

BLAIR SENIOR SERVICES, INC.

FOUR YEAR PLAN

10/1/2020 – 9/30/2024

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2020-2024 Four Year Plan

AREA PLAN PART A

I. Executive Summary

Blair County's Area Agency on Aging, Blair Senior Services, Inc. (the Agency), serves approximately 10,000 consumers on an annual basis. Nearly 8,000 of the 10,000 consumers served are over the age of 60. The Agency is a private non-profit organization governed by a fifteen-member Board of Directors and currently has a staff of 128 employees.

With 27 different services provided by the Agency, consumers receive services for a variety of needs. Although the majority of the services are provided directly by Blair Senior Services, Inc., a number of organizations also provide services through subcontracts.

Blair County's Trends

From 2015 to 2019, Blair County's total population fell by 1.69%, while its senior population grew by 4.22%. 27% of Blair County's population is age 60+, with 21% age 65+. The 65+ population of Blair County is about 15% higher than the Pennsylvania average of 18% and about 30% higher than the national average of 16%.

36.51% of the County's 65+ population has a disability and approximately 9% of Blair County residents 60+ live in poverty.

The Agency's Pattern of Service Delivery and Resource Development Efforts

The Agency's service delivery was reviewed for the purpose of composing this plan. In fiscal year 2018-2019, the Blair Senior Service, Inc., served 23.5% of the County's 60+ population. This rate was 345% higher than the statewide average of 6.8%. The Agency served 21.9% of the 60-84 cohort (371% of the statewide average) and 36.0% the 85+ cohort (242% of the statewide average). The statewide average for these cohorts is 5.8% and 14.9%, respectively.

Needs Assessment

In gathering information for this four year plan, a number of surveys were conducted, targeting specific groups within the county. Surveys from Agency consumers, service providers, Advisory Council members, and Agency staff were received along with an online solicitation of input from the general population. Many respondents shared the same concerns. The following needs were most commonly identified in the surveys:

- In-home care,
- Socialization,
- Mental health,
- Transportation access,
- Awareness of services,
- Financial services.

The Agency's Future Focus

Upon review of the results of the Agency's needs assessment process and the Pennsylvania Department of Aging's policy themes, five focus areas have been identified for the next four-year period. As the Agency looks ahead to these four years, it is anticipated that flat government funding and/or funding cuts will continue to be a reality. To ensure positive outcomes, objectives in pursuit of these focus areas have been planned with no anticipation of added funding.

The five planned goals seek to make Blair Senior Services a more efficient and effective service provider by:

- Strengthening the Aging Network,
- Supporting healthy and active lifestyles,
- Enhancing outreach programs,
- Promoting the safety of the older adult community,
- Augmenting data-driven decision-making processes.

Each goal outlined in Part A, Section III includes objectives and strategies for the pursuit of those goals, and Part A Section IV including outcomes and measures designed to track the overall success in achieving those goals.

Agency Overview

Blair Senior Services, Inc. Purpose

The 1973 amendments to the Federal Older Americans Act mandated states to establish Area Agencies on Aging based on units known as Planning and Service Areas. Pennsylvania chose to designate counties as these Planning and Service Areas. In 1974, Blair Senior Services Inc. was founded as the Area Agency on Aging for Blair County. Since its inception, the purpose of the Agency has been to determine and address the local needs of the County's older population by providing a responsive continuum of services to meet the level of assistance needed. In this effort, Blair Senior Services, Inc., with input from a number of resources, creates and administers a multi-year plan to address the current identified needs of the county's older population.

Blair Senior Services, Inc. Mission, Vision, and Values

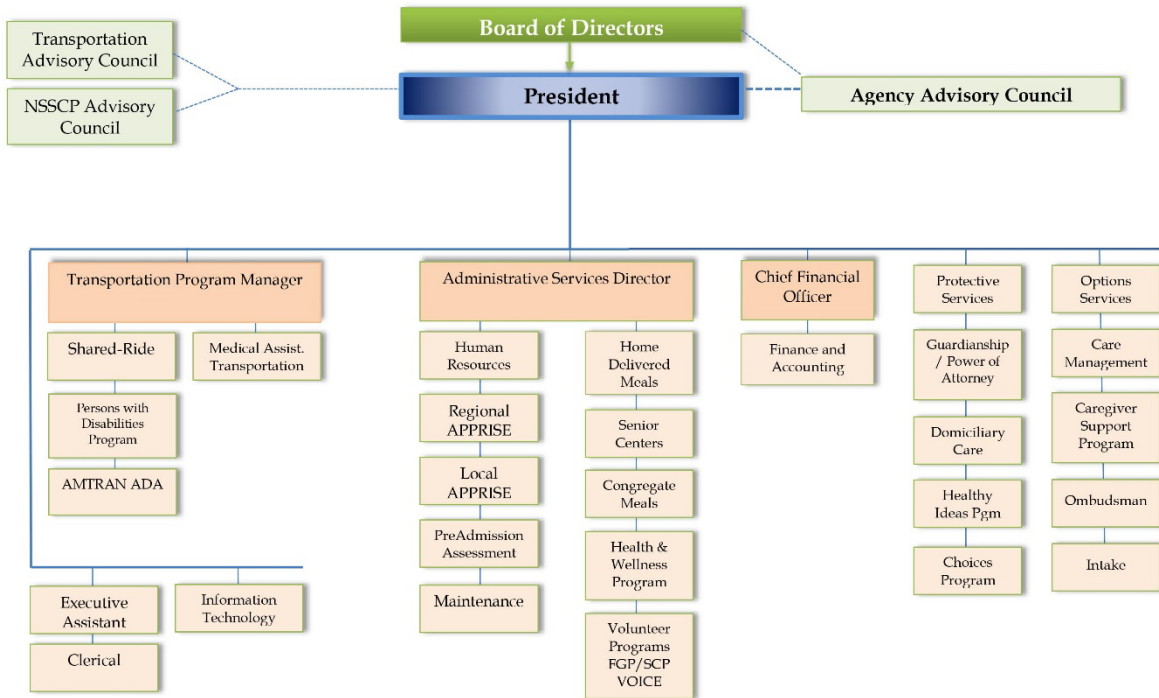
Blair Senior Services, Inc. is committed to enhancing the lives of older individuals, their families and others in need by coordinating and providing support and assistance through a system of quality home and community-based programs and services. Our professional staff and volunteers are dedicated to the principles and values of advocacy, empowerment, dignity and respect. The Agency's vision is to enrich quality of life and fulfill the changing needs of all older individuals, their families and others in need through the provision of programs and services that positively impact the community and life's aging process. The Agency's professional staff and volunteers are dedicated to the principles and values of advocacy, empowerment, dignity and respect.

