

AGING COMMISSIONS IN THE STATES

7/9/2008

Oversight vs. Advisory



Aging Commissions in the States

OVERSIGHT VS. ADVISORY

INTRODUCTION

Several states have appointed Commissions on Aging Services that advise state government officials about aging services and are responsible for oversight of aging services. The Commissions are generally appointed by the Governor or State Legislature. Aging Commission responsibilities include working with legislators shaping public policy, advocating for seniors and identifying and researching emerging issues. In some states, the Aging Commission also covers the disability population.

Several other states have appointed Advisory Commissions on Aging Services that are only responsible for advising state government officials and state agencies about aging services. The Advisory Commissions are also appointed by the Governor or State Legislature.

NASUA conducted a survey of the states to find which states have an aging commission appointed to oversee the provision of Aging Services. Of the states that responded, we found that 20 states have Commissions in place. Of these commissions, five have oversight capacity, and 15 are advisory in nature.

State Examples

Oversight Commissions

Arizona has a Governor's Advisory Council on Aging that oversees the state plan activities. The Arizona Revised Statute 46-183.B reads: *The advisory council on aging shall be composed of 15 members appointed by the Governor who shall remove a member for cause. Members appointed to the council shall be selected pursuant to rules adopted by the director which conform to the provisions of the Older Americans Act of 1965 and the federal regulations promulgated pursuant to that act. In addition members shall have a knowledge of, and an established basic interest in, the problems affecting older citizens, and members shall be selected with due regard to geographic and other elements of representation in order that as many divergent views as possible can be represented.*

The **California** Commission on Aging is comprised of 15 members appointed by the Governor and General Assembly. This commission is tasked with overseeing the State Plan accomplishments, as well as any other issues identified by the Governor or the Commission.

For more on the California Commission on Aging: <http://www.ccoa.ca.gov/>

Iowa has an Elder Affairs Commission charged with helping the Department of Elder Affairs set broad policy direction, and advocating for policies that improve services to older adults. The Elder Affairs Commission is responsible for setting the State Plan on Aging, and approving the area plans. The Commission approves administrative rules, and is tasked with hearing and judging contested cases against department decisions or policies.

For more on the Iowa Elder Affairs Commission: <http://www.state.ia.us/elderaffairs/>

Nevada has an Aging Commission that is responsible for the following:

- Determining and evaluating the needs of the older people of Nevada.
- Seeking ways to avoid unnecessary duplication of services for older persons by public and private organizations in Nevada.
- Establishing priorities for the work of the Division according to the most pressing needs of older persons, as determined by the Commission.
- Promoting programs that provide community-based services necessary to enable frail elderly persons, to the fullest extent possible, to remain in their homes, to continue as integral members of their family and community.
- Establishing priorities for programs funded under the Older Americans Act.
- Reviewing and approving the state plan for providing services to meet the needs of older persons.
- Gathering and disseminating information in the field of aging.
- Conduct hearings, conferences and special studies on the problems of older persons and on programs which serve them.
- Evaluating existing programs for older persons, recommending needed changes in those programs and propose new programs, which would more effectively and economically serve the needs of older persons.
- Evaluating any proposed legislation which would affect older persons.
- Recommending to the Legislature any appropriate legislation.
- Coordinating and assisting the efforts of public and private organizations which serve the needs of older persons, especially in the areas of education, employment, health, housing, welfare and recreation.

For more information on the Nevada Aging Commission: <http://www.nvaging.net/coa/home.htm>

Texas has an overarching Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) which is an operating agency with four other health and human service agencies under it. Those agencies include the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS). The Governor, with the confirmation of the Legislature, appoints the Commissioner of the HHSC. The Commission acts as the oversight umbrella agency. The Commissioner of the Department of Aging and Disability Services reports to the Executive Commissioner of HHS Commission. DADS is responsible for the operation, implementation, and policy implementation with direction from the legislature. DADS is wholly responsible for implementation of any programs associated with OAA, and AOA funding.

Advisory Commissions

Arizona's Commission on Aging is advisory in nature. The Commission members are appointed by the Governor to advise the Governor, Legislature and state agencies on aging issues. The mission of the commission is to improve the lives of aging Arizona residents.

For more information on the Arizona Commission on Aging: <http://www.azgovernor.gov/gaca/>

Arkansas has a Governor's Advisory Council on Aging, which is advisory in nature only. It does not oversee aging services. The members of the council are appointed by the Governor.

For more information on the Arkansas Governor's Advisory Council on Aging: <http://www.state.ar.us/dhs/aging/gaca.html>

Colorado has a Commission on Aging whose goals are:

- To conduct, and encourage others to conduct, studies of problems of the state's older people.
- To assist government and private agencies to coordinate their efforts on behalf of the aging and aged in order that efforts are effective and non-duplicative on behalf of the state's older people.
- To promote and aid in the establishment of local programs and services for the aging and aged for the state's older people.
- To conduct promotional activities and programs of public education on problems of the aging.
- To review existing programs for the aging and make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly for improvements.
- To advise and make recommendations to the Division of Aging and Adult Services on the problems of and programs for the state's older people.

The Colorado Commission consists of 17 volunteer members appointed by the Governor, with consent of the Senate. The Commission is comprised of: Two persons from each Congressional District (one from each major political party), one person at-large, one from the Senate, and one from the House of Representatives. One of the Congressional District appointees must be from the Western Slope. No more than nine members may be from the same major political party. Appointment to the Colorado Commission is for a four-year term.

