADSS has worked to build a comprehensive and coordinated Lifespan Respite system with the support of multiple Lifespan Respite grants from the Administration for Community Living (ACL). Projects have focused on coordinating outreach, information, and screening for respite services through the state's Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) while disseminating information and providing specialized training for family caregivers, providers, and volunteers.

The Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network has been connecting family caregivers across the state with options as early as possible. Alabama Lifespan Respite has also been improving access to respite services and providing a streamlined, coordinated effort with person-centered approaches to meet the needs of family caregivers of children and adults regardless of income, race, ethnicity, or special needs. Past grants have been successful through collaboration among ADSS, the Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network, and the Alabama Respite Coalition. The provision of respite services has been limited in Alabama; however, the awareness and need for respite for family caregivers has increased through the efforts and support provided by this federal grant.

In Fiscal Year 2021, Alabama Lifespan Respite accomplished numerous objectives, some of which are listed below.

- A Caregiver Wellness Initiative (CWI) was launched to increase emergency respite funds and make available mental health counseling stipends to caregivers enrolled with any Alabama Lifespan Respite reimbursement program. In Fiscal Year 2021, 72 caregivers from 18 counties have applied for stipends that resulted in approximately 54 hours of mental health counseling, and three were given Wi-Fi enabled tablets to access counseling by licensed mental health providers via tele-practice.
- Training stipends were awarded to 191 families that resulted in 1,092 hours of direct respite.
- Universal respite vouchers were awarded to 239 families that resulted in 18,345 hours of direct respite.
- Emergency respite was provided to 17 families that resulted in 1,136 hours of direct respite.
- There were 25 robotic companion pets purchased and delivered.
- Presentations on more than 65 topics were made through online trainings, respite clinics, lunch and learns, and eight virtual reality experiences.

AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTERS



Housed within each AAA is an Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC). This is the first place to go with aging, disability, and caregiver questions. This program, known as One Door Alabama, provides free information, counseling, and access to programs and services provided by ADSS, state agencies, and federal programs. One Door Alabama is the access point for information, long-term care options, benefits counseling, application assistance, referrals, and follow-ups for people of all ages, incomes, and disabilities. The ADRCs are designed to empower older adults and persons with disabilities to make informed choices about services and support.

During normal business hours, each ADRC:

- Has a live person answer the phone
- Screens for programs and services
- Assists with application processes
- Answers questions
- Refers applicants to other agencies
- Follows up as needed

Some services available through the One Door Alabama program are:

- Crisis support
- Transportation
- Food assistance
- Legal assistance
- In-home services
- Senior employment
- Elder abuse prevention
- Long-term care advocacy
- Caregiver support services
- Prescription drug assistance
- Medicare and Medicaid counseling

In Fiscal Year 2021, ADRCs served nearly 140,000 people, with 67,122 of those being new to programs. These numbers are more than have ever been served in a single year. The ADRCs continued to provide robotic companion pets and activity boxes to individuals battling loneliness and social isolation from the COVID-19 Pandemic. These two projects proved to be successful, as follow-up surveys showed a 70% decrease in feelings of loneliness and isolation after 12 months of owning the pet and/or activity box. Federal COVID-19 grant funds allowed the ADRCs to extend their reach and provide additional services and supports to enhance the lives of older adults and disabled Alabamians.

STATE HEALTH INSURANCE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SHIP)/MEDICARE IMPROVEMENTS FOR PATIENTS AND PROVIDERS ACT (MIPPA)



The State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) strengthens the state's ability to provide all Medicare-eligible individuals with information, free counseling, and assistance on health insurance matters. Funding from the Administration for Community Living (ACL) helps ensure Alabama has a network of staff and volunteers to provide accurate and objective health insurance information and assistance to Medicare beneficiaries. This helps beneficiaries reach informed health coverage decisions. SHIP counseling also helps beneficiaries understand related rights and protections under their Medicare coverage. During Fiscal Year 2021, SHIP reached and educated over 48,000 Alabama Medicare recipients.

The Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) is a grant provided by ACL. MIPPA supports outreach and assistance efforts directed toward Medicare beneficiaries with limited incomes. The specific target population for MIPPA is Medicare beneficiaries who may be eligible for Low-Income Subsidy (LIS) or the Medicare Savings Program (MSP). In Fiscal Year 2021, over 34,400 individuals were screened, with 3,557 enrolled in LIS. Over 31,000 were screened, with 4,989 enrolled in one of the three MSP benefits.

In Fiscal Year 2021, there were 1,059,206 Medicare beneficiaries in Alabama enrolled in both Medicare Part A and Part B. There were 218,784 individuals enrolled who are under age 65, many of whom require assistance and counseling regarding their benefits and plans.

ADSS has an effective partnership with the Auburn University Harrison College of Pharmacy (HCOP) for the SHIP and MIPPA programs. The SHIP HCOP project trains pharmacy students to work during open enrollment as certified SHIP counselors at enrollment events. This student training program is well received by all partners, and ADSS intends to expand the program over the next several years.

Alabama's MIPPA funding creates a statewide education and outreach campaign to enhance awareness of Alabama's local ADRCs and SHIP programs. Over the past eight years, ADSS has had a unique partnership with HCOP utilizing MIPPA funds. In 2015, the partnership was expanded to include a new online continuing education pharmacist-training system. This ensures that rural, underserved areas of the state have access to professionals with a knowledge base and awareness of SHIP and other core benefit programs offered through the ADRCs. Over 400 individuals have participated in the trainings.

SENIOR MEDICARE PATROL (AL SMP)



SMP

Senior Medicare Patrol

Preventing Medicare Fraud

The mission of Alabama Senior Medicare Patrol (AL SMP) is to teach and empower Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers on how to prevent, detect, and report healthcare fraud, errors, and abuse. Medicare loses an estimated \$60 billion each year due to these issues. Federally funded through the Administration for Community Living (ACL), the AL SMP is comprised of dedicated staff and volunteers statewide who respond to reports of suspected Medicare fraud and abuse and help to determine the next steps.

The AL SMP's key objectives include:

1. **Conducting Outreach and Education** – AL SMP gives presentations to groups, exhibits at events, and works one-on-one with Medicare beneficiaries.
2. **Engaging Volunteers** – Protecting older persons' health, finances, and medical identity while saving Medicare dollars is a cause that attracts civic-minded Americans.
3. **Receiving Beneficiary Complaints** – When AL SMP receives complaints from Medicare beneficiaries, caregivers, and family members, AL SMP determines whether fraud, errors, and/or abuse is suspected. When fraud is suspected, AL SMP makes referrals to the appropriate federal agency for further investigation.

The AL SMP has formed strong partnerships with other state and local organizations around the state. Partners include the Alabama Securities Commission (ASC), the Auburn University (AU) Harrison College of Pharmacy (HCOP), the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR), the Better Business Bureau (BBB), and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). AL SMP also works with Alabama's 330 senior nutrition centers and many local housing authorities across the state. These agencies help educate Alabama's Medicare beneficiaries about the incidences of Medicare fraud and abuse and how AL SMP can help.

Despite COVID-19, creative efforts were utilized to meet those stated objectives. AL SMP continued its social media campaign "#FraudFriday." Each Friday, information on various scams targeting Medicare beneficiaries was posted on ADSS social media platforms. AL SMP hosted virtual events to educate beneficiaries on Medicare fraud and abuse. Through the partnership with the ASC and the BBB, some areas of the state held annual fraud summits virtually. Those summits began in 2008.

In Fiscal Year 2021, AL SMP reached an estimated 18,326 people statewide through group outreach and education events, and an estimated 680,366 were reached through media outreach. Because of the great work through AL SMP, ADSS frequently has success stories like this one from the Jefferson County area: "A US military veteran called because an insurance agent told him he should sign up for a Medicare Advantage (MA) plan to better serve his needs. The veteran receives all his medical care and medications through the Veterans' Administration (VA) and has very little out-of-pocket costs. He did not think the information sounded correct, so he called the VA, which referred him to AL SMP. His information was verified, and it was confirmed that he was well covered by Medicare and his VA medical coverage, so there was no need for him to sign up for a MA plan."

HEALTH PROMOTION AND DISEASE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Alabama receives funding through the Older Americans Act (OAA) for programs that support healthy lifestyles and promote healthy behaviors. Evidence-based disease prevention and health promotion programs reduce the need for costly medical interventions and provide older adults an opportunity to socialize with fellow participants. Priority is given to serving senior adults in medically underserved areas of the state and those who are in the greatest economic need.



Alabama offers a wide range of programs across the state. For Fiscal Year 2021, some of the programs offered were:

- Tai Chi for Arthritis
- Stressbusters for Family Caregivers (SBFC)
- The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (also known as Living Well Alabama)
- Diabetes Self-Management Program
- A Matter of Balance, a program to encourage active, rewarding lives for seniors
- Arthritis Foundation exercise program
- Staying Active and Independent for Life (SAIL)
- Bingocize
- Walk With Ease

All these programs are typically offered in a group setting such as a senior center, church, or other senior community gathering places. Some of the programs were interrupted because of the pandemic. However, several of the programs made adjustments to maintain the safety of the participants and instructors to continue providing services.

Tai Chi for Arthritis and SAIL were offered via Zoom classes, and some were offered in person following proper distancing protocol. Many seniors who participated in the SAIL course reported being happier and having fewer fall occurrences at home. Chronic Disease Self-Management classes were conducted by conference calls with each participant receiving a workbook and toolkit. These phone sessions allowed participants to remain safely at home and gave participants the opportunity to speak with someone during the day. These virtual classes were well attended and instrumental in helping prevent social isolation; as well as promoting a healthy lifestyle. Bingocize is a new program many centers added in Fiscal Year 2021, which brought a fun twist to bingo by incorporating exercise. Walk with Ease was also introduced; however, many centers had issues getting clients to complete the program when centers closed.