Organizational Structure

Blair Senior Services, Inc. (the Agency) is a non-profit (501c3) organization that serves as Blair County's Area Agency on Aging, Shard-Ride and Medical Assistance Transportation Program provider. The Agency is governed by a 15-member volunteer Board of Directors who convenes monthly and more frequently as needed. (See Attachment A for a listing of the Board Members.) The Board of Directors and staff are also assisted by three internal Advisory Councils. The Agency Advisory Council provides input to the Board of Directors and staff. The majority of members on this council are older persons and represent a variety of disciplines. (See Attachment B for a listing of this Advisory Council and the Agency's Transportation and National Senior Service Corps Program Councils.)

In Fiscal Year 2018/2019, the Agency offered 27 programs and services, employed 128 staff (73 full-time, 43 part-time, and 12 casual status) and had an operating budget of approximately \$10 million. During the same time period, the Agency served an estimated 10,000 consumers. Approximately 8,000 of those consumers were 60 years of age or older.

Blair Senior Services, Inc.



Revised 5/20

Blair County Demographics

According to Census estimates, Blair County's population decreased by 1.69% in the period from 2015 to 2019. In the same time frame (2015-2019), the County's 60+ population increased by 4.22%. The 60+ population makes up 26.64% of the County's total population.

In terms of the composition of the County's population by race, approximately 96% of the Blair County population is White, 1.5% are Black/African American and the remaining 2.5% of the population identifies as another race or multiple races. There is no other single race that represents .7% of the County's population.

In terms of housing, married couples make up 42% of the 65+ population. 65+ individuals with no spouse make up 8.46% of the population, with 65+ females living without a spouse at a rate 4.8 times that of males. Nearly 48% of the 65+ population live in non-family household. The 65+ population that speaks a language other than English at home accounts for just 2.17% of all seniors.

❖ **County's Older Population with Disabilities**

Based on Pennsylvania State Data Center 5-Year Estimates (2009-2013), approximately 36.51% of Blair's 65+ population possesses a disability. By comparison, Census estimates for 2014-2018 hold that 12.8% of the population under 65 possesses a disability. Disability classifications used in the survey included hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living difficulties.

❖ **County's Older Population Living Alone**

According to the 2018 American Communities Survey 5 year estimates, 28.0% of total households in Blair County were classified as residents who live alone. Of the total population of Blair County residents aged 60+, 14.2% reside alone.

❖ **County's Older Population Living in Poverty**

9% of the County's 65+ population lives below the federal Poverty level. African Americans are 3.6 times more likely to live in poverty, and a female with no spouse is 2.5 times more likely to live in poverty (57% of the 65+ population are female and 43% are male). On average, approximately 845 consumers will receive one or more in-home services every month. Consumers share the cost of these services based on their monthly income and allowable deductions. The scale is based on the Federal poverty level guidelines, with a co-share beginning after the consumer exceeds 133% of the federal poverty level. Currently, approximately 89% of these 845 consumers fall below the income threshold and do not receive a monthly invoice for their services.

Agency Service Provision Statistics

According to the Fiscal Year 18/19 PDA Benchmark, the Agency serves 23.50% of the County's 60+ population. This rate was 345% higher than the statewide average. The Agency served 21.9% of the 60-84 cohort (371% of the statewide average) and 36.0% the 85+ cohort (242% of the statewide average).

In terms of Gender, 62% of the population the Agency served were female, 37% male and less than 1% that did not identify or identified as other. In terms of Race, 97% of consumers served identified as white, 1% identified as African American and 1% identified as Hispanic. Leaving less than 1% identifying as another race or multiple races. 28% of the population served by the Agency is rural, 99% speak English as their primary language and nearly 22% live in poverty

In Fiscal Year 2018-2019, the Agency vended:

- 274 hours of legal services
- 26,116 hours of personal care
- 1,173 days of adult daily living center visits
- 266 consumers received medical equipment and supplies
- 125,840 home delivered meals
- 34,487 congregate meals
- 112,866 one-way shared-ride trips
- 1,416 assessments
- 431 reports of need of Protective Services
- 1,256 consumers served by care management
- 42,260 One-way trips authorized by the Medical Assistance Transportation Program
- 74 families served through the Caregiver Support Program
- 937 Ombudsman activities
- 749 persons served by Waiver/CHC
- 101.7 combined volunteer service years in the Senior Companion & Foster Grandparents programs
- 16,044 volunteer hours (VOICE)
- 2,318 individuals served through the APPRISE program

Housing Options

Blair County is fortunate to have 22 subsidized housing buildings for seniors, as well as 16 additional subsidized family housing sites. There currently is a waiting list for those apartments and the typical period of time on the waiting list is 2-4 months. Many of these units are handicapped accessible. The county also has several hotel style buildings that serve as permanent residence for some individuals. While the living situations in these residences is not ideal, the individuals' basic needs of shelter and bathing facilities are met, reducing the number of homeless individuals in Blair County. Housing for those with chronic severe mental illness is also available and the housing units provide secure living arrangements with peers and access to mental health professionals.

There are currently 41 facilities in Blair County, consisting of nursing facilities, personal care homes, domiciliary care homes and two assisted living facility. While the county has over 2,300 facility beds, only 7 personal care homes accept the personal care boarding home social security supplemental income.

