

Alaska Commission on Aging Priority:

**Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs)
\$375,000 GF/MH**

February, 2010

Issue:

The Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) serve as a visible, trusted resource where older adults and people of all ages with disabilities may obtain information and assistance regarding long-term care supports and services – including everything from assistive technology to home care services to eligibility for various benefits. Federal funding agencies began requiring states to offer ADRCs after discovering that centralized, convenient long-term care information and assistance can streamline access to care and save money by allowing consumers to choose from all available alternatives.

Originally funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) through a grant to the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) which was administered by the Statewide Independent Living Centers (SILC) for three years, the program has been managed by the State of Alaska's Senior & Disabilities Services since FY 2009. Regional sites in Anchorage, Kenai Peninsula, and Southeast Alaska provide information, assistance, benefits pre-screening, and referrals to services. ADRCs in three additional regions will be funded beginning in FY 2010. In order to extend the program to all areas of the state (nine regions) and provide adequate levels of staffing in all offices, additional State funding is needed.

In FY 2009, the ADRC program served 4,623 individuals, providing information and referral as well as other services. Approximately 36 percent of these clients were age 60 and older. (The 60+ age group represents fewer than 12 percent of the total Alaska population.)

A budget request by the Alaska Commission on Aging for an increment of \$375,000 in GF/MH operating funds for the ADRCs was approved by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority for its FY 2011 budget recommendations. The increment was not included in the Governor's budget.

Background:

A top priority identified by participants in various senior/elder forums sponsored by the Alaska Commission on Aging has been access to information about the services available in their communities. Most often, seniors and their families are unaware of the range of services available, and when they encounter an immediate (and often unanticipated) need for help, they may not know where to turn – a frustrating state of affairs which only adds to their strain at a time when they are already dealing with health care needs and other unexpected stressors. Seniors have told us they would like a clearinghouse for information about senior services and benefits, a “one-stop shop” that would disseminate information and help seniors and their

families navigate the system of benefits. ADRCs provide this type of assistance to seniors and persons with disabilities, helping them complete applications and offering long-term care options counseling and support.

One example of how the ADRCs provide assistance is their role in guiding seniors through the complex enrollment process for Medicare Part D (prescription drug program). The ADRCs provide guidance for seniors enrolling in Part D for the first time or seeking to change the plan in which they are enrolled (there are dozens of plans offered, each covering a different array of drugs at a different premium). ADRCs also provide information about home- and community-based services, home modifications, assistive technology, and other services available in the area.

The number of regional ADRCs in Alaska has varied along with funding for the program. With the move to State management in FY 2009 and loss of some federal grant funding, only three regional offices were in operation during FY 2009. Receipt of a new federal grant will allow three additional offices to begin operation in FY 2010. However, current levels of staffing are minimal (one person per region), not sufficient to meet all the needs especially of the rapidly-growing senior population. The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority has continued to commit \$125,000 per year in MHTAAR funds to the ADRC program. However, the program requires an additional \$375,000 in ongoing State funding to provide adequate services through its regional offices.

The ultimate goal of the ADRC program in Alaska is to offer a one-stop center for access to long-term care support services in every region of the state, especially with the anticipated growth in demand for such services that will accompany our growing number of seniors (which is increasing at about five percent per year, giving Alaska the fastest-growing senior population of any state). Each regional site will be familiar with all the services and supports available in their area, and able to pre-screen consumers for eligibility for programs such as home- and community-based services and Medicaid. If adequately funded, the program will be promoted to Alaskans so that they will recognize it as their first point of contact when they are in need of long-term services and supports. Special efforts will be made to promote ADRC access for unserved and under-served populations such as people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD).

Recommendation:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) recommends support for the Aging & Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), a \$375,000 increment to the operating funds for the program within Senior & Disabilities Services. Full funding for this program in every region of the state will help provide a one-stop resource for seniors and individuals with disabilities to access information about available services and pre-screening for service eligibility. ADRCs will develop into a statewide information resource, accessible to all Alaskans.