In Fiscal Year 2021, there were 567 participants in the health promotion and disease prevention programs throughout the state.

ALABAMA SENIOR CITIZENS HALL OF FAME



The Alabama Senior Citizens Hall of Fame (HOF) was created in 1983 by the Alabama Legislature to honor Alabamians who have made significant contributions toward enhancing the lives of Alabama's senior adults. In 2008, the HOF became part of the Alabama Department of Senior Services. An induction ceremony is held each year to welcome new members into the HOF. Also honored are citizens who are 100 years of age or older and couples who have been married for 65 years or more. There was no ceremony for the 2021 Hall of Fame inductees because of COVID-19, but a class of honorees was selected, and awards were distributed.

Alabama Senior Citizens Hall of Fame, Class of 2021

Dolly Crewes, Gulf Shores
Oscar C. Gadson, Jr., Tuskegee Institute
Brenda Gantt, Andalusia
Dr. Dale Huff, Prattville
William F. Joseph, Jr., Montgomery
William Laurence Goodloe Lees, Hoover
Pam Nichols, Birmingham
Mack C. Spencer, Tuscaloosa
Gary Wendt, Northport
Paul Worthey, Mobile

Permanent Posthumous

Billy Joe Driver, Clanton
Henry Ed Ford, Prattville
John Lewis, Troy
James E. Morris, Jr., Tuscaloosa
Milton Parsons, Wetumpka

Life Achievement Awards

Dr. Elaine C. Harrington, Tuskegee Institute
James Harris, Wedowee
Joy Seybold, Butler
Rillie Anderson Simmons, Coffee Springs
Thomas A. Smith, Munford
Wilbur Lee Terrell, Sr., Tallassee
Lillian Thompson, Tuskegee Institute
Stafford L. Thompson, Sr., Ph.D., Enterprise

SPECIAL AWARDS

Community Service Award

Carl Craig, Chatom
Josephine Robinson, Slocomb
Mell Lee Rowser, Demopolis
Rev. Anthony C. Williams, Sr., Montgomery

Education Award

Peg Hill, Columbiana
Bettye R. Maye, York
Sydney G. Raine, Mobile
Randy Roberson, Hoover

Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Award

Terri Francis, Dothan

Journalism Award

Daisy Washington, Montevallo

Medical Award

Dr. Lisa Oestreich, Birmingham

Military Award

Mark Bowen, Lineville
Ron Bradstreet, Hoover

Religion Award

Donald & Lynn Schlick, Birmingham

RSVP Award

Pamela Raines, Pelham

COVID-19 VACCINE MARKETING CAMPAIGN

The Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS) partnered with several agencies to create a statewide COVID-19 vaccine marketing campaign.

The campaign placed special emphasis on rural communities. Campaign partners were the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), the University Centers of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Disability Rights and Resources, the Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program, and the Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities.

The purpose of the campaign was to help older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers who wished to receive the vaccine achieve this goal by assisting with appointments, transportation, or other means.

ADSS and the partner committee created the campaign message and artwork. "Getting Your COVID-19 Vaccine is as American as Apple Pie and the 4th of July" was the theme. Materials were distributed through print media, digital media, and advertising.

- Print media – 97,500 postcards and 9,750 posters
- Digital media – agency websites and social media platforms
- Gas pump advertising – 157 pumps
- Gas nozzle advertising – 90 nozzles
- Convenience store single-sheet posters – 60 posters
- Ice box wraps – 65 locations
- Floor graphics at Dollar General stores – 64 stores
- Newspapers (full color / half-page ads) – 212 insertions

A toolkit for AAA employees effectively communicated with older adults and people with disabilities who were interested in vaccine information to increase vaccine confidence. From July 1, 2021 – Dec. 31, 2021, the AAAs provided individual assistance to 3,500 people.



OFFICE OF THE STATE LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM



The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program provides consumer protection advocacy services to individuals residing in long-term care (LTC) facilities consisting of nursing homes, assisted living facilities, specialty care facilities, and boarding homes. The Ombudsman Program has programmatic oversight of local ombudsman representatives who are employees or contract employees of the Area Agency on Aging (AAA). Local ombudsmen are trained and certified by the State Ombudsman. Ombudsmen investigate and resolve complaints; educate residents, family, and facility staff; provide information to the public; and advocate changes at all levels to improve the lives of residents in LTC facilities.

FISCAL YEAR 2021 OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- 670 cases opened
- 1,034 complaints received
- 301 community education events
- 5,219 facilities consultations
- 2,437 individuals consultations

The Ombudsman Program partners with the Alabama Medicaid Agency to support Alabama's Money Follows the Person program called "Gateway to Community Living." The program assists in transitioning eligible residents from LTC facilities back into the community. Ombudsmen conduct initial baseline surveys with residents prior to transition. Ombudsmen then follow clients for 24 months after transition to ensure they are receiving the services needed to remain in the community.

The Ombudsman Program also works collaboratively with other state agencies to provide education to LTC facility staff, residents, and the community on abuse, neglect, exploitation, residents rights, inappropriate discharges, and other LTC issues. In addition, the State Ombudsman serves on the Elder Justice Council, the Traumatic Brain Injury Council, the Unlicensed Facilities Council, and the Supreme Court's Commission on Guardianship and Conservatorship.

The Ombudsman Program was appointed by the court and served as patient care advocate in three LTC facility bankruptcies in 2021, two of which were completed. The State Ombudsman and the local ombudsmen monitored the facilities to conduct interviews with residents, staff, and family members and checked for adequate supplies, food, and medication. Any problems or concerns observed during monitoring visits were addressed by the ombudsmen and reported to the court.

The Ombudsman Program continued to vigorously advocate for residents in LTC facilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Ombudsman Program recognized the isolation and loneliness experienced by residents and participated in many activities to help with the negative impact experienced by residents. Ombudsmen participated in drive-by parades and delivered cards, activity booklets, personal-care items, watermelons, and robotic pets to residents. The Ombudsman Program received positive feedback about ways the robotic pets enriched the lives of residents and improved their mental health and quality of life.

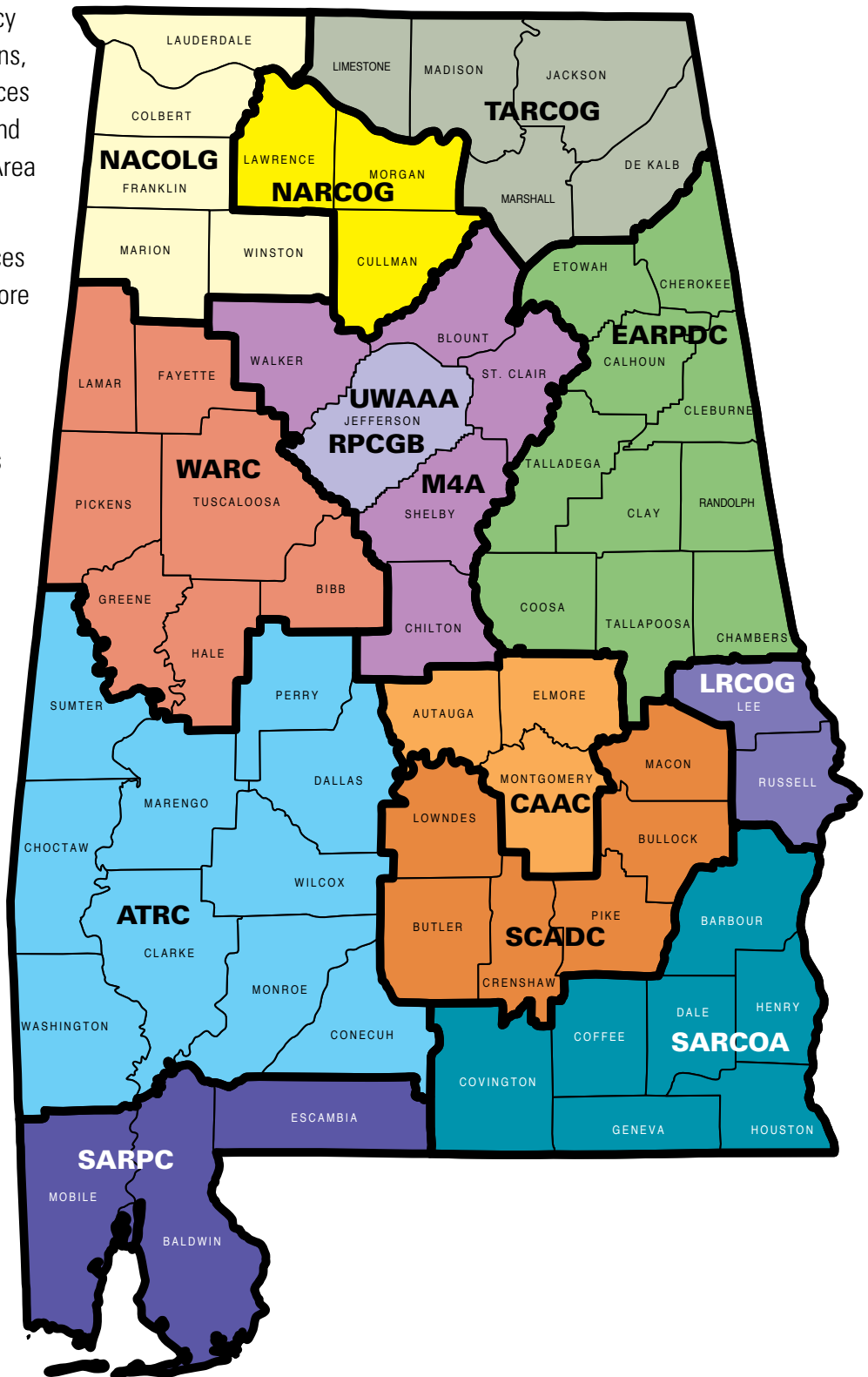
As the COVID-19 Pandemic continued, the advocacy provided by the Ombudsman Program has been more important than ever. Ombudsmen implemented programs to help ensure residents did not feel alone or forgotten. One local Ombudsman program coordinated with local churches and volunteers to implement "Adopt a Senior." The wishes of three residents were granted, and Christmas gifts were delivered to the residents of two long-term care facilities. Another local Ombudsman program implemented "Home Sweet Home," where donations were accepted from individuals, students, and community and civic groups to buy Christmas gifts for residents in all 45 boarding homes in Jefferson County.