The county has 1 primary organization that offer housing and utility assistance; Blair County Community Action. Blair County Community Action distributes housing funds received by the County to assist those who are homeless or near homeless. This organization also keeps a comprehensive list of landlords and available apartments for rent, some of which are handicap accessible. Catholic Charities also provides housing assistance, on a more limited basis.

Waiting List

Blair Senior Services began a new waiting list on 3/23/2020. Prior to this, there had not been a waitlist for services since November of 2016, when the Agency received waiting list funding and was able to serve all consumers on the list at the time. The currently waiting list is small relative to the waiting lists managed by the Agency prior to 2016; however, as consumers with lower Needs Assessment Scores (NAS) are added to the list in the coming months, it is expected to grow until funding is provided to clear the list.

Underserved Populations

In reviewing the target populations identified by the Administration on Community Living, the Agency found the following:

- Service delivery to the 60+ minority population is adequately representative of the County's racial demographics. According to 2017 Census estimates, of the total 60+ population, 97.82% are non-minority and 2.18% are minorities. In fiscal year 2018-2019, the Agency served approximately 23.2% of all 60+ non-minorities and 38.6% of all 60+ minorities.
- Of the consumers receiving in-home services, approximately 32.5% live in a rural area. Due to the make-up of the county, many providers have staffing available to all areas of the county. However, there are a few rural areas of the county that most providers find difficult to staff. These few rural towns are underserved, due to location and an apparent unwillingness to accept service providers in their home as a sort of "culture" in those areas.
- Service delivery to consumers with limited English proficiency issues poses few problems as the Agency contracts with an interpreter service provider; however, the need for this service is rare as estimates indicate that only .12% of consumers 60+ speak only a non-English language.

In short, the Agency's population served reasonably reflects the County's population. The Agency strives to serve those with the greatest need, serving individuals in poverty at a rate approximately 2.4 times greater than the older adult population average (based on Census data). This is indicative that Agency is serving those with the most social and economic need.

Improved service to minority populations and those with Limited English Proficiency continues to be a priority as the Agency seeks to deliver more evidence-based programming and other community-based services to these groups.

Local, Political and Economic Conditions

- ❖ **Conditions Affecting Consumers:** Using December 2019 as the comparator, Blair County's unemployment (4.8%) was slightly higher than then statewide (4.5%) and National (4.0%) averages. 14.4% of Blair County residents lived below the poverty line prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Per capita income is approximately \$27,847, and median household income is \$49,942. Cost of living in Blair County is comparable to neighboring counties and below the state average, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

According to the Aging Forum Report dated 2016, about 86% of people age 65 and over lived in families with income from Social Security. By comparison, 41% had income from private pensions and defined contribution plans (i.e. 401K's), and 18% had income from public pensions. Social security continues to be an extremely important source of income for individuals over 65, including those in Blair County. Employment among senior citizens was projected to increase nationally (4.5% among the 65-74 age group, 6.4% 75+) from 2014 to 2024 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Statewide employment among the 65+ age group rose from 17.2% in 2012 to 19.3% in 2017, and the Agency expects employment to continue to represent a larger share of seniors' incomes over the next four years as labor force participation rates continue to rise nationally among men and women 55+. As identified in the previous sections of the plan, the Agency has had some success in making sure it is driving services to those in the greatest social and economic need.

- ❖ **Conditions Affecting the Agency:** The Agency has a positive working relationship with the County Commissioners as well as other local elected officials, who have historically been very supportive of the Agency and its mission.

The Agency does not anticipate any substantive recurring increase in funding, in line with recent funding patterns. With the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Agency expects the lottery sales and tax revenues that provide substantial funding to AAA's in Pennsylvania to decrease markedly, causing further budgetary constriction. The Agency continues to try to maintain service to consumers as the consumer population and needs increase and funding of traditional AAA service fails to keep up with these increases. The rising cost of health insurance continues to create an economic burden for the Agency as well.

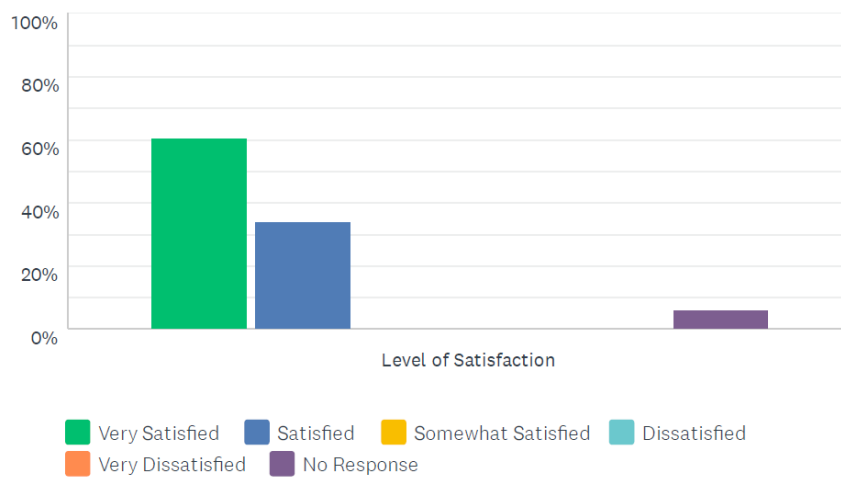
Needs Assessment Data

In preparation of this plan, the Agency solicited input from current and potential consumers, and Agency OPTIONS providers. Also included were Aging Advisory Council Members and Agency staff.

- ❖ Consumer Surveys – sought feedback regarding the Agency’s current menu of services which included access to, awareness of, and quality of all Agency services, staff interactions, and views on both essential and unnecessary services. Survey participants also shared opinions regarding self-directed care, internet usage, emergency preparedness, healthy lifestyle interest, and priority needs among consumers.
 - A total of 33.17% of consumers who received a mailed survey responded to it. This was an above average response rate.
 - The average age of the respondents was 78.12. 35.30% of respondents were ages 60-74, 27.94% were 75-84, 22.06% were 85+, and 14.71% elected not to record their age.
 - 65% of respondents were female and 35% were male. 55% of respondents lived alone, 22% lived with a spouse, and 19% lived with a child or other family.
 - Current Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) poverty guidelines place the poverty level at income of \$1,063 per month. 29.41% of consumers who responded a question about their income reported monthly income below this level.
 - 65% of respondents utilize an assistive device, such as a cane, walker, wheelchair, special chair, or bed on a daily basis.
 - The following charts illustrate responses regarding consumer satisfaction with the quality of Agency services and friendliness of Agency employees.

