

**Maryland Commission on Aging**  
**2012 Annual Report and**  
**Executive Summary of 2012 Minutes**

The Commission on Aging held eight meetings in 2012 (January and April meetings were cancelled due to weather and staff schedule conflicts, and July and August are summer break months each year).

At each meeting, the Commission covered items it had identified for discussion, including areas it had prioritized for action, and was provided a legislative briefing by the Legislative Liaison at the Dept. of Aging. The Department also provided many briefings throughout the year on the agency's current services and new programs being implemented to serve seniors in Maryland, as well as funding opportunities that were on the horizon via grants and other sources.

The Maryland Commission on Aging identified early in the year the need to host a joint meeting of the local (county) commissions on aging to take place at the Innovations in Aging Expo held by the Department of Aging at the Gaylord National Harbor Hotel in Maryland in May. The purpose of the Expo was to provide seniors from throughout Washington DC metropolitan area a unique and educational experience, and to promote awareness of senior programs to the community at large. The Maryland Commission decided it was an excellent opportunity to host members of local county commissions from around the state and provide them with the opportunity to network and learn from the experiences of other commissions working to solve senior issues at the grassroots level.

In addition, at the joint meeting, the Maryland Commission on Aging arranged to provide training in effective advocacy techniques as well as an overview of the legislative process so that each local commissioner could in turn feel empowered to more effectively educate their representatives at the state legislature about the most pressing issues affecting seniors in their respective communities.

Much of the planning for this event took place at the commission meetings held in the months of February and March. The event took place on May 4, 2012 and was a great success, with an estimated 5,000 people attending from all over the state of Maryland as well as Virginia and Washington, DC. Participant feedback was positive and many asked when the next Expo would take place.

The joint meeting of the local commissions was also very successful and included breakout sessions organized by region in order to identify common areas of need and start the conversation about how they may be addressed. Among the needs identified at the breakout sessions were: improved transportation for seniors (especially in the rural parts of the state), the sharing of best practices and examples of aging in place projects around the state, the need for increased outreach to seniors by state agencies in order to better provide information about all the programs available to seniors, and ideas for improved communication between the Maryland state Commission and Maryland's local/county commissions, including through a Commission on Aging website.

From this, it became evident to the Commission just how important it was to increase networking opportunities between and among the local Commission members from around the state in order to share ideas, resources and opportunities for finding solutions to the needs of their senior populations. The Commission decided it would make it a priority to plan and execute a follow-up meeting with local commissions in 2013.

By midyear, the Commission confirmed that the Department was in the midst of holding regional meetings across the state where performance measurements for critical issues were being established. The Department staff in charge of Federal Programs briefed the Commission on the recommendations gathered from these regional meetings and how they would be presented in the State Plan. These regional hearings were held in Queen Anne's, Prince George's, Baltimore, and Washington counties and on the Lower Shore in Salisbury. The recommendations covered senior centers, transportation, accessible and affordable housing, dental care, elder abuse prevention, private/public partnerships and health and social service programs.

At this point in the year, the Commission felt that making real inroads into the development of the Commission on Aging website (a project that had been attempted before but suffered setbacks for various reasons) should become a high priority action item to be addressed in the coming months. The Commission chair wrote to Secretary Lawlah requesting additional resources from the Department of Aging, including assistance from staff in collecting information and developing a Commission page on the Department of Aging's site.

By September, the Department of Aging had identified and presented the Commission with a Department of Aging staff person as the point of contact to create the web page and help the commission post content onto the site. Commission members developed suggestions for the types of information public and local commissioners would like to see on the site based on feedback received at the recent Expo and the regional meetings held around the state.

To further increase the Commission's presence at senior events around the state, the Commission met at the Baltimore County Department of Aging's Baby Boomer 50+ Senior Expo in Timonium, Maryland in October. The event became a joint meeting between the Baltimore County Commission on Aging, United Seniors of Maryland (USM) and the Commission.

By the end of the year, the Commission had formed a Website/Communications subcommittee to consider all its options for developing a website and to establish an outline of the content to be included that fits the regulations established for State government agencies such as the Dept. of Aging. It was determined that at the very least the website would contain the Commission's mission statement; names, photos and email addresses of the Commission members; its monthly meeting schedule and minutes, and that it would link to websites of, and information about, local commissions on aging throughout Maryland. An additional staff member was identified by the Department of Aging to help guide the Commission as far as governmental standards for the website were concerned.

In closing out the year, the Commission approved the introduction of legislation in the upcoming legislative session that would move responsibility for developing and awarding Innovations in Aging grants from the moribund Innovations in Aging Advisory Council to the Commission on Aging in order to facilitate action on such grants, which have not been awarded in many years. In addition, the Commission selected members for the review committee of the Governor's Annual Leadership in Aging Awards, scheduled to be announced in the spring of 2013.