REGIONAL COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENT AND AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

As a planning, development, and advocacy agency for senior and disabled Alabamians, the Alabama Department of Senior Services advocates on behalf of its constituents and administers aging programs through 13 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs).

Each AAA provides comprehensive services through contracts, grants, and through more than 300 senior centers to:

- Secure and maintain the independence and dignity of older Alabamians and persons with disabilities
- Remove social and individual barriers for older Alabamians and persons with disabilities
- Ensure the provision of a continuum of care for older Alabamians and persons with disabilities
- Develop comprehensive, coordinated systems for older Alabamians and persons with disabilities



Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission (ATRC)

John Clyde Riggs, Executive Director / Delia Brand, AAA Director / 334-682-5206 / 888-617-0500



Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission (ATRC) serves Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Dallas, Marengo, Monroe, Perry, Sumter, Washington, and Wilcox counties. ATRC is dedicated to improving the lives of its citizens and connecting leaders and communities with resources to help them help themselves.

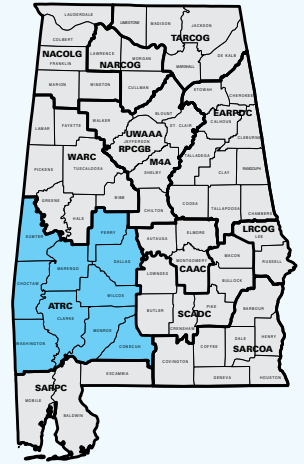
The ATRC serves senior citizens and individuals with disabilities to help them plan and manage their lives through a system of home and community-based services. The goal is to help them maintain a lifetime of independence and dignity.

As the COVID-19 Pandemic continued to impact ATRC in 2021, senior centers provided hot and frozen meals through attendance at the centers or home delivery. As COVID-19 numbers declined, seniors began to return for congregate meals and social activities, which were sorely missed during the time the centers were closed. Many centers held welcome-back parties as clients celebrated the opportunity to be together again.

The Medicaid Waiver program achieved its highest number of active clients served, allowing individuals to receive home and community-based services, rather than more expensive institutional care. Case managers continued to connect clients to a variety of services and resources to improve their quality of life. The program achieved re-accreditation by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) for an additional three-year period.

NCQA's standards provide a framework for organizations to deliver efficient, effective, person-centered care that meets people's needs, helps keep people in their preferred setting, and aligns with state requirements.

For the third consecutive year, ATRC held the Santa for Seniors Project, pairing the neediest waiver clients with donors who provide Christmas gifts based on individual wish lists. Case managers delivered the gifts during December to the delight of 50 clients.



Through an agreement with South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC), ATRC assisted individuals with the Alabama Elderly Simplified Application for Food Assistance. During Fiscal Year 2021, ATRC helped 123 individuals receive food assistance, which was essential during the ongoing



Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission staff provided assistance to individuals with the Alabama Elderly Simplified Application for Food Assistance, which resulted in additional benefits for food purchases.

pandemic. One couple from Wilcox County contacted ATRC because they lacked money to buy groceries. With assistance from ATRC, they were awarded \$183 per month in benefits, which they tearfully described as changing their lives.

The Ombudsman Program hosted the annual Ombudsman Seminar Aug. 12, 2021. This was the first in-person training since the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The seminar theme was "Hot Topics" and speakers covered subjects such as Mental Health Commitments, Guardianships/ Conservatorships, Elderly Disabled Adult Victim Services, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, and Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health. The seminar was a great success with over 50 attendees.

Joy for All companion robotic pets were delivered to several clients living with dementia to enhance their quality of life and decrease feelings of isolation. One caregiver described how his wife was often anxious. Her new robotic puppy was a great diversion, allowing her to be engaged and content.

Dementia Friendly Law Enforcement training was conducted with two municipalities in the region. The sessions helped officers become more knowledgeable, sensitive, and responsive to those with dementia. Each attendee received a toolkit, a Dementia Resource Guide, and education on how to assist someone with dementia.



Joy for All companion robotic pets were delivered to several Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission clients living with dementia to enhance the quality of life and decrease feelings of isolation.

The Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) continues to connect individuals to valuable resources. Recently an elderly woman was screened for services. She was eligible for a Medicare Savings Program that saved her \$148.50 a month. In addition, she was determined to be a qualified Medicare beneficiary, drastically reducing her monthly medication costs.



The first in-person training since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic was held for the Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission Ombudsman Program.

Central Alabama Aging Consortium (CAAC)

Susan Segrest, Executive Director / 334-240-4666 / 800-264-4680



Central Alabama Aging Consortium (CAAC) serves Autauga, Elmore, and Montgomery counties.

CAAC partnered with Autauga, Montgomery, and Elmore Seniors, Inc. (AMES) to provide food bags to the elderly and disabled in the tri-county area. Each bag contained fruit, vegetables, meat, breakfast items, and snacks. A total of 708 bags of food were distributed. Through the statewide vendor, CAAC served 277,076 meals in Fiscal Year 2021.

CAAC hosted a pandemic-friendly Christmas party for 300 senior adults. Those attending enjoyed lunch, door prizes, and Christmas gifts. CAAC also hosted two outside/social distancing events in May to celebrate Older Americans Month. Approximately 400 senior citizens attended these events.

To combat loneliness and improve brain health, CAAC purchased and delivered 750 activity boxes throughout the region. The boxes contained information on vaccination and benefits, services, a craft, and other activities. Recipients reported that they enjoyed the crafts and brain-stimulating



activities, as well as the information about benefits and available services.

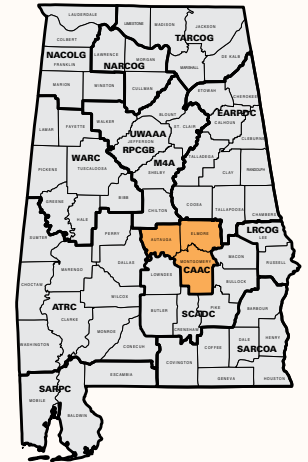
CAAC also distributed 67 Joy for All companion robotic pets to individuals in the tri-county area. Surveys showed the pets helped reduce feelings of loneliness.

CAAC hosted a World Elder Abuse Awareness Day event June 15, 2021, at Vaughn Road Park in Montgomery. There were 70 attendees who blew bubbles to signify blowing away elder abuse. Representatives from the Alabama Department of Senior Services, Montgomery County District Attorney's Office, State Attorney General's Office, and Department of Human Resources were speakers.

The agency, through the Alabama CARES Program, provided assistance to 438 caregivers of individuals aged 60 and over. The program provided assistance to 38 grandparents caring for children under the age of 18. Assistance included laptops, cleaning supplies, wipes, gloves, hand sanitizer, and masks. Through its Medicaid Waiver programs, CAAC served 669 clients. Services included homemaker, personal care, respite, companion assistance, and meals.

CAAC provided insurance counseling to 2,812 Medicare beneficiaries, including assistance with comparing Medicare prescription drug plans and Medicare Advantage Plans. Medication assistance was also provided to 309 individuals through CAAC's SenioRx program.

CAAC's Aging and Disability Resource Center completed screening assessments for 2,280 people and matched them with benefits and services. The agency provided information and educational materials to 13,584 individuals at various outreach events during the year.



East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission (EARPDC)

Lori Corley, Executive Director / Michael Morrison, AAA Director / 256-237-6741 / 800-239-6741



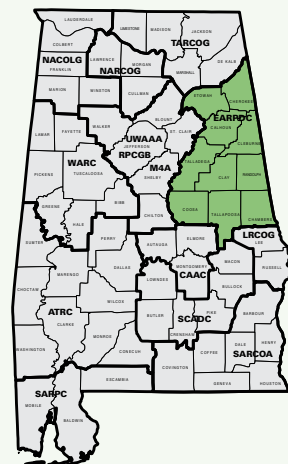
East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission (EARPDC) serves Calhoun, Chambers, Cherokee, Clay, Cleburne, Coosa, Etowah, Randolph, Talladega, and Tallapoosa counties. It is a multi-purpose public agency providing a wide range of services to member governments within the 10-county service area and to residents of the region. The commission's Area Agency on Aging (AAA) provides services to seniors, people with disabilities, and caregivers through either local contracts or by direct service providers. It also assists in the coordination of a variety of aging service programs with other agencies in the 10-county area. The commission currently funds 36 senior centers serving hot meals.

