Petrina Thomas

Research Project 1

October 14, 2015

SOCG 371M: Community Power, Section 1, Dr. Leslie Martin

Opportunity, Yes. Efficacy…. TBD

Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), James Rothrock, presented a brief report of DARS activities to the Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) at the beginning of its quarterly Business meeting on Wednesday, October 7, 2015. He reported a good relationship and dialogue with the new federal agency in charge of Independent Living services initiated by the signing of WIOA, the Administration for Community Living (ACL). This relationship and dialogue he spoke of must refer to interpreting new regulations because when asked if ACL took any guidance from the state with regards to its funding opportunities (grants), he replied, “no.” This new knowledge that the federal agency, ACL, does not have a focus group or intention of retrieving information from the states about the needs of the populations that they serve, makes one wonder where the Administration for Community Living (ACL) gets its information to create annual funding opportunities (aka grants). Clicking around the ACL website offers dim light on this subject. For instance, one top listed research tool is the National Core Indicator used for data in programming at ACL. The only problem that one might see immediately with that tool is that in 2013-14, only 8 states participated, none on either the east or west coast and one barely touching the northern or southern boundaries of the country. The lack of representativeness of this research tool decreases its validity, reliability, and generalizability but is still used to direct millions of our tax dollars but more importantly affects the quality of life and programs for our fellow Americans.

The purpose of this research project to prove that combining the federal programs charged with oversight and provision of aging and disability services under one federal roof, Administration for Community Living (ACL), does not automatically mean that programs and funding opportunities are written or designed in a cohesive manner that avoids discrimination and segregation of services and funding based on disability or age group. Examination of the twenty-four total Funding Opportunities offered by ACL for fiscal year 2015 will provide the basis for this argument. At first glance, the 24 funding opportunities (or grants) appear to be split exactly down the middle with 12 focused on people with disabilities and 12 focused on the aging population. A closer look at each funding opportunity shows more actual demographics of the populations who gain benefit from these grants. This research project does not include a discussion of the quality or relevance of each funding opportunity but focuses on the target populations as a whole. Quality and effectiveness of individual programs is the subject of future research projects. This research project aims to point out discrepancies in funding and populations served with regards to programs focused on disabilities and aging.

The first funding opportunity for ACL listed is the Disaster Assistance for State Units on Aging (SUAs) and Tribal Organizations in National Disasters Declared by the President. This grant is slated for the aging population but one would hope that in the event of a disaster, individuals with disabilities would not be discriminated against if in need of the services provided by this grant. The second funding opportunity that is geared towards the aging population is the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) Funding for Beneficiary Outreach and Assistance: Title VI Native American Programs. The third grant that allocates funds solely to aging individuals is titled Advancing Person-Centered, Trauma-Informed Supportive Services for Holocaust Survivors. The fourth and fifth funding opportunities that delineate funds towards aging are the Alzheimer’s Disease Initiative—Specialized Supportive Services (ADI-SSS) and the Alzheimer’s Disease Supportive Services Program (ADSSP): Creating and Sustaining Dementia-Capable Service Systems for People with Dementia and their Family Caregivers. Sixth on the list of funding opportunities for aging is Information and Planning: Understanding the Capacity of the Aging Network. The seventh grant for aging is the National Minority Aging Organizations (NMAO) Technical Assistance Centers and eighth is titled Evidence-Based Falls Prevention Programs. Ninth and tenth are the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP)/State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) Hard-to-Reach Beneficiary Project and the Senior Medicare Patrol Projects: Empowering Seniors to Prevent Health Care Fraud. Eleventh funding opportunity for aging programs is the Senior Legal Helplines and Model Approaches—Technical Assistance. The twelfth and last funding opportunity written that only serves the aging population is called the National Resource Centers on Older Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians. The twelve funding opportunities listed here are available to organizations that serve solely the aging population.

As programs designed to support individuals with disabilities to live inclusively in their communities have also included the needs of the aging population such as the need for accessible and affordable housing, transportation, personal care assistance, and access to healthcare to name a few, it is not surprising that ten of the twelve remaining funding opportunities under ACL are designed to and benefit both the aging and disability communities. The two remaining funding opportunities that serve only people with disabilities and not aging is geared towards developmental disabilities and may be a political reaction to the rise in incidence of autism and related advocacy and are titled University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities with two different deadline dates. In Virginia this grant is centered at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU).

The ten funding opportunities that are accessible and designed to benefit both aging and disability needs are:

1. American Samoa and Guam Center for Independent Living (CIL) Competition
2. Statewide Independent Living Council Training and Technical Assistance Center
3. Transforming State LTSS Access Functions into a No Wrong Door System for All Populations and All Payers: Statewide Implementation
4. 2015 Lifespan Respite Care Program: Grants to New States
5. State Grants to Enhance Adult Protective Services
6. Lifespan Respite Care Program Technical Assistance
7. Empowering Older Adults and Adults with Disabilities through Chronic Disease Self-Management Education Programs
8. Help American Vote Act
9. National Legal Resource Center
10. Paralysis Resource Center

Thus begins the discussion of these above listed ten remaining funding opportunities that ACL writes to look like disability only but in reality benefits both the aging and disability populations. It is certainly good news that 22 of the 24 funding opportunities at ACL address needs of the aging population but raises concern if 22 grants are not also accessible to people with disabilities. This inequality of funding opportunities ultimately plays out in the state or local agency that receives the funding. For instance, twelve state and local entities receive money to serve only the aging population while ten state or local agencies receive funding to serve both the aging and disability populations. This, of course, all comes out of the same budget or pot of money so the agencies charged with serving both populations are ultimately doing double the work with less than half of the funds. Please do not make the mistake that this argument is about who gets what. It is about who serves who with the intent of sustained funding to reach the best outcomes for all populations. In reviewing the literature provided by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), a troubling trend appears that threatens the state and local agencies that have been serving both of the aging and disability populations for decades. It is the segregation of programs between disability and aging that appears most problematic with programming and funding opportunities and echoes Rebecca Cokely’s closing remarks from her keynote address last week. Increased approaches towards collaboration and integration may alleviate some of these problems but is not part of this research project. The above analysis and description of ACL’s funding opportunities prove that putting aging and disability under one roof (ACL) does not mean that all aging and disability programs work together but continue to separate opportunities based on age or disability.

Resources

Administration for Community Living website: [www.acl.gov](http://www.acl.gov)

Virginia Statewide Independent Living Conference and Celebration 2015

Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (VA SILC) October 7, 2015 Quarterly Business Meeting, Short Pump, VA.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act