



Celebrating Seniors

**Ionia County Commission on Aging 50 Year
Anniversary: Celebrating SENIORS Since 1973!**

Semi-Annual Report

November 2023

Ionia County Commission on Aging

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Celebrating 50 Years of Service to Ionia County

The goal of the Ionia County Commission on Aging is to strengthen the well-being of all Ionia County Senior Citizens and to be the cornerstone of support services for their continued independence. One way we remain focused on our goal is through an annual review of services delivered and by polling those we serve to get feedback on service delivery and programming.

This year, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of our founding, we remain as committed as ever to this annual review and to using what we've learned to plot our course moving forward. Looking back over the history of our agency, its services and direction, it's clear that while certain services continue to form our core – Meals on Wheels, Transportation, Homemaker and Respite Services, Senior Center Services and Healthy Aging/Disease Prevention - nothing remains static and it's fundamentally important to adapt to the needs of those we serve *today*.

In 2022, we completed renovations on the public spaces of our Ionia Senior Center, making important safety and accessibility upgrades. In 2024, we hope to upgrade the other half of our facility, including our kitchen and offices, and we hope to increase our footprint by 800-900 square feet. This modest increase would provide much needed private space for meeting with clients. Just as important is a critically needed refresh of our kitchen, with direct access for load-in and load-out for Meals on Wheels, and upgraded ductwork above our kitchen and office space with separate zones for each.

The goal of these changes is to set our agency up for the *next* 50 years. As we develop our plans, we will work to engage the public directly on the project, as we did previously. In fact, several of the ideas for our prior renovation came directly from clients during annual polling.

Our vision for the future is encapsulated in our Senior Center in downtown Ionia. To respect our past and plan for the future, our facility is a welcoming destination for social interaction, enriching programming and a hub for information, where seniors have a voice and a hand in both content and community.

Following is an update on the services and operations of the Ionia County Commission on Aging.

Thank you for your support of our efforts as we support seniors in Ionia County!

Carol Hanulcik

Director

Agency goals for fiscal year 2024

- Renovate the other half of our facility – adding much needed, private space to meet with clients + a critically needed refresh of our kitchen, replacing ductwork and separating HVAC runs for kitchen/office space.
- Continue to increase service hours delivered in our In Home Services Department; grow and maintain staff levels at 75% of allocated hours and continue to reduce (or eliminate) the waiting list for these important services.
- Transportation – expand fleet from 7 to 8 vehicles, fill vacant positions and bring on more volunteers.
- Train an additional MMAP counselor from existing staff.
- Launch the Blue Skies Adult Day Program, providing a low-to-no-cost option for Ionia County residents, one day per week.
- Add Senior Center programming at satellite sites throughout Ionia County.
- Continue to grow capacity to be able to meet the needs of a growing senior population.

Ionia County Commission on Aging Milestones 1973 to date

On March 29, 1973 twenty-three individuals met at Gregory's Restaurant in Ionia to organize a Council on Aging. Martin Succop of Ionia was elected as President, Vere Howlett of Clarksville elected Vice-President, Marion Hathaway of Portland elected as Secretary and Doris Smith of Ionia elected as Treasurer. Ionia County Department of Social Services, along with Ionia County Mental Health representatives, were present.¹

April 1973 - Six multi-service Centers were designated in Belding, Hubbardston, Ionia, Lake Odessa, Portland and Saranac to reach seniors for assistance in areas such as recreation, health, transportation and housing.

January 1974 – ICCOA receives first state grant for Outreach, Information and Referral and Transportation.

1977 – Congregate Meals begin, Homemaker Services begin.

1978 – Home Delivered Meals Program begins.

1978 – Board of Commissioners declares ICCOA an official “County Agency.”

April 1986 – County purchases 115 Hudson Street Building with renovation grant from the State for the use of ICCOA. Building will house office, kitchen and senior center facilities.

1987 – Michigan Department of Transportation funding secured for Specialized Services.