Despite the COVID-19 Pandemic, EARPDC continued to find new ways to deliver in-person services to participants. Staff members, partners, and service providers were committed and remained vigilant in providing the same level of care and service through varying and innovative means.

EARPDC's nutrition program engaged in the following activities to help minimize and combat the effects of isolation and loneliness for seniors:

- Delivered 40 Joy for All companion robotic pets to members of the nutrition program suffering from loneliness and isolation
- Helped facilitate the reopening of all 36 senior centers in the 10-county region
- There were 139,698 congregate meals served, 529,855 homebound meals served, and 350 door-to-door frozen meals delivered weekly

- Hosted and co-facilitated the first joint vaccination program with the Alabama Department of Public Health and the AAAs
- The Long-Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman Program served over 4,600 residents in the 63 LTC facilities in EARPDC's 10 counties and facilitated 65 educational events



- The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) placed 49 enrolled participants in service-related subsidized employment with 34 host agencies
- The SenioRx Program served 1,140 clients, and over 6,641 prescriptions were filled, resulting in a savings of over \$10.3 million for participants
- The Alabama CARES Program served 181 in-home clients and provided over 17 hours of respite care
- 144 clients were served with supplemental supplies and services
- 532 registered clients received caregiver education
- Provided 3,311 contacts to registered clients
- Distributed over 3,400 personal protective equipment care kits for caregivers and the community
- Engaged in a vigorous media campaign that focused on Medicare fraud and COVID-19 vaccinations with help from the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and the Senior Medicare Patrol Program (SMP)
- Reached over 462,950 homes and potential clients for services in the region



EARPDC staff members were committed in 2021 to providing the best level of care and service through varying and innovative means.

- Served over 800 seniors and community members through face-to-face outreach efforts
- Served over 1,400 clients during Medicare Open Enrollment

Ageless Innovation Robotic Pet Program

To help combat social isolation and depression among older adults during the COVID-19 Pandemic, EARPDC provided 40 Joy for All Companion robotic pets to seniors from 15 senior centers who were most at-risk for social isolation.

Social isolation was already a serious public health concern for older individuals who have limited social connections prior to COVID-19. Those who do not have close family or friends and rely on the support of community services are at

additional risk, along with those who are already lonely or isolated.

The robotic pets gave socially isolated seniors gratification and comfort by calming anxiety, decreasing loneliness, and providing a better quality of life, without the expense of pet food or vet bills.

Many older adults who love pets can no longer provide care for them, and robotic pets are a wonderful substitute. Robotic pets meow or bark, move, and can be loved and snuggled.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, robotic companion pets were even more comforting and appreciated by isolated older adults.

Lee-Russell Council of Governments (LRCOG)

Lisa Sandt, Executive Director / Jeanna Thomas, Director / 334-749-5264



Lee-Russell Council of Governments (LRCOG) is a regional planning and development organization that serves member governments by managing programs, promoting collaborative efforts, and serving as a clearinghouse for federal, state, and local funds.

In 2021, funds awarded for vaccine promotion and access were utilized by LRCOG in an effort that reached an estimated 130,000 individuals.

Agency representatives attended dozens of community events to distribute fans, cards, ice packs, vaccine card holders, hand sanitizer, and other promotional items to spread the message: "Arm Yourself and the People You Love. Get the COVID Vaccine."

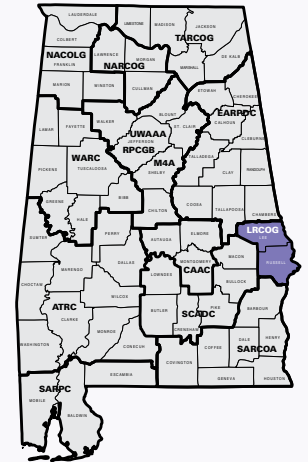
LRCOG placed an ad on a local radio station to inform individuals about assistance the organization provided with scheduling and transportation to vaccination sites. Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) counselors maintained and shared a list of local vaccination sites and assisted individuals with scheduling vaccinations. Lee-Russell Public Transit (LRPT) buses prioritized rides for transportation to vaccination sites.

LRCOG continued distribution of COVID-19 care kits in Lee and Russell counties. More than 1,500 bags were distributed to seniors and disabled individuals requesting personal protective equipment. These kits included reusable masks, disposable masks, hand sanitizer, and sanitizing wipes.

A new partnership between LRCOG and the Jan Neal Law Firm began in 2021 to assist with Medicare counseling. The State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) assisted

beneficiaries, with 445 individual contacts during the 2021 Medicare Open Enrollment period. Beneficiaries each saved an average of \$733, which equaled a combined savings to those served of \$63,781.

LRCOG SHIP also partnered with the Auburn University (AU) Harrison College of Pharmacy. Second-year pharmacy students from AU who are certified SHIP counselors assisted during open enrollment with Part D or Medicare Advantage Plan comparisons.



LRCOG held its most active Elder Abuse Awareness Month on June 15, 2021. During a special event held in Phenix City, Russell County Commissioner Chance Corbett read a proclamation supporting elder abuse awareness efforts, and community members pledged to speak up to protect elders.

Dress-up days "Splash Out Elder Abuse" and "Team Up Against Elder Abuse," plus trivia and a door-decorating contest helped educate and raise awareness. The message was spread that elder abuse is not uncommon, and if elder abuse is suspected, it should be reported immediately to law enforcement or Adult Protective Services.

LRCOG hosted a Fraud Summit in August 2021 to educate seniors about healthcare fraud. The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) program aims to empower older adults and enable greater independence and choice in managing their health.

The summit was offered with the option of attending virtually or in-person. More than 30 seniors were in attendance as Nick Vonderau of the Alabama Securities Commission presented the program: "Tips to Help You Protect Your Wallet." Lunch was provided, and seniors asked questions and shared concerns about potential fraud and financial exploitation.



During Elder Abuse Awareness Month, the Lee-Russell Council of Governments held "Splash Out Elder Abuse" dress-up day with activities, trivia, and a door-decorating contest.



Middle Alabama Area Agency on Aging (M4A)

Carolyn Fortner, Executive Director / 205-670-5770 / 866-570-2998



**ASSISTING
ALL AGES AT
ALL STAGES**

Middle Alabama Area Agency on Aging (M4A) serves Blount, Chilton, Shelby, St. Clair, and Walker counties. The agency specializes in resources, services, and information for older individuals, people who are disabled (regardless of age), and their caregivers.

As an Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), M4A also specializes in assisting consumers who have questions about Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), housing, transportation, home safety and repair, dementia, Alzheimer's disease, Medicare (Part D, Advantage Plans, Supplements), Medicaid, Social Security Disability, and more.

Virtual Education and Engagement

M4A utilized strong commitment and innovation to keep clients, caregivers, communities, and professionals educated and engaged, even during the pandemic. M4A developed the Take a Stand for Caregivers webinar series that targeted medical and social service professionals. These webinars covered several diverse aging-related topics, which provided education to hundreds of professionals who attended.

M4A also conducted several virtual caregiver support groups, public-speaking events, and monthly Coffee Breaks for Caregivers. An important initiative M4A achieved was a new stand-alone website for Alabama's statewide Dementia Friendly First Responder Training. The training was created by M4A in 2018 and previously was available in person. The creation of the new virtual platform available for first responders was unprecedented for the program and is easily accessible to first responders. The website

and training program are available online at Training4Aging.org.

Expanding In-Home Care for Persons with Dementia

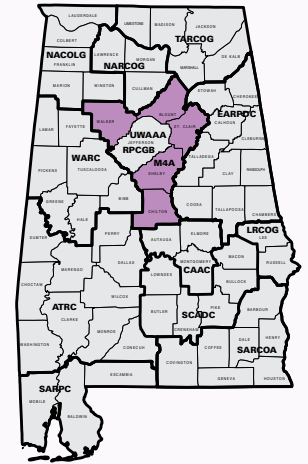
The overall goal of the federally funded Providing Alzheimer's 'N' Dementia Assistance (PANDA) Project, is to enable people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias to remain in their homes, including those who live alone. Removing a person from their known and comfortable surroundings often exacerbates dementia symptoms.

Of those who have left the program, 58% stayed in their homes until death. Additionally, only 9% of those exiting the program left due to being placed in a long-term care facility.

Another major strength of the PANDA Project is the objective to develop person-centered/family-centered support plans for caregivers of a person with dementia. A unique aspect of this program is both the person with dementia, as well as their caregivers, are considered clients.

The PANDA Project utilizes the Tailored Caregiver Assessment and Referral (TCARE) evidence-based tool. This is an in-depth assessment of where the caregiver is by measuring aspects such as caregiver identity discrepancy, caregiver burdens (objective, relationship, and stress), depression, and intention for nursing home placement. Reassessments are completed every six months, and care plans are re-evaluated.

A positive result of this intervention has been that an average of 67% of the caregivers' scores were either maintained or improved. Training professionals, caregivers, and the public is another important aspect of this program.



Growing Home and Community Based Services (HCBS)

M4A's largest state-funded program, Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) grew exponentially during 2021. There was an increase in staff and clients, and new positions were created to ensure the program's success. M4A created and employed a new Medicaid Waiver trainer to focus solely on the training of HCBS staff personnel, added two full-time case managers under the Personal Choices Medicaid Waiver Program, and increased the number of case managers for the program. M4A increased the number of clients by almost 200. It created and sustained an HCBS Initials Team, which is considered a best-practice model for replication and success.