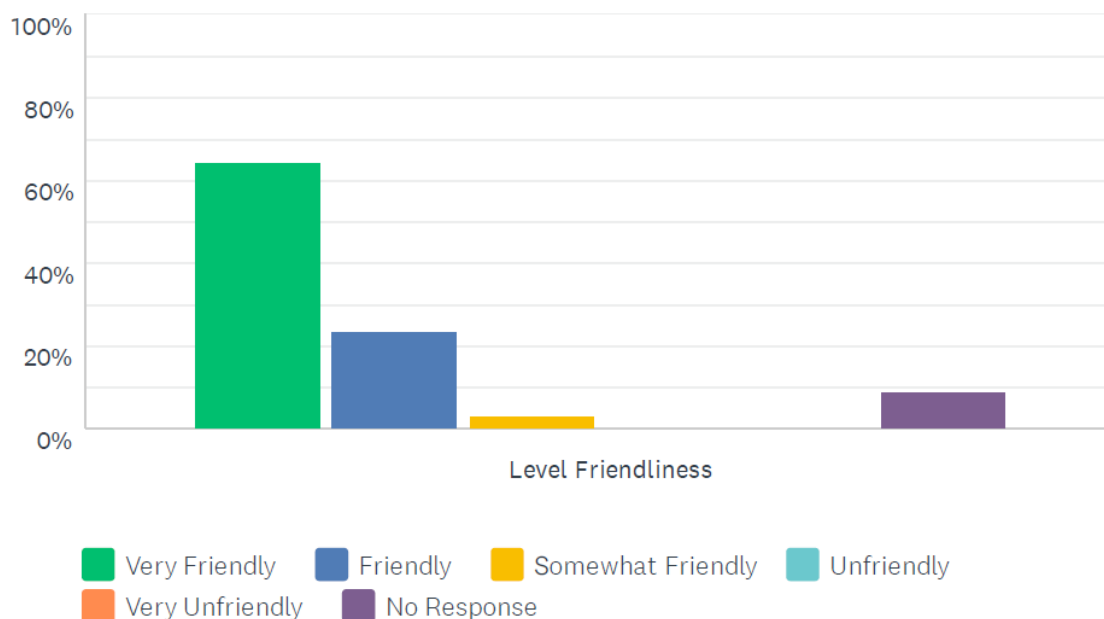
How satisfied are you with the quality of service received from Blair Senior Services?

Answered: 68 Skipped: 0



Is the staff friendly?

Answered: 68 Skipped: 0



Overall, the largest take away from the consumer needs assessment was that awareness of Agency services needs to continue to increase. Some of the Agency's more visible programs, such as Home Deliver Meals and Shared-Ride Transportation, were known to over 95% of respondents, while programs with less community visibility such as Legal Services, APPRISE Counseling, and Protective Services were known to less than half of all respondents. Most services were unknown to 25-40% of all respondents

- ❖ Provider Surveys – sought feedback regarding the Agency's relationship with the providers, known service gaps, and resolution to those gaps, as well as priority needs of consumers.
 - Providers cited flexible transportation access, lack of knowledge of programs, service to rural areas, and clients being afraid to share financial information with the Agency as potential areas for improvement.
 - Respondents also commented on the need for more outreach, more education, and more funding to enhance the Agency's effectiveness.
- ❖ Staff Survey – sought input from all staff members on the most urgent needs of the County's older population.
 - A total of 39 employees (28.89% of all staff) participated in this survey. Major concerns highlighted include access to technology, social isolation, mental health

- assistance, and help acquiring and maintaining housing. Many of these factors are contextualized in the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Increased assistance with chores, errands, housing, and financial concerns were also cited as areas where staff saw unmet need.

Resource Development

While the Agency utilizes most of the beneficial resources available to it, there are select resources that the Agency will seek to leverage further to enhance its capacity as the County's older population continues to outpace funding. Resource sharing among AAA's in pursuit of economies of scale and innovative ideas will be needed to survive.

To this end, the Agency will continue to apply for funding from competitive resources and expand current efforts to develop regional cooperation efforts. At minimum, the following efforts will be undertaken:

- The Agency has developed the Choices Program which provides private paid services, including care management, to individuals. The Agency currently profits from this endeavor and hopes to grow the program in order to serve more people as well as generate additional income that will be used to provide services. In particular, the Agency plans to expand Choices into Bedford County, in cooperation with their AAA.
- The Agency formed a subsidiary corporation, Regional Cooperative, LLC, in 2014. Through the LLC, the Agency contracts with fellow Area Agencies on Aging to provide administrative support and some programmatic assistance. The purpose of the LLC is to afford the AAA's an opportunity to combine resources where feasible to reduce administrative costs while making processes consistent. The Agency will continue to seek opportunity to grow Regional Cooperative through mutually beneficial partnerships.

National Planning Requirements

Program requirements of Area Agencies on Aging during this four-year plan cycle as direct by the Administration for Community Living focus on service provision to specific older individuals of the County. These targeted areas include providing service to older individuals:

- With greatest economic risk and social need
- At risk of institutional placement
- Who are low income minorities
- With Limited English Proficiency, or
- Who reside in rural areas of the County

Through Blair Senior Services' intake, referral, assessment, and service authorization process, service provision in the targeted areas are constantly assured. The use of the Commonwealth's assessment instruments, and a well-structured and operational internal waiting list, assures that those with economic/social/placement risks are prioritized and receive service first, with the assistance of the objective scoring system, the Functional Need Score. The Agency's objective

will be to budget Penn Care funds to meet the service needs of such higher priority individuals in a timely fashion.

