

Office for Aging Advisory Council

February 10, 2025

In attendance: Sandy Sanzo, Katie Legga, Rene Conklin, Maria Motsavage, John Kang, Suzanne Sullivan, Sue Thrasher, Robert Hoover, Youjung Lee

OFA staff: Mary Turbush, Lucia Esposito

Motion made by Rene and second motion by Robert to approve previous meeting's minutes.

Director's Report:

- Our Age Friendly project is on hold for now until our Coordinator wraps up with HEAP season
- Senior to Senior Dances are coming up at several senior centers
- Foster Grandparents Program continues to struggle with enrollment. This program is mostly funded by the Federal Government, so we are waiting for updates on the future of the program. In the meantime, it is business as usual.
- CASP – up to 25 clients; working closely with medical providers to provide support to clients in the community; a dedicated OFA caseworker works closely with Endwell Family Physicians to assist clients who have high social determinants of health needs; we now also have a nurse working on these cases to navigate health literacy and referral needs; We are taking community referrals we call reverse referrals and linking to UHS and Guthrie as well.
- Still in need of a Senior Account Clerk and Senior Clerk
- We have a new Caseworker starting in early March
- We are discussing keeping the Group Respite program in Binghamton opened until December 2025 and then consider a merge with Endwell or a new location. There are currently no affordable spaces where we could move to Binghamton to keep this location. The attendance levels in Binghamton are down. Discussion was held on the change of food service at the Binghamton Yesteryears Group Respite Program. The program was utilizing food from the North Shore Towers Senior Center but once that closed, OFA has opened a Home Delivered Grab site at the Yesteryears Group Respite in Binghamton. This change has no affect on the Yesteryears program since the food is still from Sodexo/same menu and still handled in the same manner as before. The committee members have no concerns about this changed when asked.
- NYSOFA is implementing caps on Caregiver services including Group Respite. This would be 208 hours per client per year. This could affect our Yesteryears Group Respite Program significantly. We are working with NYSOFA to try and address this concern.
- Unmet needs funding – we continue to spend our allotment before March 31, 2025. Lot of funding is put toward in home services: laundry services, clean outs, respite staff to provide in home respite, transportation, in home services through the Guaranteed aide program, equipment for senior centers, senior center activities etc.
- Consumer Directed Medicaid – one agency for the whole state, however OFA Consumer Directed is not impacted and will still use STIC.
- Four- year plan – we are currently under review by NYSOFA after we submitted it.
- Festival of Lights – Group Respite participants got to visit the park in the month of December
- Willow Point Respite Program –Through this program, the care recipient stays at the nursing home for 2 weeks so the caregiver gets respite. Three clients so far used this program. Caregivers

would prefer to have shorter stays. We looked at Good Shepherd and contracted for 3 days respite.

- New contract Comfort Keepers – this contract will be for personal care level I which is basic housekeeping, shopping etc.
- Mental Health Association-MHAST is a new vendor as well – they have trained all of OFA staff in Mental Health First Aid; MHAST has also visited the senior centers to provide presentations to participants about mental health topics and to collect feedback about what mental health topics they are interested in (self care, grief etc.)
- Memory Maker – back at the centers providing two new art events for participants. There will also be a Caregiver Event provided by MM in the month of February.

Updates from members:

- Robert – the LGBTQ group really enjoyed Mary who came and spoke about OFA services. Many speakers lined up till April, then the group will look at moving to a more social agenda with speakers quarterly.
- Sue T – the Unitarian Church is hosting an LGBTQ support group and several educational programs.
- Sue S. – concerned about payment safety when sending checks for payments. Rene filled the group in that banks like M&T have ways to safeguard checks and accounts. OFA will look into hosting more financial literacy and scam prevention presentations at centers and adding more information to Senior News.
- John – will be doing a class about use of AI and ethical issues that stem from that. John offered to present to the senior centers and provide learning materials once they are created.
- Youjung – worked on a scholarly paper about the value of the Foster Grandparent Program. Youjung also will send Mary her published paper on senior to senior dances. Mary will present on the dances at the next OFA Director Leadership Conference.

Next meeting: April 14th, 2025 at the BC Library.