Expanding Reach Across Local Communities

M4A worked diligently to enhance its Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) infrastructure to increase the number of individuals and families receiving assistance, resources, and services. M4A maintains an agency-wide

E-Newsletter that posts several times a month to keep the readers engaged on numerous topics and event notifications. The newsletter is delivered statewide to over 2,000 readers. The Alabama CARES Program has also been successfully sending weekly E-Newsletters to caregiver clients and shares extensive education materials and tools they can use to provide better care for their loved one.

M4A created new videos of several programs and placed them on various social media platforms. An enhanced online ADRC Referral System made the agency easily accessible to consumers wanting to make an online referral. An enhanced Critical Needs Campaign in memory of Kimberly Payne, who unexpectedly passed away in 2021, also was established. The Critical Needs Campaign is now the Kimberly Payne Memorial Fund, which has increased funding through grants and donations. Outreach efforts included 3.7 million video views, 118,332 airings, and 12,280 visits to the agency website, which is a large increase over Fiscal Year 2020. For Fiscal Year 2021, M4A received 1,632 online referrals (compared to 130 for the previous year) and 1,528 visitors completed the Get Help portal for assistance.

M4A Personal Story

Last year, M4A highlighted the amazing story of "Mr. Earl", a 69-year-old disabled Veteran who became homeless for a short time. M4A was able to take him under its wing during the pandemic. M4A brought several partnering agencies together to create and ensure a long-term care plan was in place so he could thrive in his local community and age with dignity and independence. After months on a senior community waiting list, Mr. Earl was able to move into a new apartment in 2021. He continued receiving delivered meals, made new friends, and is safe, happy, and independent. Mr. Earl claims if not for the kindness of the M4A staff, he does not know how he would have made it through as a homeless disabled Veteran. He's known as the "apartment complex sheriff" because he watches over everyone there and is an advocate for them. He said he is just "paying it forward" thanks to M4A.



Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments (NACOLG)

Keith Jones, Executive Director /Cindy Roberts, AAA Director / 256-389-0530 / 800-838-5845



Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments (NACOLG) is a regional planning and coordination agency comprised of a voluntary association of 37 governmental units which serves Colbert, Franklin, Lauderdale, Marion, and Winston counties.

The labor shortage associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic adversely affected the direct service providers that contracted with the Area Agencies on Aging's (AAA) Medicaid Waiver program. Service providers had fewer available home attendants which led to difficulty providing adequate staffing. In many cases, providers were simply unable to meet client needs. To overcome this barrier, clients and their caregivers began utilizing the alternate self-directed option known as Personal Choices. This option provided continuity of care by employing a trusted family member or caregiver. This option offers maximum flexibility in scheduling — even allowing for services at night or on weekends. NACOLG's Personal Choices program grew to serve 25% more clients in Fiscal Year 2021 and required the hiring of an additional counselor. With direct service providers still struggling to hire and maintain staff, the Personal Choices program continues to grow. Overall client satisfaction has improved due to fewer breaks in service and more scheduling flexibility to meet client needs.

To help seniors remain in their own homes, the Alabama CARES coordinator used state grant funds from ADSS for minor home repairs and several ramps that were built for homes in the NACOLG region. NACOLG partnered with Singing River Project through the Colbert/Lauderdale Baptist Association to build four ramps and three church groups built others. One of the homes needed two ramps as both people in the household used wheelchairs. The family

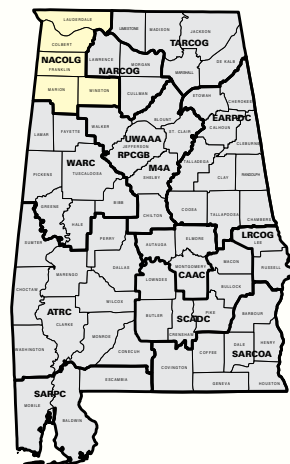
also receives services through Alabama CARES, and receives home-bound meals.

Another example of the difference the AAA is making in the lives of seniors in the NACOLG Region began with a call to the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC). A member of the household needed to attend Rock Steady Boxing Class, as this client has Parkinson's.

Another household member works and provides the family health insurance, which made transportation difficult.

Through the CARES Program transportation, NACOLG transit was provided. A ramp was built to provide safe access to and from the home, and the nutrition program is providing a home-bound meal.

The Joy for All companion robotic pet project continues to be a success, which brings joy and companionship to those who have them.



North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments (NARCOG)

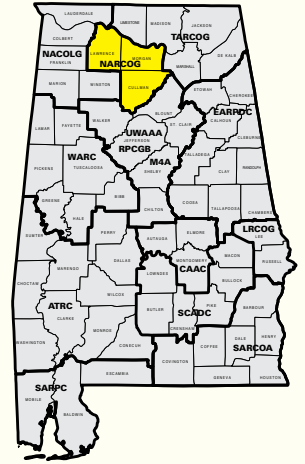
Robby Cantrell, Executive Director / Justin Graves, AAA Director / 256-355-4515



North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments (NARCOG) is an organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for individuals and the livability of communities within Cullman, Lawrence, and Morgan counties.

NARCOG connects families to programs and services that help older adults and disabled individuals. The agency also connects regional and community leaders, organizations, and businesses to resources that create more vibrant and livable communities.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, one of the greatest needs addressed in 2021 was food assistance. Because the region's senior centers were closed for much of the year, NARCOG, along with the commissions on aging in Cullman, Lawrence, and Morgan counties, helped establish drive-through stations at the region's nutrition centers.



The drive-through services provided hot, nutritious meals. Shelf-stable meals also were provided to ensure the region's seniors had access



The North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments held outdoor events as senior centers reopened during 2021.



North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments clients enjoyed the return of activities at local senior centers.

to enough nutritious food during a time when many were unable to visit grocery stores.

During Fiscal Year 2021, NARCOG served 252,635 total meals throughout the region.

Another significant challenge presented by the COVID-19 Pandemic for the region's elderly was isolation. NARCOG addressed this issue by providing activities such as trivia and parking lot bingo at the nutrition centers' drive-through meal lines. In Cullman County, the Commission on Aging also hosted a large bingo event at a drive-in movie theater.

The NARCOG Alabama CARES Program addressed the issue of isolation for its clients by participating in the Joy for All Companion Robotic Pet Program. It helped 30 people living with dementia and was a popular initiative. NARCOG will expand the program into 2022. The Alabama Cares Program also provided dementia training to law enforcement agencies in the region's three counties and provided services to 399 unduplicated caregivers.

One of the most impactful program expansions at NARCOG was legal services. Contracting with Legal Services of Alabama (LSA), NARCOG was able to add a full-time attorney to provide free legal services to seniors who are

60 and older in the region. By doing this, NARCOG was able to significantly increase the number of clients who received legal assistance with wills, powers of attorney, guardianship, and other services. Before contracting with LSA, NARCOG only had access to an attorney 20-30 hours per month. Now the agency has an attorney on-site to assist clients 40 hours per week.

The NARCOG State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) provided counseling to 1,938 people during the Medicare Open Enrollment Period, saving clients an estimated \$1.25 million. Those savings allowed seniors to use their money on other needs, such as food, fuel, and other necessities.

As senior centers began to reopen, NARCOG helped provide social interaction that seniors had missed in the previous year. The ombudsman frequently visited assisted living facilities to check in with residents and ensure their needs were met, and NARCOG employees visited senior centers to organize activities. NARCOG also expanded its Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program with the addition of new classes throughout the region. This was a popular initiative, with numerous testimonials from clients on the positive impact these classes made in their daily lives.

Southern Alabama Regional Council on Aging (SARCOA)

Dana Eidson, Executive Director / 334-793-6843 / 800-239-3507



Southern Alabama Regional Council on Aging (SARCOA) is an Area Agency on Aging (AAA) serving Barbour, Coffee, Covington, Dale, Geneva, Henry, and Houston counties in southeast Alabama. SARCOA continually seeks ways to better serve the rapidly growing senior population through planning, coordinating, and developing community levels of service. As the regional focal point for senior services, SARCOA's goal is to provide services that improve the quality of life and enhance the independence of seniors.

In Fiscal Year 2021, SARCOA served a total of 14,279 individuals in its seven-county southeast Alabama region. This represents about 17.5% of the total 60-plus population of 81,671 senior adults in the area.

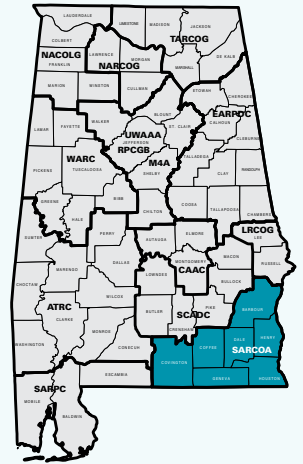
Some of the services provided through SARCOA in 2021 included:

- Over 422,500 meals were served to 3,741 senior center participants through the 36 senior centers and Meals on Wheels program.
- SARCOA helped 957 SenioRx clients save over \$2.8 million in prescription costs.
- Nearly 2,000 individuals received in-home services through the SARCOA In-Home Service, Alabama CARES, and Medicaid Waiver Elderly and Disabled programs.
- The SARCOA Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), "One Door Alabama," received 4,766 requests for information and assistance and performed almost 3,000 individual assessments to screen for benefits and services.

- The agency's website received 19,613 visitors in Fiscal Year 2021.

SARCOA coordinates several events and projects throughout the year including a Valentine's Concert, Older American's Day, and Senior Day at the fair.

The largest special project, Santa for Seniors, brings volunteers and supporters across the region together to serve the





Volunteers with the Southern Alabama Regional Council on Aging wrapped numerous gifts donated for the Santa for Seniors program.

needs of some of the agency's most vulnerable individuals. The awareness it brings to the community about SARCOA is invaluable.