For more information on the Colorado Commission on Aging: http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/aas/commissiononaging_index.htm

Connecticut has a Commission on Aging that is located in the legislative branch. The members of the Commission on Aging are appointed by the Governor and the Legislature, as well as ex-officio members from State Agencies. The Commission is charged to advocate on behalf of the present and future elderly, and serve as an objective, credible source of information on the issues affecting them. Its primary responsibilities include independent advocacy, critiquing and proposing legislation.

For more information on the Connecticut Commission on Aging: <http://www.cga.ct.gov/coa/>

Delaware's Commission on Aging serves as an advisory committee to government officials and state agencies. The commission is comprised of 15 members appointed by the Governor. The Commission of Aging is charged with the following:

- Maintaining continual study and analysis of all aging trends and processes.
- Maintaining a continuous inventory of resources relevant to the aged and make them available.
- Serving as a central permanent agency to coordinate programs instituted for the benefit of the aged.
- Providing leadership and direction to persons both offering and receiving aid.
- Serving as a communications clearinghouse for information on the aged.
- Targeting the needs of the aged and address them using available resources.
- Serving as a clearinghouse for federal or state funds available to the aged.
- Fostering interest in and establishment of local community councils to address the same concerns

For more information on the Delaware Commission on Aging:

<http://archives.delaware.gov/collections/aghist/1500-005.shtml>

Georgia's Council on Aging serves as an advisory committee to the Governor, the Legislature and other state agencies. The Council is also charged with advocating on behalf of Georgia's seniors and establishing legislative priorities.

For more information on the Georgia Council on Aging: <http://www.gcoa.org/>

The **Kentucky** Commission of Senior Citizens is a legislative committee. The commission is staffed by the legislative branch of the state government and serves in an advisory capacity. It was established in 1977 to provide a forum through which the knowledge and experiences of senior citizens may be utilized in dealing with problems affecting senior citizens. The Kentucky Commission has several subcommittees including: Consumer Affairs, Health and Human Services, Insurance, Senior Citizens Executive Committee, Taxation and Transportation

Maryland's Commission on Aging is charged with the responsibility to review and make recommendations to the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Aging with respect to ongoing statewide programs and activities.

Michigan's Commission on Services to the Aging is a 15 member body appointed by the Governor, advises the Governor and legislature on coordination and administration of state programs, changes in federal and state programs, and the nature and magnitude of aging priorities. The Commission also reviews and approves grants and participates in development of the state plan and budget as required by the federal Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended. Commission meetings are held monthly and are open to the public.

For more information on the Michigan Commission on Services to the Aging:

http://www.michigan.gov/miseniors/0,1607,7-234-43230_43289---,00.html

Montana has an Advisory Council which is appointed by the Governor, and is advising the Governor on the needs of aging Montanans. The mission of the Council is to advocates for Montana's aging residents. It does not oversee aging services.

For more information on the Montana Advisory Council on Aging:
<http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/sltc/services/aging/GAC/Feb07.shtml>

North Carolina has a Governor's Advisory Council on Aging reports to the Governor and the Secretary of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The Council is tasked with improving human services to the elderly. They study ways and means of promoting public understanding of the problems of the aging and consider the need for new state programs in the field of aging. The Council is responsible for advising DHHS in the preparation of a plan describing the quality, extent and scope of services being provided, or to be provided to elderly persons. The Council on Aging studies all of the state agencies that provide services for elderly persons, to ensure that there is not overlap or duplication of services.

For more information on the North Carolina Governor's Advisory Council on Aging:
<http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/aging/gacrcm.htm>

Utah has a Commission on Aging that was created by the Legislature in 2005. The Commission, housed within the Governor's office, is charged with addressing how state government and the private sector can prepare for the wave of aging individuals.

For more information on the Utah Commission of Aging: http://aging.utah.edu/utah_coa/index.html

Virginia's Council on Aging is a 19 member advisory board. The members are appointed by the Governor and each chamber of the Legislature. It is tasked with examining the needs of Virginia's elderly, and advising the Governor and the General Assembly on aging issues and the activities of the Virginia Department of Aging. The Advisory Board is also tasked with advocacy for the elderly and to help plan for increasing needs.

For more information on the Virginia Council on Aging: <http://www.vda.virginia.gov/council.asp>

Washington has a State Council on Aging which provides advice to the Governor, the Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS is the State's Medicaid Agency) and the Aging and Disability Services Administration (part of DSHS) on all matters pertaining to policies, programs, and services affecting the quality of life of older persons, with a special concern for the low-income and frail elderly. It also acts to create public awareness of the special needs and potentialities of older persons. Washington's State Council on Aging supports self-advocacy by older citizens of the state through sponsorship of training, legislative and other conferences, workshops and such other methods as may be deemed appropriate.

For more information on the Washington State Council on Aging: <http://www.wccoaging.org/>

West Virginia has a Commission on Aging that is an advisory rather than oversight board. The Commission meets twice a year and is presented with an overview of new programs, and funding for aging services.

Conclusion

The existing Commissions on Aging have a broad range of responsibilities across the states. The general task of each commission is to advise legislators and the Governor on current practices and emerging needs of the

senior population. In the five (5) states that responded to the survey with oversight of aging services, the primary oversight is targeted toward the state plan and what has been accomplished therein.

NASUA will continue to monitor Aging Commissions and their responsibilities, and provide periodic updates. If your state has a Commission that is not included, please contact NASUA and we will update the report.

For more information:

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