1990 – Medicare Medicaid Assistance Program (MMAP) formed in Ionia County.

August 1995 – Grand Valley Strings formed to provide weekly musical performance at ICCOA, with proceeds designated for Transportation Program.

August 2002 – Senior Millage approved, providing 3/8th of a mill for four years.

December 2002 – Caregiver Support Group first met at Ionia County Commission on Aging.

2016 – Transportation Coordinator and Administrative Aide positions established. Relaunch of Wellness programming and MI Tax Credits Assistance throughout Ionia County.

2017 -Transportation fleet expanded from 5 to 6 vehicles.

¹ Historical information from former Administrator Lynette Seiler's report Historical Facts about the Ionia County Commission on Aging

2019 – Expanded Congregate Meal Program – Portland Site added, Belding increased to 2 days per week.

2020 – Renewal of Senior Millage through 2029. Renovations completed on public spaces of ICCOA facility. Transportation fleet expands to 7 vehicles.

2021 – MMAP Counselor staff position established.

2023 – ICCOA Celebrates 50th Anniversary! Currently 50 individuals on staff, 12 full-time and 40 part-time, not including volunteers.

1970 Census Figures: 45,848 total Ionia County
or 4,447 sixty-five and over individuals

2010 Census Figures 63,905 total Ionia County
11.3% **sixty-five** and over or 7,221 individuals

2022 Estimates² 66,809 total Ionia County
15.9% **sixty-five** and over or 10,622 individuals



Ionia Sentinel-
Standard, April
4, 1973

The steering committee which formulated the Ionia county commission on aging met Thursday for the official signing of the document which will be sent to the Michigan Department of Commerce for registering. Community representatives as well as from county-wide senior citizens groups prepare to sign the document. They are left to right, front row: Mrs Marion Gregory, Eight-Cap representative; Mrs Muriel Peck, Saranac; Mrs Marion Hathaway, Portland; Mrs Doris Smith, Lake Odessa. Back row: Martin Succop, director of social services; Mourice Gierman, county commissioner; Ray Hughes, director of mental health; Eric Smith, community education; and Burton Siencel county commissioner. (Daily Sentinel-Standard Photo)

² <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/ioniacountymichigan>

ICCOA Services Delivered

Fiscal Year 2023 Recap - Oct 1, 2022 – Sept 30, 2023³

COA Client Profile

Registered Clients	•	Average Age
Fiscal year 2023 ⁴	2,269	75.1
Fiscal year 2022	2,221	75
Fiscal year 2021	2,038	74.7
Fiscal year 2020	2,079	74.1
Fiscal year 2019	2,175	73.8
Fiscal year 2018	1,409	74.1
Fiscal year 2017	1,454	74.1
Fiscal year 2016	1,413	74.8

Full Client & Caregiver Assessments Completed

Fiscal year 2023	913
Fiscal year 2022	895
Fiscal year 2021	880
Fiscal year 2020	894
Fiscal year 2019	846
Fiscal year 2018	744
Fiscal year 2017	663
Fiscal year 2016	621

Full Client/Caregiver assessments by a caseworker are required for Meals on Wheels and In-Home Services. Additionally, we partner with EightCAP Inc. in delivering Senior Companion Services by providing Client Assessments for this program.

³ Numbers and Units are preliminary as our fiscal year has only just closed.

Core Services, Departments and Staff

Units delivered are for the period October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023

Nutrition

Home Delivered Meals (meals)

Fiscal year 2023	73,200	479 individual clients
Fiscal year 2022	75,975	464
Fiscal year 2021	76,472	481
Fiscal year 2020	74,840	476
Fiscal year 2019	73,810	425
Fiscal year 2018	75,741	408
Fiscal year 2017	68,305	386
Fiscal year 2016	73,071	390

Congregate Meals (meals)

Fiscal year 2023	11,020	514 individual clients
Fiscal year 2022	9,608	436
Fiscal year 2021	7,168	355
Fiscal year 2020	5,595	317
Fiscal year 2019	10,110	439
Fiscal year 2018	9,015	356
Fiscal year 2017	8,491	364
Fiscal year 2016	8,515	297

Meals on Wheels and Congregate Meals remain a critical, core service of our agency. Numbers for FY 2023 continue to show the importance of these programs. While MOW showed a minor decline in total meals served, analysis shows this could show a reduction of under 10 clients served over the course of the year.