Although there are so few older minorities residing in Blair County, the Agency anticipates continuing to serve a higher percentage of its older minorities than its non-minorities. In Fiscal Year 2018-2019, the Agency served 286 of the County's projected 741 older minorities 60+ years of age.

To ensure service delivery to consumers with limited English proficiency, the Agency secures an interpreter service provider. With this provider, information can be accurately relayed. To ensure service to rural areas of the County, the Agency maintains strategically placed Senior Centers. With a reasonable amount of commute time, any resident of the County can easily access one of the Agency's four centers. These centers are used as distribution sites for the Farmer's Market Nutrition and Commodities Supplemental Food Programs. VITA income tax preparation sites are also established at each center, and no older resident in the County is without access to the Agency's Shared-Ride Transportation or Home Delivered Meals Programs. Agency Care Managers are assigned geographically to ensure coverage to the entire County.

During the plan period, the Agency will require all applicable contracted service provider organizations to address planned efforts or measures taken to assure that service provision to these specific individuals is maintained.

Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Goal 1

Strengthen the aging network's capacity, promote innovation and best practices and build efficiencies to respond to the growing and diversifying aging population.

Objective 1.1

By implementing new services targeting vulnerable populations, including Healthy Ideas, the Agency will be able to serve a subset of the aging population who otherwise may fall through the "cracks."

Strategy 1.1.1

Implement Healthy Ideas with a full-time coordinator by 1/1/21 (6 months after our original date of 7/1/20 given the current crisis) in order to effectively serve identified consumers and to serve a greater number than previously served. Provide program information to Options, Choices, PS, etc. to ensure a better understanding of the program for referral purposes.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- Full time Healthy Ideas coordinator employed by 1/1/21
- Maintain a rolling caseload of approximately 20 consumers

Objective 1.2

Develop the Protective Services Pilot program to provide technical assistance and support to PS programs with limited resources to ensure appropriate and timely response to consumer need.

Strategy 1.2.1

Expand the pilot to assist PS staff with investigating complex financial exploitation cases, the geography of the pilot will be expanded.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- Provide assistance to 10 counties with complex cases per fiscal year for the term of the plan until capacity is reached
- Refer at least 20 cases to law enforcement to enable the prosecution of extreme bad actors, contingent on the Agency's involvement in a sufficient number of cases with extreme bad actors

Objective 1.3

Increase recruitment efforts in the Ombudsman PEER program, to increase volunteer coverage in facilities.

Strategy 1.3.1

Enlist current Ombudsman volunteers and PEER volunteers in promoting the PEER program during facility visits and Resident Council meetings at each facility.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- Start PEER programs in 3 facilities that do not currently have one in the next 2 years
- Increase total number of PEER volunteers in Blair County by 20% in the next 4 years

Objective 1.4

Expand the private-pay CHOICES program into neighboring counties to provide wider coverage of access to services to individuals with needs for care who are not eligible for subsidized programs, so as to increase consumers served by 100% in 4 years.

Strategy 1.4.1

Increase staffing in the program by .5 FTE to initiate the expansion of the program. Additional staffing will be considered if the need is identified for further expansion.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- .5 FTE added to CHOICES staff by 7/1/21
- Increase total CHOICES consumers served by 100% within 4 years

Objective 1.5

The transportation program will expand our understanding of the growing needs of the aging community and consider program expansion responsive to identified needs, within regulatory and funding requirements.

Strategy 1.5.1

The transportation program will conduct multiple community outreach sessions to be completed in various locations, including nursing homes, senior centers and elderly and subsidized housing locations. The transportation program will subsequently review data from community outreach sessions and consider the ability of current and potential funding sources to meet identified needs.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- Conduct 6 community outreach sessions per year

- Analyze feedback from outreach sessions to determine if there are cost-effective ways to address service need

Objective 1.6

Increase partnerships and collaborations to serve older adults with meaningful activities and programming inside and outside of the Aging's Senior Centers.

Strategy 1.6.1

Re-evaluate current partnerships and collaborations, modify and/or expand upon current partnerships, and create new partnerships and collaborations with area organizations who share a common interest in serving individuals over the age of 60.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- Increase number of consumers served by Center activities by 10% in 4 years

Goal 2

Establish and enhance efforts to support healthy living, active engagement and a sense of community for all older Pennsylvanians.

Objective 2.1

BSS will work to strengthen evidence-based programs in both the Senior Centers and the community (Tai-Chi, Healthy Ideas, etc.).

Strategy 2.1.1

Determine desire for additional Senior Center Programs by surveying current participants, especially those that come for exercise programs, dance classes, Tai Chi, etc., with the goal of piloting at least one new activity program per year.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- Surveys will be given to the participants in Senior Center programs
- At least one new activity program will be piloted each year

Objective 2.2

Develop Caregiver support group for caregivers of older adults in response to lack of such a group currently in the community.

Strategy 2.2.1

Partner with the Geriatric Interest Network to provide a support group for caregivers of older adults; current groups available in our community are typically diagnosis-specific, which deters caregivers of individuals diagnosed with other conditions from participating.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- Support group formed and available to caregivers by 1/1/21
- Support group engages with 50 caregivers annually by 2024
- Survey measuring caregiver satisfaction & engagement with support group taken biannually starting 7/1/21

Objective 2.3

Transportation services will expand flexibility and reliability to support consumers in participating in healthy living activities.

Strategy 2.3.1

Transportation staff will reach out to providers of senior healthy living activities to assure a mutual understanding of available community activities and transportation service parameters, and communicate monthly with BSS Center Managers to coordinate consumer service and transportation needs.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- Transportation staff will identify providers and contact each provider quarterly
- Transportation will make monthly contact with Center Managers

Objective 2.4

Expand and enhance Senior Center programming to reduce social isolation.

