



*Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.*

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## **National Association of Area Agencies on Aging**

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**Date: November 26, 2008**  
**From: National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)**  
**To: Obama Transition Team; Health Care Policy Working Group Members**  
**Re: Aging Policy Priorities and Opportunities for Early Wins in 2009**

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The primary focus of the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)—the advocacy voice for Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and Title VI Native American aging programs—is to advance policies that effectively and efficiently address the needs of an aging America.

**This document outlines key priorities that we think the Obama Administration should take an active role in advancing in 2009.**

The aging of our nation's population will challenge not only federal entitlement programs, such as Medicaid and Medicare, but will substantially increase the demand for home and community-based support services. To meet these increased demands, we must more fully utilize the potential of non-entitlement programs—in particular the Older Americans Act. The well-established system of federal, state and local entities that comprise the Aging Services Network is committed to and capable of managing the resources that will be needed to meet the service demands of this nation's aging population. *For more information, visit: [n4a and the Aging Services Network](#).*

## **An Opportunity for an Easy Win**

### ***Project 2020: Building on the Promise of Home and Community-Based Services***

Fund *Project 2020* to provide the resources to implement consumer-centered and cost-effective long-term care strategies through the Administration on Aging, as authorized in the 2006 reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. The proposal would empower the Aging Services Network to implement a three-pronged program encompassing person-centered access to information, evidence-based disease prevention and health promotion activities, and enhanced nursing home diversion services.

These tested best practices in community-based long-term care have been demonstrated around the country to reduce the need for more expensive institutional care and prevent “spend down” to Medicaid for people of all ages with disabilities.

The *Project 2020* initiative, we believe, has tremendous potential to:

- Achieve an easy win for the Administration
- Generate savings in Medicare and Medicaid;
- Prevent older adults from spending down to Medicaid and relying on unnecessary institutionalization to meet their long-term services and supports needs;
- Earn bipartisan support from lawmakers, aging professionals, consumers and caregivers; and
- Offer a bold yet practical plan for your Administration to include in the FY 2010 budget request.

According to our initial estimates, the program has the potential to *reach over 40 million Americans* and will *reduce federal Medicaid and Medicare costs by approximately \$2.7 billion* over the first five

years of the initial investment requested, resulting in a net savings to the federal government of over \$300 million.

The program would also generate significant savings for state governments. Financial performance is expected to improve in years five through ten of the program, as all systems reach full scale operations nationally, with the *net federal savings over ten years reaching over \$1.4 billion*.

*For more information, visit: [Project 2020](#). We would welcome the opportunity to explain why this initiative offers your incoming Administration an excellent early policy prescription in the areas of re-balancing long-term care, generating savings in Medicaid and Medicare, and offering consumers and caregivers better long-term services and support options in their communities.*

## Other Key Priorities to Consider for the Budget

### **FY 2010 Funding for the Older Americans Act**

Increase funding for the Older Americans Act and other supportive services to help older Americans remain healthy and living independently in their homes and communities.

**Other key programs** that help support older adults and caregivers and allow them to stay healthy and independent in their homes and communities should be adequately funded in fiscal year 2010. They include:

- Social Services Block Grant (HHS)
- Community Services Block Grant (Commerce)
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (HHS)
- Section 202 Elderly Housing Program (HUD)
- Formula Grants Supporting Senior Transportation (DOT/FTA)
- Community Development Block Grant (HUD)
- Medicare Part D outreach and assistance through State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (CMS) and AAAs and Title VI programs (AoA)

### **Livable Communities**

Prepare America's communities to meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's older Americans. "Livable communities for all ages" refers to places where citizens can grow up and grow old with maximum independence, safety and well-being. Although there is much that individuals can and should do to maximize their independence as they age, public policy makers must make critical decisions relating to housing opportunities, transportation systems, and land use regulations, for example, that affect the ability of older adults to live at home and in their community. According to the 2006 report *The Maturing of America – Getting Communities on Track for an Aging Population*, only 46 percent of American communities have even begun to address the needs of the rapidly increasing aging population. To assist communities in developing comprehensive strategies to promote livable communities for all ages, n4a supports creating a National Resource Center on Livable Communities to provide necessary guidance, training and technical assistance. *For more information, visit: [Livable Communities](#) and [Aging In Place Initiative](#).*

## Issues to Watch for Potential Trouble

### **Digital Television Transition in February 2009**

There could be potentially widespread problems with vulnerable older adults not making the transition smoothly or in a timely fashion. n4a is concerned that seniors who depend on television for news, information and companionship will be unprepared for the transition due to a lack of information and

assistance. Experts estimate that the number of seniors currently relying on analog-only over-the-air television signals is between 4 and 8 million, many of whom are frail and living alone. While many community groups are working hard to educate and assist this vulnerable population in taking steps to make the transition, fully adequate resources from the federal government have not been made available to support these efforts. *For more information, visit: [Digital Television Transition 2009](#).*

### **Medicaid Regulations**

Reverse proposed and final CMS Medicaid regulations currently under moratoria (P.L. 110-252), including harmful regulations on targeted case management services, published in the Federal Register 12/4/07. *For more information, visit: [Targeted Case Management Proposed Regulations](#).*

## **Ways to Increase Coordination on Federal Aging Policy**

**Implement the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Aging**, created in the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2006 (P.L. 109-365), which amended Section 203 of the Older Americans Act of 1965. The law called for the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish the Interagency Committee in collaboration with the Secretaries of Housing and Urban Development and Labor as well as the Attorney General, the Commissioner of Social Security, the Secretaries of the Treasury, Agriculture, Homeland Security, and Transportation, as well as other federal officials as directed by the President. The Interagency Committee would help improve coordination and help address fragmentation of programs across federal agencies that provide housing, transportation, and health and supportive services for older Americans.

**Designate a White House office with responsibility for aging issues** that would work with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Administration on Aging, and the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Aging to coordinate administration efforts on issues that affect the nation's growing older population. This new White House office would work closely with the Congress, national aging organizations and consumer advocacy groups in developing a comprehensive national policy on long-term care for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

→ **For further information on these or any other aging issues, please do not hesitate to contact Sandy Markwood, n4a CEO, [smarkwood@n4a.org](mailto:smarkwood@n4a.org), Amy Gotwals, Director of Public Policy and Legislative Affairs, [agotwals@n4a.org](mailto:agotwals@n4a.org), or K.J. Hertz, Associate Director of Public Policy and Legislative Affairs, [khertz@n4a.org](mailto:khertz@n4a.org), at 202-872-0888.**