Congregate Meals on the other hand showed a marked increase. We feel the popular option for “take-out” contributed to the growth in numbers here although meals served has remained steady since this option was discontinued in May.

Seniors have been happy to return to our meal sites – in Belding, Clarksville, Lake Odessa, Ionia Portland and Saranac – and to get back into the swing of things post Covid.

We are happy to report that we have returned to 5-days-per-week meal delivery for Meals on Wheels and all congregate sites are back to twice-weekly service or, in the case of Clarksville, will return to twice weekly service by the end of November.

Our Nutrition Department is led by our amazing Nutrition Director, Lisa Insley. Lisa currently leads a team of 21 staff (2 FT, balance part-time, total FTE of appx 8). The roster includes 2 full-time Cooks, 2 part-time Food Service Aides, 11 part-time MOW Drivers (including sub meal drivers) and 7 part-time Site Hosts (1 position vacant).

Our goal for FY 2024 is to proceed on further renovations while maintaining full meal service.

Direct Care Services - In Home & Adult Day Services

Including Respite, Homemaker, Home Health Aide Services, Adult Day Services

In-Home Services (hours)

Fiscal year 2023	7,294	257 individual clients
Fiscal year 2022	4,385	235
Fiscal year 2021	2,953	174
Fiscal year 2020	4,165	210
Fiscal year 2019	6,916	213
Fiscal year 2018	6,267	211
Fiscal year 2017	7,030	171
Fiscal year 2016	7,058	179

The investment we have made, as an agency and as a state, by incentivizing this important work – by creating full-time positions with benefits and by increasing compensation, has truly begun to bear fruit. We delivered more hours of service in 2023 than in any year going back to 2016.

Now we hope to increase it even further, to achieve levels not seen since FY 2012-2013, when our agency delivered over 10,000 service hours annually. This is important, especially as the number of Seniors who might need these services continues to grow, and as we continue to maintain a waiting list for services due to a shortage of workers even with the progress we've made.

It's worth noting how important local funding is to this service as well. Roughly 40% of our funding for Homemaker Services comes from our Senior Millage. 100% of Home Health Aide Services is funded by our Senior Millage (ie, shower assistance and nail care, when not provided

as part of Respite Services).

Our key goal for this COA Department in FY 2024 will be continued growth in staff hours available to service clients – with our target to reach and maintain 75% of allocated hours worked per pay period and reduce or eliminate our waiting list.

Our In Home Services Director, Emily Gray, has done a remarkable job transforming this department by building and leading a solid team of skilled and devoted Direct Care Workers. She currently leads a team of 11 (4 full-time, balance part-time) with several vacancies yet, total allocated hours equal an FTE of just under 8.

Emily will use these same aides, with additional training, to staff our Adult Day Program which we are working to launch in spring 2024. We see this as a natural extension of our work supporting caregivers through Respite Services and through our Alzheimer’s Association programming and support group.

The extra benefits of Adult Day Services, vs care provided in the home, include socialization, unique programming such as wellness classes, a delicious meal, all provided in a model that lowers the cost of care.

Transportation

Including COA Fleet and Volunteer Drivers

Transportation (one-way trips)

Fiscal year 2023	4,896⁵	182 individual clients
Fiscal year 2022	5,013	149
Fiscal year 2021	3,343	263
Fiscal year 2020	3,979	429
Fiscal year 2019	7,289	233
Fiscal year 2018	6,405	216
Fiscal year 2017	6,660	208
Fiscal year 2016	6,220	196

⁵ 2022-2023 total one-way client trips include accompanying caregiver trips. Individual clients does not include caregiver count.