Strategy 2.4.1

Identify opportunities for programming outside of the senior center and opportunities to offer senior center programming outside of the current operating hours, with the goal of reaching consumers who have difficulty coming to the center during regular hours, because of either schedule conflicts or physical difficulties

Outcome & Performance Measure

- Six activities/programs will be held outside normal operating hours each year
- Six activities/programs will be held outside of senior centers each year.

Strategy 2.4.2

Present opportunities for older adults to engage in center programming and presentations through YouTube, Zoom and Facebook Live events and monitor participation levels of online events and make adjustments to programming as needed.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- 20 live classes will be held online each year
- Create a catalog of online activities that individuals can ask when it is convenient for them

Objective 2.5

Enhance home delivered and congregate meals by providing more variety and incorporating fresh foods within budget.

Strategy 2.5.1

Ensure quarterly menus meet the Pennsylvania Department of Aging's Aging Program Directive (APD) guidelines and provide home delivered and congregate meal consumers more variety and fresh foods while maintain meal costs within budget. Incorporate 3-5 new menu items per menu cycle and provide more salads, soups and sandwiches for congregate consumers and offer appropriate substitutions for home delivered meals consumers.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- 3-5 new entrees per menu cycle.
- Increase combined number of salads, soups, & sandwiches in congregate meals from the previous fiscal year and survey consumer satisfaction with the change.

Goal 3

Emphasize a citizen-first culture that provides outreach, embraces diversity and honors individual choice.

Objective 3.1

BSS will work to increase the community and facility outreach services provided by the Ombudsman as it relates to long-term care rights, choice, etc.

Strategy 3.1.1

Work to increase the number of trainings offered to facilities, community organizations. Strive to offer outreach throughout the year, not just during Resident Right's Month (Oct). Increase

PEER Group efforts by providing information to every facility in the county regarding the program to determine interest.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- Training options provided to all facilities in Blair County, and facilities will be encouraged to incorporate these trainings into routine staff training
- Consistent outreach programming available to facilities year-round, beginning in FY 20/21
- PEER group information delivered to every facility in the county each year

Objective 3.2

BSS will strive to embrace cultural diversity in an effort to better serve a diverse population of older adults.

Strategy 3.2.1

Obtain an updated and approved Cultural Competency Training for all staff.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- Staff will participate in an updated Cultural Competency Training upon hire and every other year thereafter.

Objective 3.3

Expand current evidence-based programs to minority, diverse cultures, low income, and medically underserved consumers throughout Blair County.

Strategy 3.3.1

Identify minority, diverse cultures, low income and medically underserved consumers in Blair County and present opportunities through community partners to engage participants in evidence-based programming.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- At least 2 programming series will be held in community locations targeted to reach minority, diverse, and/or underserved groups a year

Objective 3.4

The transportation program will provide training on topics regarding diversity and person-centered thinking/communication to all transportation staff at least annually.

Strategy 3.4.1

The transportation operations team will explore and utilize training resources that promote an understanding of diversity and strategies to support staff in providing culturally competent service.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- Transportation will acquire and administer a person-centered communication/cultural competence training relevant to transportation services by 1/1/22

Objective 3.5

Increase the public's awareness and knowledge of the Agency to ensure services and information are accessible, inclusive, consistent, and available through a variety of sources.

Strategy 3.5.1

Identify appropriate social media outlets, outreach activities and advertisement opportunities to provide information on Agency services and programming; develop an email distribution list to share information with consumers and caregivers, and monitor the effectiveness of the outreach efforts and make changes as needed.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- Social media content calendar and email list developed by 1/1/21.
- Data on web engagement will be tracked continually and compiled monthly.
- Increase total web engagement (measured with visits to the Agency's Facebook and web pages) each year through 2024.

Goal 4

Protect older adults and ensure their safety and dignity by raising awareness of and responding effectively to incidents of abuse, injury, exploitation, violence, and neglect.

Objective 4.1

BSS will raise awareness on behalf of older adults in the community, community organizations, etc.

Strategy 4.1.1

Protective Services staff will increase awareness of their program by conducting presentations quarterly at various nursing facilities, community organizations, etc. PS staff will also foster awareness through a local Elder Justice Task Force.

Outcomes & Performance Measure

- PS presentations given quarterly.
- Elder Justice Task Force formed by 7/1/21 and meeting quarterly

Objective 4.2

BSS will respond effectively to reports of abuse by meeting timeframes and ensuring that staffing levels are adequate.

Strategy 4.2.1

Will continue to measure timeframe compliance outcomes with 100% of timeframes being met or documentation to show otherwise. Will ensure that an adequate number of staff are trained in PS in order to ensure that all reports are responded to in a timely manner and that no older adults are left at risk.

Outcomes & Performance Measure

- PS department will be 100% compliant with the required timeframes to initiate investigations per the categorization of the report of need.
- The Agency will maintain an adequate number of trained staff to conduct timely investigations.

Objective 4.3

Increase Guardianship program staffing in response to lack of adequate guardianship providers in our area.

Strategy 4.3.1

Increase Guardianship staffing from 1 FTE to 2 FTEs to accommodate the increased need for this type of support in the community.

Outcomes & Performance Measure

- Guardianship staff reaches 2 FTE by 7/1/21.
- Increase and subsequently maintain Guardianship caseload to maintain an approximate case to FTE ratio of 20:1 upon addition of new FTE.

Objective 4.4

The transportation program will promote awareness of abuse, injury, exploitation and neglect in the aging population.

Strategy 4.4.1

The transportation operations team and applicable BSS program staff will review reporting procedures regarding abuse/neglect/exploitation at least annually as well as any time that regulatory requirements change.

Outcomes & Performance Measure

- Transportation staff will review these procedures annually and upon regulatory change.
- Changes in operations will be identified and implemented

Strategy 4.5.2

The transportation operations team will assure that all staff are trained at hire and at least annually regarding signs of abuse/neglect/exploitation and the role and responsibility of each team member in effectively addressing these signs to assure consumer safety and wellbeing.

Outcomes & Performance Measure

- Transportation will conduct abuse/neglect/exploitation training upon hire and annually thereafter.

