

Remarks of
the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Programs
U.S. Administration on Aging

**“The Aging of America and Care Coordination:
A Federal Perspective”**

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Good morning. I'm very happy to be invited to join you for your Government Affairs Conference. It's a pleasure to be here with so many people who are making outstanding contributions every day in serving people of all ages in communities across the country.

On behalf of the U.S. Assistant Secretary for Aging, Josefina Carbonell, I want to particularly commend and thank you for all of your efforts and contributions in support of older persons and their families.

The aging of America will present us with a number of major challenges and require every sector of society to rethink the way it does business. With this in mind, the Administration and Assistant Secretary Carbonell have established five strategic priorities for action by the Administration on Aging and our Aging Services Network. I'd like to take a few minutes to provide an overview of these priorities and encourage you to continue to work as community partners with us in helping to implement these initiatives.

AoA's Strategic Priorities

These strategic priorities are:

- Improving older people's access to long-term care
- Helping older people stay active and healthy

- Supporting family caregivers
- Protecting consumers from abuse and neglect
- Implementing cross-cutting initiatives that support the strategic priorities, including Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities.

Improving Access to Long-Term Care

Let me begin with the President's important initiative aimed at improving older people's access to long-term care by creating real choices in home and community-based care. Currently, 75% of public long-term care funding goes to institutional care. Yet, we've heard repeatedly during our community listening sessions that most people prefer to remain at home.

Our vision for long-term care is to have a system in place in every community that provides a meaningful range of service options for older adults and their family members. This full range of options should allow consumers to age in place in their homes and communities, and ensure that those who reside in facilities receive high-quality care.

We believe the key is to provide a balanced approach to long-term care. We're working to provide innovative and high quality home and community based

services, at the same time that we work to delay and prevent the chronic conditions that result in the need for those services.

To realize this vision, the mission for AoA and the Aging Services Network is to focus both on developing comprehensive and coordinated systems of care for all older Americans 60 years of age and older, as well as to help the nation prepare for the aging of the baby boom generation.

As part of our efforts to develop comprehensive and coordinate systems of care right now, the President is leading the effort to modernize Medicare.

Medicare Modernization Act

The Medicare Modernization Act provides prescription drug coverage to Medicare beneficiaries and offers many more opportunities for preventive services and health benefits.

The Administration on Aging is working with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and a variety of partners to provide beneficiaries with accurate information on what the Medicare Modernization Act is about, namely a more flexible Medicare program. We're partnering with a number of public and private organizations to support community level efforts to educate and enroll low-income Medicare beneficiaries in the drug discount card program.

Aging and Disability Resource Center Grants

In concert with this initiative, we have launched several initiatives to support the establishment of a more balanced, consumer-oriented system of care. Over the past two years, AoA and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have jointly issued competitive grants designed to support the efforts of states to empower consumers through one stop entry points to long-term care. Through this Aging and Disability Resource Center initiative, twenty-four states have received grants to develop streamlined access to long-term care for people with disabilities of all ages. This initiative is designed to establish a front-end entry point for the entire system of care, and improve community-based access to long-term care.

Alzheimer's Grants to States

Another important effort designed to provide community-based long-term care alternatives is the Alzheimer's Disease Demonstration Grants to States program. This program, which is administered by the Administration on Aging, is designed to:

- focus attention on the needs of families who are caring for persons with Alzheimer's Disease;
- encourage states to develop models of assistance for persons with Alzheimer's disease;
- and encourage close coordination and incorporation of those services into the broader home and community based care system.

The Alzheimer's program has proven successful in targeting service and systems development to traditionally underserved populations, including ethnic minorities, low-income and rural families coping with Alzheimer's disease.

Helping older people stay active and healthy

As the baby boom ages, we need to do every thing we can to reduce both the incidence and severity of disease and disability during the later stages of life.

There is a growing body of science in the area of prevention that clearly shows it's never too late for older persons to obtain substantial health benefits by making lifestyle changes – even for older persons with impairments. The science also reveals that we can significantly reduce at least five major chronic conditions – diabetes, heart disease, cancer, depression, and arthritis – through increased physical activity and improved nutrition.

With this in mind, a second strategic priority of Assistant Secretary Carbonell is helping older people to stay active and healthy. Through an evidence-based prevention program, we're taking health promotion and disease prevention to a new level by translating research into practice at the community level.

We're working with the Centers for Disease Control, the National Institute on Aging, the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality, the nation's leading

foundations, and local service providers to demonstrate that our aging services network can effectively deliver programs that have proven to be effective in reducing the risk of disease and disability among the elderly.

We're also working with our partners to develop a special training program targeted at state and local agency staff in both the aging and health networks to help the rest of our network learn about and implement evidence-based prevention programs for the elderly at the community level.