The Santa for Seniors program began in 2007 as a way to help elderly individuals who might not have a Christmas celebration. The first year, the program helped only a handful of clients. But within a few years, the project had grown to 400 participants and remained at that level until the most recent Christmas when it grew to almost 500.

Gifts included groceries, cleaning supplies, and various other items such as throws, slippers, and pajamas. Other gifts are a little unconventional such as adult diapers, liquid nutrition, and toilet paper. Some are more elaborate gifts like stoves, refrigerators, or televisions. One year, a mobile home was donated.

Volunteers are important to SARCOA and the success of Santa for Seniors. A caring Wiregrass community supported this project with enthusiasm. Besides the generous

donations of money and wrapped Christmas presents, members of the community gave their time to support this cause.

Civic clubs, church groups, sports teams, school clubs, and businesses helped with many tasks of the Santa for Seniors project. The City of Dothan provided two warehouses to serve as Santa's workshop, and Coleman World Wide Moving provided two trailers for the groceries and undesignated donated gifts. Even a dumpster was donated.

Gift delivery occurred over a two-day period, a week before Christmas. Staff and volunteers loaded vehicles with groceries and gifts for the seniors. The heartfelt gratitude of the recipients was clearly seen through their smiles, hugs, and tears of joy.

But Santa for Seniors didn't end there. Because of the generous donations, SARCOA continued to help throughout the year with requests for home repairs, air conditioners, and other special needs.

South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC)

Rickey Rhodes, Executive Director / Julie McGee, AAA Director / 251-433-6541



The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) is an instrument of local government and is the designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for Mobile, Baldwin, and Escambia counties. In Fiscal Year 2021, SARPC provided services for 13,071 seniors and caregivers in southwest Alabama.

Local aging and disability services are accessed through the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), which received 9,640 calls in Fiscal Year 2021, compared to 8,741 the previous year, representing a 10% increase.

Integrated within the ADRC is SARPC's Benefit Enrollment Center. The benefit center operates through a partnership with the National Council on Aging (NCOA). The center and companion Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) grants have expanded statewide capacity to provide SNAP outreach by each AAA in Alabama to address senior hunger. To increase awareness of these educational, screening and enrollment services, SARPC partnered with East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission (EARPDC), Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments (NACOLG), Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments (TARCOG), and Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments (NARCOG) in a NCOA Boost Your Budget Facebook campaign in April 2021.

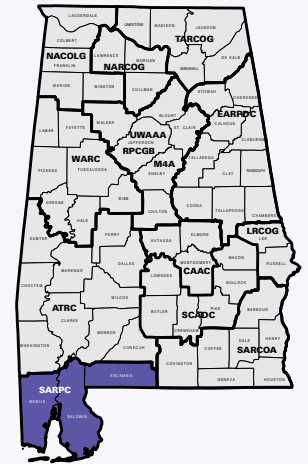
In Fiscal Year 2021, SARPC screened 1320 persons eligible for public benefits and provided assistance with applications for \$16,438,258, which included \$304,920 in food assistance through SNAP to 242 senior adults in the region.

The growth in calls to the ADRC mirrors growth in services in the core programs, supported by funds made available due to the pandemic. Frozen home-delivered meals to persons not living in delivery areas of senior nutrition centers doubled to approximately 1,000 seniors served through weekly deliveries. Home and community-based services provided by the Elderly and Disabled Medicaid Waiver program increased from 799 active clients in 2020, to 919 active clients in 2021, with over 1,000 projected to be active in Fiscal Year 2022.

With a fast-growing senior adult population, SARPC saw a need to increase access to legal assistance provided for older adults in the region. To increase access to legal counseling, the AAA employed an elder law attorney. The attorney works full time with the AAA, allowing the legal department to increase services to seniors. While services offered are those covered under Title III B of the Older Americans Act, the elder law attorney emphasizes education on estate planning and probate matters. Legal services are provided at multiple locations in Mobile, Baldwin, and Escambia counties to those 60 years and older.

Senior centers reopened in 2021, first through the provision of outdoor activities in March, and then in the summer for inside dining and activities. However, many senior nutrition centers still struggled with attendees not feeling comfortable with congregate settings. However, a large increase of home-delivered meals brought significant program growth.

South Alabama experienced more COVID-19 deaths in 2021 than in 2020, driven by the significant number of





Following 18 months of construction and an extended closure during the COVID-19 pandemic, Semmes Senior Center reopened June 1, 2021 with an expanded facility and additional space to better serve local seniors. ADSS Commissioner Jean Brown cut the ribbon celebrating the reopening.

unvaccinated persons. Senior adults and persons with disabilities were at significantly increased risk of serious illness and death from the virus. While senior adults had the highest vaccination rates among all age groups, a significant minority remained unvaccinated. SARPC launched a project to address vaccination barriers to help protect the health of senior Alabamians. The project included help with online registration, location information on the brand of vaccination desired, boosters, patient and caregiver vaccine access, general information, Facebook campaigns, and helping homebound seniors obtain vaccinations.

To support these efforts, the south Alabama Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) partnered with the Baldwin County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) to provide volunteers for multiple COVID-19 vaccination sites in 2021. Some of the vaccination sites were located at the Daphne Civic Center, OWA Entertainment Park in Foley, Three Circle Church in Fairhope, and the Macedonia Church in Daphne. RSVP provided 33 volunteers for 16 clinics, which gave over 10,000 vaccinations to eligible Baldwin County citizens. RSVP volunteers accumulated 851 volunteer hours during these 16 events.

The south Alabama RSVP expanded its Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) Program and completed the 2020 tax season on April 30, 2021, with significant growth in volunteer participation and tax preparation. The TCE program services taxpayers at sites in Baldwin and Escambia counties.

In Fiscal Year 2021, the TCE program gained approximately 26 new tax volunteers and added three new TCE sites including the James P. Nix Center in Fairhope, the Orange Beach Senior Activity Center, and the G.P. Thames Senior Citizen Center in Robertsedale. Existing sites are in Atmore, Flomaton, Poarch Creek, Daphne, and Spanish Fort. The Internal Revenue Service reported TCE volunteers prepared and submitted 1,962 federal tax returns and helped senior and disabled taxpayers receive \$1,946,989 in refunds.

Improving social connectivity and accessible services was a priority during the pandemic, which continued throughout 2021. SARPC offered free Get Set Up virtual senior center classes to older adults, allowing them to benefit from live Zoom social get-togethers, plus health, travel, educational, and technology classes. Free Trualta classes were offered with on-line education and support for caregivers. A home-study toolkit and small group calls for Chronic Disease Self-Management classes were offered. Joy for All companion robotic pets helped reduce feelings of isolation for seniors with dementia. These resources helped senior adults stay mentally, spiritually, and physically fit, providing activities that reduced isolation and associated negative physical and mental health impacts.

SARPC's AAA received a Social Isolation Grant from the Mobile County Commission to pilot the Circle of Friends Program to combat loneliness and social isolation. The Circle of Friends Program incorporated existing on-line resources that include Get Set Up, Trualta and the AARP's new Connect2Affect.

South Central Alabama Development Commission (SCADC)

Tyson Howard, Executive Director / Sharon Redd, AAA Director / 334-244-6903



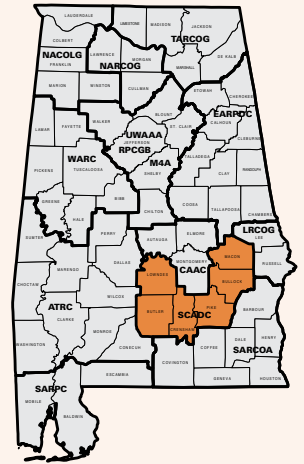
South Central Alabama Development Commission (SCADC) serves Bullock, Butler, Crenshaw, Lowndes, Macon, and Pike counties. SCADC is focused on growing and improving many of its already successful programs and services while seeking innovative ways to improve the quality of life, and enhance the independence of, senior adults, persons with disabilities, caregivers, and their families in planning and service areas.

SCADC oversees 18 senior centers in the region. Due to COVID-19, all centers closed in April 2020. In May 2020, senior centers began serving weekly curbside meals or frozen meals. In July and August of 2020, there were 13 centers that began serving hot meals curbside. The other centers were still serving frozen meals once a week. In 2021, the centers continued to serve curbside meals. In September of 2021, there were nine centers that reopened. Twelve centers had reopened by the end of 2021, and five of these were still serving some curbside meals. The seniors were excited about returning to the centers, and most facilities held reopening celebrations.

During Fiscal Year 2021, SCADC continued supporting the Joy for All Companion robotic pets. SCADC received funding from the Central Alabama Aging Consortium to provide robotic pets to address social isolation and loneliness. The Tuskegee Senior Citizens Program also received 12 robotic pets from Ageless Innovations.

Research shows the robotic pets improve interactions, behaviors, and quality of life for hospice dementia patients. It has been reported that animal-assisted therapy can help individuals better cope with stress, reduce depression, prevent loneliness, and improve socialization.

The first robotic pet, a dog, was delivered to a 103-year-old client, who named her pet Ace. The client was believed to be the oldest citizen in Macon County. When the client's niece was contacted, she expressed appreciation for the pet and relayed the excitement her aunt displayed from having the pet.



Through an innovative outreach effort in October and November 2021, SCADC hosted a Fall Festival and Medicare Open Enrollment event in rural Lowndes County. In partnership with the Omega Church, SCADC distributed COVID-19





South Central Alabama Development Commission staff continued distribution of the Joy for All Companion Pets.

education materials. An estimated 125 people were given bags of groceries due to food shortages. The bags were filled with cheese, canned goods, meats, and snacks.

