

## APPENDIX F- TOWN MEETING SUMMARY

The Department of Aging conducted eight town meetings between January 31 and March 28, 2008. At each meeting, facilitated discussion sessions were held where consumers, providers and caregivers could offer their comments on each of the four goals identified by the department. Participants were provided with a discussion guide listing the goals and identifying key topics to park discussion. However, all comments and suggestions were welcomed.

Consumers and providers were afforded the opportunity to give input at separate sessions, if they chose, in order to better foster discussions. However, consumers and providers were not restricted to sessions and most meetings experienced a mix of attendees across sessions. As a result, responses collected reflect both consumer and provider perspectives.

The following contains a summary of issues that garnered the greatest attention across all town meetings. Issues are not listed in any particular order.

### Goal 1:

- Educate all medical professionals and hospital facilities about the services available to older Pennsylvanians.
- Rebalance the system between nursing home and home and community based services.
- Educate individuals about long term care planning with special attention to younger populations (under the age of 60).
- Continue consumer education and counseling on health insurance options.
- Provide education to families and caregivers on the availability of services rather than limiting focus to consumers.
- Develop a single source of information for all services regardless of the agency providing the service.
- Identify and address language and cultural barriers.
- Provide assistance for hearing and visually impaired individuals.
- Provide easy to understand information about Advanced Directives to consumers and their families; educate hospitals and care facilities about honoring those directives.
- Prohibit lottery dollars from funding programs other than for older Pennsylvanians.
- Educate individuals and providers about medication management.

### Goal 2:

- Improve transportation:
  1. Many home and community based services are dependent on effective transportation including Adult Day and Senior Centers.
  2. Eliminate disparity between senior transportation and medical assistance transportation.
  3. Improve accessibility for individuals with disabilities.
  4. Improve service to rural areas.
- Housing and home modifications:
  1. Increase housing options for low income individuals.
  2. Increase home modifications.
  3. Increase accessible housing options for individuals of all incomes.
  4. Develop a web-based database of housing services, contractors and organizations assisting with modifications.

## APPENDIX F- TOWN MEETING SUMMARY

5. Expand community partnerships and volunteer efforts.
- Expand the roles of Adult Day Facilities to provide increased respite assistance to family caregivers and to offer increased services to individuals with dementia.
  - Increase supports for family care givers including respite programs and training.
  - Direct care workers:
    1. Increase recruitment and retention.
    2. Improve conditions (wages, driving time)
    3. Require background checks or bonding for workers.
  - Explore new technologies including telehealth, life alert, Wii interactive game systems and adaptive equipment for individuals with disabilities; however, recognize that technology poses a barrier for many consumers including automated phone systems and personal computers.
  - Expand the hours of operation of AAAs to better serve working seniors.

### Goal 3:

- Focus on preventive care and healthy living.
- Encourage volunteering among younger adults including partnering with the RSVP program and other intergenerational programs.
- Establish neighborhood watch programs for individuals without families.
- Promote healthy brain programs to deter dementia.
- Provide education and support for grandparents raising grandchildren; raise awareness of special legal and financial needs of these individuals.
- Senior Centers:
  1. Centers should be wellness centers offering activities promoting physical fitness, nutrition and mental acuity.
  2. Expand the hours that centers are open to attract seniors who are still employed and meet their need for socialization; offer special evening activities like dancing.
  3. Improve food choices and explore nutrition options.
  4. Explore new programming and marketing options to appeal to the boomer generation.
- Top media avenues recommended for reaching older Pennsylvanians include television, radio, newspapers, Senior Centers and faith-based partnerships.

### Goal 4:

- Increase public awareness of Protective Services and who they should contact for help or to report abuse.
- Examine effects of drug abuse on older populations including abuse by caregivers and self-neglect by prescription drug users.
- Raise awareness of issues of abuse, neglect and abandonment recognizing that financial exploitation and fraud, also important issues, receive more public attention.
- Increase caregiver supports and respite programs to avoid fatigue and increase the possibility of becoming potential abusers; raise public awareness of warning signs and resources for caregiver fatigue.
- Increase collaboration between the aging and mental health network.

## APPENDIX F- TOWN MEETING SUMMARY

- Remove consumer stigma about asking for assistance with mental health issues; decrease negative public perceptions about mental health issues.
- Encourage consumers to be prepared for emergencies; encourage individuals needing special assistance to register with their local emergency responders.
- Increase access to free legal advice.
- Provide greater public awareness and education about estate recovery.
- Educate consumers and caregivers about mental health and behavioral health issues; provide additional assistance to plan for their long term care needs.

Cross-cutting issues: The following issues were relevant to multiple goals.

- Develop community partnerships with public and private agencies, local businesses, professionals and faith-based organizations. Local partnerships can potentially foster support in many areas including:
  - Raise public awareness about programs and services.
  - Educate the public about pertinent issues.
  - Provide opportunities for funding and service collaboration.
  - Recruit professionals to share their talents with older residents.
  - Expand the volunteer base.
- Increase funding for programs; change allocation formula for existing funding.
- Collaborate with agencies that also serve the aging population including:
  - Department of Corrections
  - Veterans Administration
  - Department of Public Welfare
  - Department of Health
  - Department of Transportation
  - Department of Conservation and Natural Resources