



Semi-Annual Report

November 2024

Ionia County Commission on Aging
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Semi-Annual Report

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.

Services we provide are delivered in client homes, at satellite sites throughout the county and at our Senior Center in downtown Ionia.

Annually, we poll clients to learn how we might improve current services and how we might develop new services or resources to address needs in our community. Each year this feedback is crucial in developing plans for the new year. And each year polling gives results that both challenge and inspire us to best serve Ionia County.

We've just completed this process and we are happy to share our plans for the new year with you.

Completing renovations on our facility in FY 2025 remains a key deliverable for our clients and for our agency. Feedback on the renovations completed in 2022 were universally positive. Our goal in completing renovations is to provide a solid foundation for our agency for decades to come. A list of other key deliverables follows along with a look back at FY 2024.

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.

Thank you for your support of our efforts, and of our seniors, in Ionia County!

Carol Hanulcik

Director

Agency goals for fiscal year 2025

- Renovate the other half of our facility – adding space to meet confidentially with clients, completing an essential refresh of our kitchen and replacing ductwork and separating HVAC runs for kitchen/office space.
- Fill vacant positions/hours and become “fully staffed” in order to meet increased need.
- Work to reduce or eliminate the Waiting List for Direct Care Services (Homemaker and Respite).
- Continue to develop and raise the profile of other services that support caregivers such as Memory Café, Caregiver Support Group and Respite Certificates. Launch the Blue Skies Adult Day Program, providing a low-to-no-cost option for Ionia County residents, one day per week.
- Continue to help Seniors become more **tech savvy** – to stay connected with family and friends, to access online programming and services, to stay informed on current events, and to improve cognition.
- Bring on more volunteers! This will help us to deliver more Senior Center Activities, add more Transportation hours and help ensure 5-day-per-week Meals on Wheels delivery.

ICCOA Services Delivered
Fiscal Year 2024 Recap - Oct 1, 2023 – Sept 30, 2024¹

Registered Clients² • Demographics

Individuals Registered	FY 2024	2,185
Average Age		75.4
Average % fpl ³		148.9%

Most ICCOA services are not based on a client's ability to pay, but rather on client's need for assistance to remain in their home. Client support is made through donations, cost sharing or through private payment.

In FY 2024, clients contributed nearly \$72,000 toward the cost of Meals on Wheels, almost \$18,000 for Homemaker and Respite Services and \$5,800 for Wellness Programming. These are client donations only and do not include other community support.

The last several years indicate the average age for registered clients is increasing.

Full Client & Caregiver Assessments Completed

Fiscal year 2024	953
Fiscal year 2023	913
Fiscal year 2022	895
Fiscal year 2021	880

The number of full client assessments continues to increase, over 53% since 2016. This is one of our best indicators of increased need. Assessments determine an individual's priority score, based on indications of need for assistance, for instance: health of the client, if there is family or other support available, if the client is isolated, whether a client is able to perform various activities of daily living and so forth.

Full Client/Caregiver assessments by a caseworker are required for Meals on Wheels, Homemaker and Respite Services, Adult Day Services and for EightCAP's Senior Companion Program.

¹ Numbers and Units are preliminary as our fiscal year has only just closed.

² Not all clients who are helped by our agency are registered for services, and all registered clients may not receive a service which records a unit of service. Transportation clients are not included in this count, see Transportation Summary for more information.

³ <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>

Core Services, Departments and Staff

Units delivered are for the period October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024

Nutrition

Home Delivered Meals (meals)

Fiscal year 2024	76,609	474 individual clients
Fiscal year 2023	73,200	479
Fiscal year 2022	75,975	464
Fiscal year 2021	76,472	481

Average age for this service FY 2024: 76.6

Congregate Meals (meals)

Fiscal year 2024	9,887	451 individual clients
Fiscal year 2023	11,020	514
Fiscal year 2022	9,608	436
Fiscal year 2021	7,168	355

Average age for this service FY 2024: 74.6

Meals on Wheels is a critical, core service that helps seniors remain in their homes. In addition to a healthy meal, the service provides, in many cases, a wellness check five-days-per-week by ICCOA staff.

The delivery model also make sense financially. Meals on Wheels America notes that *we can serve a senior for an entire year for roughly the same cost as [one] day in the hospital, or 10 in a nursing home.*⁴

FY 2024 shows no return to lower, pre-pandemic numbers⁵ and continued increases are projected to continue due to demographic changes. There are more seniors to help and more seniors are living to an advanced age. And while the majority of ICCOA services are not based on income, it's important to note how these services also support those with lower incomes, and for whom food insecurity is an issue.

Congregate Meals are served in a group setting at 6 locations in Ionia County. Congregate Meals provide both a nutritious meal and socialization to boost overall wellness. The option for take-out congregate meals ended in FY 2023 which reduced overall numbers a bit this year but not significantly. We're at 98% of pre-pandemic numbers (compared to FY 2019). We are also seeing an increase for our larger, holiday luncheons. We anticipate 100 will join us for our upcoming Thanksgiving meal in Ionia.

Our Nutrition Department is led by our amazing Nutrition Director, Lisa Insley. Lisa currently leads a team of 20 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).

⁴ www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/facts

⁵ Pre-pandemic refers to FY 2019 and prior

Our goal for FY 2025 is to proceed on kitchen renovations while maintaining full meal service and to recruit volunteers. With renovations to our kitchen planned in 2025, ICCOA will be well prepared to provide nutritional support and socialization to seniors and to help maintain their quality of life, well into the future.