At the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, Lowndes County was one of the hardest hit places in Alabama. At one time, one in 17 people was infected with COVID-19, among the highest rates in the U.S.

Older adults and people with severe underlying medical conditions seemed to be at higher risk for developing more serious complication from COVID-19. As of November 2021, more than 50% of Lowndes County residents were vaccinated.

To assist with vaccination efforts, SCADC partnered twice with a local medical screening agency and provided two free COVID-19 clinics in White Hall. Free testing, vaccines, and incentives for first, second, and booster shots were given to eligible participants.

A group of 25 lucky older individuals each received free Thanksgiving turkeys, while 300 received free groceries, and 136 were vaccinated. During the Medicare Annual Open Enrollment period from Oct. 15, 2021 – Dec. 7, 2021, SCADC

State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) provided counseling and assisted in enrollment for 2022 health care and drug plan options. Over 227 client contacts were provided to 64 Medicare beneficiaries in the SCADC region during the seven-week open enrollment period.

As a result of counseling, a total of \$6,851 in savings was provided to beneficiaries who received services from SCADC through the SHIP. Of those served, 37.5% had monthly income and assets of less than 150% of the federal poverty level. All individuals served were screened to ensure they were enrolled in one of the “Extra-Help” programs. A total of 15.625 % of those served were persons with disabilities. Over 56% of those served were females between the ages of 65-74, and 40.625% of all served were people of color, while the remaining 59.375% were white.

Through the partnership between the Auburn University Harrison College of Pharmacy and SCADC AAAs, 17 second-year pharmacy students worked with Medicare beneficiaries during three virtual Open Enrollment events. The students also helped counsel beneficiaries in plan options and enrollment under the supervision of the SHIP coordinator.

Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments (TARCOG)

Michelle Jordan, Executive Director / Rene Breland, AAA Director / 256-830-0818

The Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments (TARCOG) Area Agency on Aging (AAA) administers aging programs in DeKalb, Jackson, Limestone, Madison, and Marshall counties. The AAA's mission is to carry out a service delivery system that addresses needs of the region's 115,529 senior citizens and to help them maintain their independence. The AAA fulfills this mission by providing three key service components: to serve as an advocate on behalf of all older and disabled persons; to identify the needs of the elderly and develop plans for meeting those needs; and to effectively administer coordinated services through the responsible utilization of resources provided to the agency by the Alabama Department of Senior Services.

Even in the pre-pandemic world, social isolation among senior adults was a major concern. Studies indicate social isolation can take a major toll, increasing a person's risk of dementia, depression, and even premature death. In Fiscal Year 2021, senior citizens were even more susceptible to social isolation due to senior center closures as well as terminations of other activities they enjoyed.

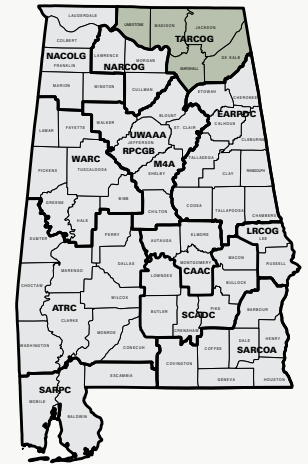
TARCOG found ways to connect with seniors by providing coloring/activity books, crossword puzzles, and "My Life" books that allowed them to tell their life story and share with relatives and friends. Senior center managers and volunteers called home-bound and congregate meal participants regularly to check on them and make sure their needs were being met.

TARCOG's Nutrition Program found ways to provide meals to seniors without disruption, with staff and volunteers playing music and sometimes wearing costumes as seniors received curbside-service to pick up meals. In May 2021, senior centers were allowed to hold outdoor activities to celebrate Older Americans Month. Outdoor bingo, corn hole, live music, clowns, horseshoes, health checks, and picnic lunches were just a few activities seniors enjoyed. By July 2021, all senior centers in the TARCOG region were

providing indoor and outdoor "Welcome Back!" days and recreation activities.

In June 2021, TARCOG embarked on a month-long campaign to bring awareness to the issue of elder abuse by providing education on how to recognize and report suspected abuse. A short video discussing elder abuse was developed and posted on the agency's website and Facebook page. Written materials and activities were distributed to homebound seniors, senior centers, local businesses, and public libraries. TARCOG also organized a week of Elder Abuse Awareness events designed to educate aging professionals and the public about elder abuse. TARCOG's Board of Directors, staff and other community leaders participated by taking the Elder Abuse Awareness Pledge, vowing to report suspected instances of abuse.

Access to Legal Services is especially critical to senior citizens faced with major decisions regarding their health, estate planning, and end-of-life issues. Of equal importance is the affordability of these services, especially for seniors who are on a fixed income. In Fiscal Year 2021, TARCOG's Legal Services Department addressed this need by providing assistance, education, and support to senior citizens in the region. Unfortunately, there are also times when a senior needs emergency intervention by TARCOG's elder attorney. One instance involved an elderly client who was facing eviction and becoming homeless. This client suffered from serious health issues and lived below the federal poverty level. Legal intervention took place immediately, keeping the client safe and averting eviction. A plan was then developed that provided resources, which



helped the client find more suitable and affordable housing and better living conditions.

TARCOG Program Impact Fiscal Year 2021:

Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC): 1,949 requests for assistance were received

Legal Services: 834 senior citizens received legal services such as Powers of Attorney, Wills, and Advance Directives

Nutrition: 724,074 meals were delivered to home-bound and senior center participants

SenioRx: 1,113 clients received free prescription medications at a savings of over \$3.5 million

Alabama Cares: 25,588 respite units were provided to family caregivers

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP): 125 participants were enrolled and provided training and compensation

Ombudsman Program: 173 consultations on long-term care facility issues were provided

Medicaid Waiver: 831 individuals received in-home services

State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP): 2,478 Medicare beneficiaries received Part D assistance at a savings of \$1,026,213



Personal Testimony – Ruby Banks

“Hi, I’m Ruby Banks. Please allow me to share my career journey on how I became the IT Support Technician for TARCOG. In 2019, after being out of the corporate world for 11 years, I decided I needed a change in my life. I started putting my resume on various websites, but I was aware that my skills needed updating. I came across a flyer about TARCOG and how it offered the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). I called and spoke with Project Director John Sanders, and he scheduled a time for me to come in and go over the details of the program.



SCSEP offers many different assignments for seniors; however, I was placed as an administrative assistant to Mr. Sanders. Not only was I able to update my skills using Excel, Word, and Adobe, but I was able to gain additional skills. I learned how to process payroll and put together enrollment packets for potential participants along with many other tasks. I was thrilled when I heard TARCOG was hiring an Information Technology Support Technician since I have an IT background. I interviewed for the position, and here I am – from a SCSEP participant, to a full-time employee at TARCOG!”

United Way Area Agency on Aging of Jefferson County (UWAAA)

Laysea Chasteen, AAA Director / 205-458-3330



United Way Area Agency on Aging (UWAAA) of Jefferson County promotes the health, dignity, and independence of seniors, people with disabilities, and their caregivers. Through a comprehensive and coordinated system, UWAAA is enhancing lives in meaningful ways – from providing hot, nutritious meals, and monitoring long-term-care facilities, to training caregivers and helping individuals take full advantage of Medicare benefits. In Fiscal Year 2021, UWAAA impacted the lives of over 16,000 senior adults and individuals with disabilities.

Fiscal Year 2021 saw many changes for the UWAAA. The agency was able to fill the long vacant AAA director position, as well as add a new position of assistant director. Filling and creating these roles added much needed stability and direction. The hirings also allowed the UWAAA to begin investing more in its programs, which increased commitment to expanding agency partnerships with other organizations that support the aging population in Jefferson County. It also broadened awareness of resources to those in need.

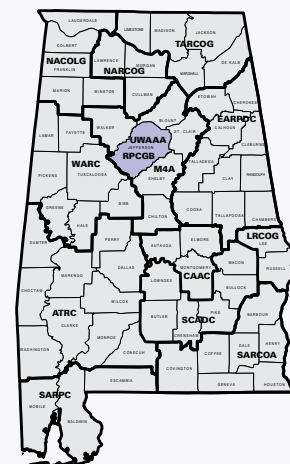
In Fiscal Year 2021, the UWAAA Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) received 13,338 calls from seniors and individuals with disabilities in Jefferson County. During the pandemic, callers continued to seek resources to become vaccinated and find testing locations. Callers also needed help finding area food banks, and rental, utility, and financial assistance. The ADRC specialists conducted 2,924 intakes, made 3,966 referrals to programs, and provided information and/or assistance to 5,378 Jefferson County residents. ADRC specialists and program staff continued to provide help with essential needs such as Medicare

counseling, prescription drug assistance, and caregiving, as isolation and fear brought mental health concerns to the forefront.

UWAAA's Senior Nutrition Program provided 246,291 congregate meals to seniors in Jefferson County during Fiscal Year 2021. This was a year of transition for the nutrition program and Jefferson County's senior centers. For the first two quarters of the fiscal year, eight of UWAAA's 26 contracted senior centers were serving daily hot meals to-go, with the remaining centers continuing to distribute boxes of frozen meals on a weekly basis. In March, senior centers reopened for outdoor activities followed by indoor activities in April. In June, senior centers began serving hot meals in congregate settings, serving 80,480 total meals. COVID precautions were put into place and infrared thermometers supplied by ADSS were distributed by UWAAA. As Fiscal Year 2021 ended, there were 21 senior centers open for activities and serving hot, congregate meals. Ten of these centers were prepping daily hot meals for delivery to Meals on Wheels participants. Many senior centers also continued to provide hot and/or frozen to-go meals for independent seniors not yet comfortable in a congregate setting.