Our Transportation Department continues to grow back to our pre-pandemic numbers with a solid foundation provided by our new Coordinator Ashley Denker. She's doing a tremendous job building back the department after a period of over 3 months where the position was vacant. We feel this helps explain the slight reduction in one-way trips provided in FY 2023 as compared to FY 2022.

This absence also prevented the department from filling vacant drivers positions or adding volunteer drivers, which resulted in a decrease of 644 staff hours worked over the same period last year.

Our goal for the new year is to bring on additional drivers to work those hours and/or to substitute for drivers when they take time off for vacation or medical needs. We also hope to onboard additional volunteer drivers.

And finally, we hope to expand the fleet to 8 vehicles. We plan to accomplish this when a replacement vehicle arrives in December or January. We will retain the replaced vehicle, vs retiring it, to allow for increased service at times of peak demand.

Ashley is also bringing fresh eyes to the department and is making real improvements by leveraging technology and applying her administrative experience from her recent position in long term care. Ashley currently leads a team of 10 (8 staff + 2 volunteers) with about 25% of allocated hours currently unfilled.

This year Transportation benefitted from increased revenues from both MDOT and AAAWM. Nonetheless, this program remains largely supported with Senior Millage funds. Transportation is a crucial lifeline for many seniors to remain independent.

Senior Center Services

Wellness & Healthy Aging (client class sessions)

Fiscal year 2023	5,350	134 individual clients
Fiscal year 2022	3,072	99
Fiscal year 2021	1,718 ⁱ	41
Fiscal year 2020	2,301	115
Fiscal year 2019	3,807	143
Fiscal year 2018	3,506	163
Fiscal year 2017	4,043	122
Fiscal year 2016	4,459	138

Disease Prevention/Health Promotion, or Wellness, saw their best numbers for client class sessions since comparable records are available, or 2013. Total, unique participants is just

below 2019's pre-Covid numbers but new participants are joining at all fitness levels.

Rachel Yenchar leads our Wellness Department, with additional staff trained in several disciplines, which allows us to reach multiple areas throughout Ionia County. In 2023 classes were offered in Ionia, Portland, Belding, Lake Odessa and Saranac. Our agency offers EnhanceFitness™, Tai Chi, A Matter of Balance, Walk With Ease and Armchair Exercise. In FY 2024 we'll be adding Arthritis Exercise.

Additional Services and Support

Additional caseworker hours, and a robust administrative team, allow our agency to offer support in a number of other, significant ways. Services include:

- Alzheimer's Association Caregiver Support Group – meets monthly in Ionia and on Zoom, led by trained facilitator, Rachel Yenchar. Rachel has additional training as well through the Rosalyn Carter Institute for Caregivers.
- Equipment Exchange Program – over 620 items were distributed to 103 individuals in FY 2023. We hope to gain some storage after additional renovation work and build this program out further.
- Info and Referrals – as the focal point for services to seniors in our county, we strive to develop and maintain resources in all areas needed.
- MMAP Counseling – 73 hours of counseling were delivered to 31 clients in FY 2023. We plan to train one additional counselor in this discipline to increase service hours for FY 2024.
- Tax Returns and Tax Credits – Caseworkers and Admins assist clients with preparation of MI Tax Credits or tax returns prepared by the United Way. 58 individuals assisted in FY 2023.
- Senior Project Fresh – 738 coupon booklets were distributed to 382 individuals in FY 2023.

Office staff include 6 full-time positions, the COA Director (Administrator), Nutrition Director, In Home Services Director, Transportation Coordinator, Wellness & Health Aging Specialist and one full-time position split between casework and administrative/program support.

Part-time positions include: 2 additional, part-time caseworkers and 3 part-time administrative/program aides with roughly 60% of their hours providing or supporting direct client services.

COA Volunteers - Volunteer service is an important part of service delivery. Over 1,800 volunteer hours were documented in FY 2023.