You Can Campaign

In order to raise awareness among the senior population about the importance of prevention and the small steps that older people can take to maintain and improve their health, we recently launched the You Can! Steps to Healthier Aging Campaign.”

The You Can! Campaign is focused on encouraging seniors to eat better and exercise more. We call it the “2-2-2” campaign – because our goal is to mobilize 2,000 community organization to reach 2 million seniors within 2 years. We've learned through focus groups that the older adults we're targeting are ready to make a change. They can't do it alone. They need a friend, a neighbor, or a group to do it with them. They just need a little encouragement. So we need to provide programs that are simple and fun to do.

We're asking our community partners in this campaign to help spread the word about the importance of lifestyle choices; share information about improving food choices and increasing physical activity; and consider making activities and programs available for older adults. In return, we'll recognize organizations that sign up as a campaign partner, highlight their programs and activities, provide a toolkit, and help with networking opportunities. You can find out more about the You Can Campaign or sign up through our website at www.aoa.gov.

Supporting family caregivers

A third major priority of the Assistant Secretary is the support of family caregivers. At listening sessions throughout the country, one of the recurring messages we've heard time and time again is the considerable physical demands, emotional distress, and losses caregivers experience.

More than 22.4 million U.S. Households are serving in family caregiving roles for persons over the age of 50, and that number will increase rapidly as the population ages, and as medical science continues to extend life.

The care provided by these relatives and friends to their loved ones saves the government billions of dollars. A study conducted in 2002 estimates the value of

this care to be \$257 billion dollars per year. This is more than the amount spent on formal home care and nursing home care combined.

Yet, caregivers face serious difficulties -- all too often they assist loved ones at a considerable cost to themselves. The physical demands, emotional distress, losses, and their age increase their risk for health problems. According to data we've collected, one out of four caregivers report difficulty providing care because of their own physical limitations. Other research indicates that caregivers experience strain and suffer a mortality rate that is 63% higher than non-caregivers.

The message we hear from caregivers throughout the country is the same – just give me a little help – a little hope – a little relief, and I can take care of my loved one in my home. We've taken some important steps in that direction through the National Family Caregiver Support Program.

The Caregiver Support Program, currently funded at \$156 million, provides funding to states through a formula grant and provides a number of caregiver supports, including: information and assistance; individual counseling; support groups and caregiver training; respite care; and supplemental services on a limited basis.

Through this program, we've reached out to over 8 million family members, and provided vital services to over 500,000 caregivers. We're working together to strengthen America's families and keep impaired older people in their homes and communities, and out of nursing homes. Over 3 million of the individuals supported by the caregiver program have intensive health care needs.

Protecting Consumers from Abuse and Neglect

A fourth strategic priority of the Administration on Aging is to protect older individuals from abuse and neglect.

Within this initiative we have worked to Improve the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center and partnered with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services on the Nursing Home Quality Initiative through the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center. We also continue to provide technical assistance to our National Aging Services Network and our key partners in the area of consumer choice and protection through our resource centers on Elder Abuse; Legal Services; Pension Rights; and detecting fraud in the Medicare program.

Cross-Cutting Initiatives That Support All Strategic Priorities – Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities

A fifth priority is to implement cross-cutting initiatives that support all strategic priorities. One of these activities I know you're very familiar with – Naturally

Occurring Retirement Communities. Last month we awarded over five million dollars for 22 grants to help seniors remain independent in the communities in which they live.

These awards will establish demonstration programs to develop and test models to support older persons in cities, suburbs and counties that have high concentrations of older adults living in apartments, townhouses and single family residences. The grants will provide opportunities to test and evaluate new methods for helping these individuals to successfully age in place.

Most of the demonstration grants will focus on linking seniors living in naturally occurring retirement communities to health and supportive services, as well as seek to develop innovative strategies designed to enhance the quality of life of residents.

Closing

One of the greatest strengths we have as a nation in meeting the challenges associated with the aging of the Baby Boom population is our continued commitment to service and community effectiveness. I recognize that our strength lies not at the federal level, but in the communities where our partners and community-based organizations work to serve the needs of older Americans and their families.

All of the things that we at the Administration on Aging are working to develop are designed to help give states, providers, and families the resources and the flexibility to use them effectively. But it is the work that all of you do in your communities that makes the real differences in the lives of the older people we serve.

I sincerely commend you for your service to your community and to older Americans and their families. I encourage you to continue to take advantage of the opportunities created by a growing societal preference for home and community-based care.

We must work together to complete the work of building a system of care that focuses on the community, is cost-effective, and truly reflects the needs and preferences of older Americans.

We know what we do makes a difference! Let's work together to make sure that EVERY community is a caring community. Congratulations and best wishes.