Goal 5

Improve services for older adults and the ability to advocate for them by using evidenced-informed planning, committing to data integrity and being accountable for results.

Objective 5.1

Maintain quality assurance measures for PS to ensure compliance.

Strategy 5.1.1

PS Supervisor will ensure that there is 100% compliance with regard to RON categorization and case initiation timeframes by utilizing practices already in place. This will ensure that the Agency has not left any older adult at risk due to negligence or error.

Outcomes & Performance Measure

- Maintain 100% compliance with proper RON categorization.
- Maintain 100% compliance with face-to-face visit timelines or have properly documented why not.

Objective 5.2

Maintain 'green' review status for Protective Services program.

Strategy 5.2.1

Utilize existing tools to internally monitor compliance and make immediate adjustments to procedure when the need is identified.

Outcomes & Performance Measure

- PS program maintains “green” review status each year.

Objective 5.3

The transportation operations team will engage in ongoing conversation with potential partners to evaluate the benefits and/or disadvantages of adjusting service areas to assure optimal service provision.

Strategy 5.3.1

Transportation operations team staff will continue to strive to be an active presence within planning and information gathering bodies, including but not limited to PPTA, Ecolane Steering Committee and Shared Ride Software Committee.

Outcomes & Performance Measure

- BSS presence on steering committees will advocate for enhanced data reporting from software vendor, to further enable AAA’s to cultivate efficient shared-ride systems

Objective 5.4

Promote engagement in health aging, nutrition, education, and prevention programs.

Strategy 5.4.1

Re-evaluate the current senior center structure by creating participation benchmarks, monitoring monthly participation levels for success and underperformance, and adjusting programming and benchmarks as needed.

Outcome & Performance Measure

- Create participation benchmarks each year using participation data from the previous year; benchmark will be 5% increase over participation from the previous year
- Meet or exceed the benchmark each year

AREA PLAN PART B

Part B, Section 1.

Signature Page/Standard Assurances Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Aging

FY 2020-24 Area Agency on Aging

Four-Year Plan on Aging

**Signature Page
Area Agency on Aging Name and Address:**

**Blair Senior Services, Inc.
1320 12th Avenue
Altoona, PA 16601**

We certify that I/we are authorized to submit this Plan on behalf of the designated Area Agency on Aging and agree to abide by regulations issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Aging, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Labor. We further certify that the general public has had the opportunity to review and comment on this Plan through the public hearing process and that written policies, procedures or agreements, as appropriate, have been developed in accordance with Part A, Section 307 of the Older Americans Act, and are on file for review and approval, as appropriate, by Department of Aging officials.

We assure that services and programs of the Area Agency on Aging will be managed and delivered in accordance with the Plan submitted herewith. Any substantial changes to the Plan will be submitted to the Department of Aging for prior approval.

We hereby expressly, as a condition precedent to the receipt of State and Federal funds, assure:

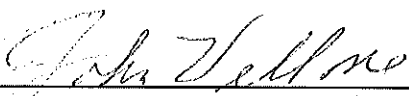
That in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975; The Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990; The Pennsylvania Human Relations Act of 1955, as amended; and 16 PA Code, Chapter 49 (Contract Compliance regulations):

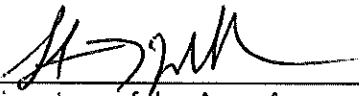
- 1) We do not and will not discriminate against any person because of race, color, religious creed, ancestry, national origin, age, sex, or handicap:
 - a) In providing services or employment, or in its relationship with other providers.
 - b) In providing access to services and employment for handicapped individuals.
- 2) We will comply with all regulations promulgated to enforce the statutory provisions against discrimination.

We further hereby agree that all contracts for the provision of services addressed herein will require contractors to comply with these same provisions.

We certify that the advisory council of the Area Agency on Aging has participated in the development of this Plan and has reviewed the Plan as herewith submitted.

Signature(s) of Governing Authority
 Official(s), e.g., Chairman of County
 Commissioners or President, Board of Directors.

	Title	Date
 _____ John Vellone	Board of Directors Chair	<u>10-29-20</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

 _____ (Signature of the Area Agency on Aging Director)	President (Title)	<u>10/29/20</u> (Date)
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Name of Person to Contact Regarding the Contents of This Plan:

<u>Steve Williamson</u> (Name)	<u>(814) 946-1235</u> (Area Code and Telephone)
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Part B, Section 2

DOCUMENTATION OF PARTICIPATION BY THE AREA AGENCY ON AGING ADVISORY COUNCIL

PSA NO. 11

NAME OF AAA: Blair Senior Services, Inc.

PLAN PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 1, 2020 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2024

In accordance with 6 PA Code, Section 35.23, a.(1) and (2) and the Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended, I certify that the Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council has had the opportunity to assist in the development of this Plan. I further certify that the Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council has participated in at least one Public Hearing held on this Plan.

The Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council does recommend approval of this Plan.

Charles J. Cates
Signature of the Chief Officer of the Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council

Charles Cates
Chair
Typed Name and Title

Oct 19, 2020
Date

Part B, Section 3

Listing of Plan Assurances and Required Activities

Older Americans Act, As Amended in 2016

ASSURANCES

The Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended, requires each Area Agency on Aging (AAA) to provide assurances that it will develop a Plan and carry out a program in accordance with the Plan. Each AAA must comply with the following provisions of the Act. Written policies, procedures, or agreements, as appropriate, must be on file in the AAA office and available for review and approval by Department of Aging officials.

Area Plans

- Assurances that an adequate proportion, as required under section 307(a)(2), of the amount allotted for part B to the planning and service area will be expended for the delivery of each of the following categories of services:
 - Services associated with access to services (transportation, health services (including mental and behavioral health services), outreach, information and assistance (which may include information and assistance to consumers on availability of services under part B and how to receive benefits under and participate in publicly supported programs for which the consumer may be eligible) and case management services.
 - In-home services, including supportive services for families of older individuals who are victims of Alzheimer's disease and related disorders with neurological and organic brain dysfunction
 - Legal assistance.
- Assurances that the AAA will report annually to the State agency in detail the amount of funds expended for each such category during the fiscal year most recently concluded.
- Assurances that the AAA will:
 - Set specific objectives, consistent with State policy, for providing services to older individuals with greatest economic need, older individuals with greatest social need, and older individuals at risk for institutional placement.
 - Include specific objectives for providing services to low-income minority older individuals, older individuals with limited English proficiency, and older individuals residing in rural areas.
 - Include proposed methods to achieve the objectives.

