

COMMISSION ON AGING LEGISLATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE

INFORMATION SHEET FOR LEGISLATORS AND CANDIDATES

Elder issues are issues for people of all ages; those who live long enough to be elders, those who care about family and friends who are elders, and those who are caregivers for elders. When the world is safer and more secure for older people, people of all ages will benefit.

- **Demographics – Aging in Nevada Today and for the Future**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Nevada's estimated 2013 population is 2,790,136, of which 13.1% (approximately 366,000) is over the age of 65. The number of people living below the poverty rate in Nevada is 16.4%, which means that approximately 60,000 people over the age of 65 are living on \$11,490 per year if single and \$15,510 per year if there are 2 people in the household. This most likely represents their Social Security pension.

- **Issues where the Legislature can make a difference**

- **BEHAVIORAL AND COGNITIVE HEALTH:** Currently, there are few services in Nevada for people requiring assistance due to a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or other dementia, or who have mental health or behavioral issues. This results in many people being placed in facilities in other states or going without needed care. Legislation is needed to provide for implementation of the State Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease, other dementias, and mental health illness. There is a need to increase facilities throughout the state for treatment of brain-related and mental health illnesses.
- **BUDGET ISSUES:** Increase Medicaid waiver slots for elderly and disabled. Increase long-term care Ombudsmen. Create permanent state funding for services now funded with Tobacco Settlement funds.
- **CAREGIVERS:** There are 532,000 Nevadans providing care to loved ones and friends every year. This saves Nevada taxpayers an estimated 4 billion dollars a year by avoiding publicly paid care giving programs. Laws are needed that will help these volunteer caregivers to remain in the workplace while maintaining or increasing their ability to perform these valuable services.
- **LEGAL RIGHTS:** In order to protect the legal rights of older persons, the Legislature can do many things including revise elder abuse laws to better protect victims and to make prosecuting the crimes more effective, regulate private, for-profit guardians, and increase the number of professionals who are mandatory reporters.
- **MEDICAID:** Expand Medicaid services to include services that are provided in other states but not in Nevada, e.g. bed-holds at long-term care facilities, dental care, case management and medication management. Prioritize home and community based waived services over institutionalization.
- **NUTRITION:** Older people must be included in State planning for food security. In Nevada, 18.8% of seniors are deemed marginally food-insecure. Many depend on congregate or home-delivered meals as their only reliable nutrition. These programs are primarily federally-funded, and the funding is diminishing as the need grows.
- **TRANSPORTATION:** The number one need in the rural communities and the urban areas. Legislature can evaluate NDOT funding and regulations for local and intercity transportation in rural communities. Also, a Medicaid "non-medical" transportation waiver can be included in the Medicaid State Plan.
- **WORKFORCE:** Nevada lacks sufficient numbers of trained health care professionals in geriatrics. Many states have programs that help students repay their student loans if they agree to enter public sector employment for a certain amount of time. Funding and incentives for health care and social workers who work in geriatrics in the private sector would encourage people to enter the field. Additional funding to gerontology programs in higher education would increase the amount of care available to older people, help to attract businesses to Northern Nevada, and alleviate some unemployment.