In addition to meals, senior centers continued to offer creative programming in response to the shifting variations in the pandemic. Activities ranged from drive-through eye screenings and parking lot bingo, to indoor and outdoor exercise and dance classes, educational events, and craft workshops. Seniors were excited to reunite with friends for these stimulating activities – even if “socially distanced.”

United Way's Meals on Wheels Program experienced rapid growth in 2021 largely due to increased requests for service during the pandemic, which caused many homebound seniors to be more isolated. A decrease in volunteer



support, also due to the pandemic, sparked innovative new ways to ensure clients received uninterrupted deliveries of vital nutrition and safety checks. Response to the unprecedented need was fueled by support from a caring community and COVID-response funding. A total of 426,298 meals were delivered in 2021. Of those, 360,812 were delivered to enrolled clients, and the remaining were stopgap meals, which went to seniors on a waiting list. Additionally, groceries were provided to 271 seniors who reported being in extreme need, while 1,722 homebound seniors in Jefferson County received weekly frozen meal deliveries and safety checks. Shifting to weekly delivery during the pandemic was fundamental to reducing exposure to COVID-19. There were 744 new clients added to the roster through rapid enrollment in response to the pandemic. There were 329 amazing volunteers who delivered meals and made calls to homebound seniors.

A total of 21 Meals on Wheels clients were helped through our Senior Home Repair Program. Repairs and modifications were made to their homes, free of charge, allowing them to remain safe, healthy, and independent in the place they most want to be.

The new Meals on Wheels kitchen opened in 2021 as part of a major new addition to United Way of Central Alabama's campus. The facility was used for assembly and volunteer pickup of weekly meals and stands ready for meal preparation with the return to daily delivery of hot meals in 2022.

Through the Call a Senior Program, 930 personal phone calls were made by 124 volunteers to 465 isolated seniors to help combat loneliness and depression during the pandemic. Concerned volunteers were eager to help, and this was a safe, easy, and very enriching way for them to do so. Due to the pandemic, some programming and outreach activities moved to a virtual platform.

In May, the UWAAA Senior Medicare Patrol collaborated with the Alabama Securities Commission (ASC) to offer a Virtual Fraud Summit. Five, 10-minute segments on fraud topics were presented virtually, and a chat was available for questions. Professionals from ASC, Legal Services of Alabama, as well as several representatives from UWAAA were featured speakers.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) in-person events and appointments were canceled. Open Enrollment in 2021 was done through direct mail, phone, and email. A mail piece offering Open Enrollment plan comparison information was sent to 432 SHIP clients from the previous year, and clients were able to call and schedule a plan comparison phone appointment or mail in a form requesting the plan comparison mail piece. A team of volunteers worked hard to call clients and send information. During Open Enrollment, SHIP contacted 618 clients, a 100% increase over clients contacted the previous year.

Staff worked closely with SHIP and ADRC programs to ensure clients were receiving their eligible prescription drug assistance. SenioRx assisted 390 clients, including 231 new clients, in Fiscal Year 2021. UWAAA fostered a relationship with Positive Maturity and was able to help clients with a one-month supply of medication (paid for by Positive Maturity) while working to get Prescription Assistance Program approvals for their medications.

Alabama CARES & ORC: UWAAA's Alabama CARES and Older Relatives as Caregivers (ORC) programs recognized how COVID-19 created unique burdens for caregivers and grandparents raising grandchildren. UWAAA provided in-home respite care, virtual monthly support group meetings, and temporary financial assistance. Other help included 19,879 respite hours to 180 caregivers and items such as laptops, printers, school supplies, virtual tutoring, and clothing for 68 grandparents caring for a grandchild.

Preventive Health: UWAAA offered two preventive health programs in Fiscal Year 2021 – Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention, and the Arthritis Foundation's Walk With Ease Program. Both programs were offered through virtual and in-person formats. Tai Chi classes met twice weekly in the virtual setting and weekly in-person classes at nine senior centers. These free classes were attended by 209 seniors throughout the year. The Walk With Ease Program launched towards the end of the year. One self-directed six-week class was completed in which seniors participated independently while receiving weekly motivational emails with helpful information.

West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC)

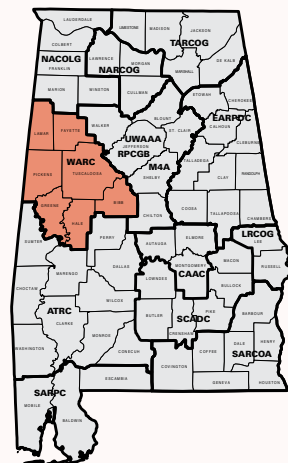
Dennis Stripling, Executive Director / Kelli Kimbrell, AAA Director / 205-333-2990 / 800-432-5030



West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC)'s Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is dedicated to serving aging and disabled populations and caregivers of Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa counties. AAA staff are available to assist seniors and their families in coordinating resources and services that will enable older adults to maintain their independence.

Fiscal Year 2021 proved to be another busy time that allowed the agency an opportunity to constantly adapt to new challenges in order to assure it met the needs of older adults, disabled individuals, and their caregivers. The ongoing pandemic was the major concern for WARC

throughout the year. While it knew clients' safety was the No. 1 priority, it continued to see and hear stories of how social isolation caused major difficulty in the population it serves. At one time, the agency had calls from seniors on a weekly basis asking when the Senior Activity Centers would open back up to congregate settings.



Although the impact those centers have on a person's well-being is common knowledge, the calls reminded agency officials just how crucial those centers are to the community. Some municipalities re-opened centers to congregate settings as soon as allowed, and WARC made a concentrated effort to enhance the Senior Activity Centers and prepare for new and existing clients. A Senior Center Enhancement drive was initiated. Feedback was requested



WARC staff and volunteers helped schedule appointments, locate transportation, and distribute education on COVID-19 vaccines.

and received from center managers, center participants, and aging contractors on what needs they had at the centers and ways to improve operations and attendance. Each center had the opportunity to submit three wishes for its center to WARC. The wishes ranged from new hot pads to outdoor signs and various items in between.

The agency used American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to purchase items on the wish lists. Items purchased included quilting supplies, cornhole games, bingo cards, picnic tables, cushioned chairs, food prep tables, and professionally installed outdoor signs. Computers and technology at all centers were upgraded to allow more opportunities for attendees. A television was installed in every center that requested one to allow virtual evidence-based training opportunities, virtual meetings, social hours, etc. The enhancements made to the centers brought a renewed sense of pride to center participants, and they continued to reach out to others in the community and invite them to come join the fun.

In 2021, WARC sought more ways to connect with residents in long-term care facilities that were hit especially hard with COVID isolations, limited visits from family and friends, and decreased facility social activities. WARC continued the #LoveLetters2Elders Initiative, Pen Pals, and Sock Drive.

A new project started through the Ombudsman program was a jewelry drive. Since it can be hard for nursing home residents to feel good about themselves or have a desire to get dressed if they are not going anywhere, the agency wanted to provide pieces of jewelry to help remind them how special they are. There were a lot of beautiful, gently used jewelry pieces given to the long-term care residents in the community. The drive began internally with AAA staff, expanded to WARC staff, and then moved into the community. Each jewelry bag included a printed message "Playing dress up begins at age 5, hoping this gift finds you well and feeling loved because you are." The jewelry drive was well received, and jewelry was presented to all the nursing homes in the region.

The agency also found volunteers to make fidget quilts for distribution to local long-term care facilities and some other clients. The fidget quilts are blankets covered with embellishments and trimmings that can be an effective way to reduce anxiety, calm nerves, keep hands busy, and

provide comfort. These quilts can provide benefits to people with Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and other cognitive conditions.

Much of 2021 was also spent educating seniors and disabled individuals about COVID-19 vaccinations. A database was kept of all vaccine site schedules in the region, and it was updated throughout the year. WARC helped individuals schedule appointments, locate transportation, find home-based options, and provided outreach for vaccinations. The agency distributed over 1,000 vaccination card holders, and continues to provide educational flyers on vaccines and boosters, and helps individuals schedule appointments when needed.

To celebrate Older Americans Month (OAM), WARC held drive-thru community outreach events in May. Agency staff visited all seven counties it serves and provided educational information. WARC had over 250 attendees at the drive-thru events.

Another way OAM was celebrated was a Facebook page honoring older individuals who have made an impact on WARC employees. Staff members interviewed elderly clients, family members, friends, and other people in the community about life lessons, favorite memories, advice for future generations, and their lives today. The project reached over 8,700 contacts on Facebook. The website had 3,200 views during May as well. Since the theme for OAM was "Communities of Strength," the agency felt these two activities helped highlight the strength of older Americans in their communities.

Other programs returned to in-person activities that provided social distancing and ample safety measures to clients. Evidenced Based Trainings is one program that went back to in-person settings in 2021. Two Stress Buster trainings (nine-week classes) were completed and the newest evidence-based training, Bingocize (10-week class), began in May. Bingocize was a huge hit, and since completing the first series of classes, the agency has received numerous requests to provide the training program at various senior apartment complexes in Tuscaloosa. The agency also provided Dementia Friendly Training to Bibb County Law Enforcement in May and the Fayette County Police Department in June.



Alabama Department of Senior Services

201 Monroe Street, Suite 350
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

AlabamaAgeline.gov