- Assurances that the AAA will include in each agreement made with a provider of any service under this title, a requirement that such provider will:
 - Specify how the provider intends to satisfy the service needs of low-income minority individuals, older individuals with limited English proficiency, and older individuals residing in rural areas in the area served by the provider.
 - To the maximum extent feasible, provide services to low-income minority individuals, older individuals with limited English proficiency, and older individuals residing in rural areas in accordance with their need for such services.
 - Meet specific objectives established by the AAA, for providing services to low-income minority individuals, older individuals with limited English proficiency, and older individuals residing in rural areas within the planning and service area.

- Each AAA shall identify the number of low-income minority older individuals and older individuals residing in rural areas in the planning and service area, describe the methods used to satisfy the service needs of such minority older individuals, and provide information on the extent to which the AAA met the objectives described in clause (a)(4)(A)(i).

- Assurances that the AAA will use outreach efforts that will identify individuals eligible for assistance under this Act, with special emphasis on:
 - Older individuals residing in rural areas.
 - Older individuals with greatest economic need (with particular attention to low-income minority individuals and older individuals residing in rural areas).
 - Older individuals with greatest social need (with particular attention to low-income minority individuals and older individuals residing in rural areas).
 - Older individuals with severe disabilities.
 - Older individuals with limited English proficiency.
 - Older individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders with neurological and organic brain dysfunction (and the caretakers of such individuals).
 - Older individuals at risk for institutional placement.

- Assurance that the AAA will ensure that each activity undertaken by the agency, including planning, advocacy, and systems development, will include a focus on the needs of low-income minority older individuals and older individuals residing in rural areas.

- Assurances that the AAA will coordinate planning, identification, assessment of needs, and provision of services for older individuals with disabilities, with particular attention to individuals with severe disabilities, and individuals at risk for institutional placement, with agencies that develop or provide services for individuals with disabilities

- Assurances that the AAA, in carrying out the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman program under section 307(a)(9), will expend not less than the total amount of funds appropriated under this Act and expended by the agency in fiscal year 2000 in carrying out such a program under this title.

- Information and assurances concerning services to older individuals who are Native Americans (referred to in this paragraph as "older Native Americans"), including:

- Information concerning whether there is a significant population of older Native Americans in the planning and service area and if so, an assurance that the AAA will pursue activities.
 - Outreach, to increase access of those older Native Americans to programs and benefits provided under this title.
 - Assurance that the AAA will, to the maximum extent practicable, coordinate the services the agency provides under this title with services provided under title VI.
 - Assurance that the AAA will make services under the area plan available, to the same extent as such services are available to older individuals within the planning and service area, to older Native Americans.
- Assurances that the AAA will maintain the integrity and public purpose of services provided, and service providers, under this title in all contractual and commercial relationships.
 - Assurances that the AAA will disclose to the Assistant Secretary and the State agency the identity of each nongovernmental entity with which such agency has a contract or commercial relationship relating to providing any service to older individuals; and the nature of such contract or such relationship.
 - Assurances that the AAA will demonstrate that a loss or diminution in the quantity or quality of the services provided, or to be provided, under this title by such agency has not resulted and will not result from such contract or such relationship.
 - Assurances that the AAA will demonstrate that the quantity or quality of the services to be provided under this title by such agency will be enhanced as a result of such contract or such relationship.
 - Assurances that the area agency will, on the request of the Assistant Secretary or the State, for the purpose of monitoring compliance with this Act (including conducting an audit), disclose all sources and expenditures of funds such agency receives or expends to provide services to older individuals.
 - Assurances that preference in receiving services under this title will not be given by the AAA to particular older individuals as a result of a contract or commercial relationship that is not carried out to implement this title.
 - Assurances that funds received under this title will be used to provide benefits and services to older individuals, giving priority to older individuals identified in paragraph (4)(A)(i); and in compliance with the assurances specified in paragraph (13) and the limitations specified in section 212.

Part B, Section 4

Narrative Summary of the Proceedings of the AAA Area Plan Public Hearing

Given the extenuating circumstances of and social distancing guidelines surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, a website survey soliciting both targeted and open-ended input from the community was conducted in lieu of an in-person public hearing. This survey was available from April 27th to May 10th, and allowed us to appropriately involve the public in the planning process without causing any unnecessary risk to public health.

Participants were asked to respond to the following questions.

The first question asked participants to rank 10 aging policy themes, based on the AAA Planning and Service Area – Areas of Focus list, by order of importance. Themes were selected based on the bearing on the local community and relevance to the general public (eliminating, for example, themes focusing on AAA internal processes and funding sources). Themes selected for public ranking were:

- Affordable/Available housing
- Addressing Senior Homelessness
- Outreach to Diverse Communities
- Outreach to the Socially Isolated
- Supporting Grandfamilies
- Supporting Family Caregivers
- Investigating Financial Exploitation
- Increasing Senior Employment Opportunities
- Increasing Availability of Health Programs
- Supporting Dementia-Friendly Communities

Participants generally cited housing availability, outreach to the socially isolated, senior employment opportunities, and availability of health programs as important.

The second question asked participants to list the top three needs of older residents in Blair County. Ability to afford essentials such as shelter and medicine, maintaining a safe home, assistance understanding health care options, combating isolation, and educational programs figured prominently among responses.

The third question asked participants to suggest programming that should be provided at senior centers. A number of educational and social recreational programs were suggested.

The final question asked participants to suggest ways for the Agency to strengthen its ties to the community. Suggestions included participation in certain local events. Participants were given an opportunity to express general comments at the conclusion of the survey.