Direct Care Services – In-Home & Onsite

Including Respite, Homemaker, Home Health Aide, Memory Café and Respite Certificates and Adult Day Services.

Homemaker, Respite and Home Health Aide hours

Fiscal year 2024	7,890	267 individual clients
Fiscal year 2023	7,294	257
Fiscal year 2022	4,385	235
Fiscal year 2021	2,911	174

Average age for these services FY 2024: 79.5

FY 2024 built on the success of FY 2023, delivering more Direct Care Worker service hours⁶ than any prior year going back to FY 2015. We also served more individual clients with these services⁷ than in any year going back to when these records are available, FY 2013. To both grow service hours, and maintain a high degree of client satisfaction, is a goal which we believe we are achieving.

FY 2024 also saw the launch of Memory Café at our Senior Center in Ionia. Memory Café is an innovative, inclusive gathering for seniors 60+ affected by memory issues and their caregivers. Staffed by Direct Care Workers (In Home Aides), Memory Café is a safe, welcoming environment where participants can eat lunch, engage in activities and avoid the stress of going out in public.

ICCOA was recently named the distributing partner for Respite Certificates to Ionia County residents by AAAWM. An underutilized program for several years, we have noted new interest. Participants for both Memory Café and Respite Certificates could also be the first participants in our Adult Day Program. As we continue to have vacant positions in this department, and maintain a waiting list of 40+ individuals for services, innovative programming such as Memory Café and Adult Day Services can help when one-on-one care in the home isn't an available option.

The extra benefits of Adult Day Services, as compared to care provided in the home, include socialization, unique programming, a delicious meal, and all provided in a model that lowers the cost of care.

Our key goals for this COA Department in FY 2025 will be continued growth in staff hours, to serve more clients and to reduce or eliminate our waiting list, and to launch our Adult Day Program.

⁶ Including Homemaker, Respite and Home Health Aide (personal care) Services, funded through Older Americans Act, Ionia County Senior Millage, contributions and donations, etc.

⁷ Again, including all funding sources.

Our Direct Care Services Director, Emily Gray, has excelled in leading this department and continues to innovate and develop to support and serve more seniors. Emily also leads our Memory Café, is point on distribution of Respite Certificates in Ionia County and will oversee our Adult Day Program.

She currently leads a team of 9 Direct Care Workers to provide Homemaker, Respite, Memory Café and Home Health Aide services. While staff hours have increased substantially we remain at just under 75% of allocated hours filled with a current team of 9 (4 full-time, balance part-time, FTE of appx 8).

Transportation

ICCOA Fleet including Staff and Volunteer Drivers

Transportation (one-way trips)⁸

Fiscal year 2024	5,507	219 individual clients
Fiscal year 2023	4,896	182
Fiscal year 2022	5,013	149
Fiscal year 2021	3,343	121 ⁹

Under our Transportation Coordinator, Ashley Denker, our Transportation Department continues to increase both trips provided and clients served with a significant increase over FY 2023.

Ashley brings top notch people and technology skills and a remarkable work ethic which have led to her taking on new responsibilities and is currently training on procurements. She leads a team of 9 drivers + 2 volunteers (FTE just under 5, including volunteers) with approximately 1 part-time position vacant and multiple volunteer positions looking to be filled. Ashley also manages our MOW fleet.

While not quite as large as our Nutrition and Direct Care Services Departments, ICCOA Transportation is a critical, core service which Seniors depend on. Our focus on *Assisted* Transportation, providing extra help for Seniors boarding vehicles + groceries, walkers and so on is a game changer for keeping seniors independent and reducing isolation.

Our ability to transport clients to select destinations outside the county, such as to veteran's facilities, or to special cancer treatment centers, is unique and helps many remain in their homes.

Our goal for the new year is to fill all vacant hours and to continue to leverage our dispatch software to deliver as many trips as possible with existing staff.

Senior Center Services

Wellness & Healthy Aging (client class sessions)

Fiscal year 2024	4,962	117 individual clients
Fiscal year 2023	5,350	134

⁸ One-way client trips include accompanying caregiver trips. Individual clients does not include caregiver count.

⁹ This figure was decreased by 142, for Fresh Produce Box delivery clients, an allowed service definition during the pandemic.

Fiscal year 2022	3,072	99
Fiscal year 2021	1,718 ⁱ	41

Disease Prevention/Health Promotion, or Wellness, numbers dipped a bit in FY 2024 compared to FY 2023 but still saw their second best year on record¹⁰ and Wellness continues to be a popular, core service at our agency. Our agency currently offers Arthritis Exercise, EnhanceFitness, A Matter of Balance, Tai Chi and Walk With Ease.

Our goals for FY 2025 are to roll out new equipment to improve the audio for participants at in-person classes or for those who join via Zoom. We will also deliver Zoom “how-to’s” at each of our Congregate Meal sites to encourage clients to join virtually when inclement weather makes travel unsafe.

Rachel Yenchar leads our Wellness Department, with other ICCOA staff trained in several disciplines. An additional EnhanceFitness instructor will be added in FY 2025 to maintain a deep bench and reduce the need for class cancellations. This year, classes are planned in Ionia, Lake Odessa, Belding, Saranac and Portland.

Additional Services and Support

Our caseworkers + administrative team allow our agency to offer a robust suite of services that support seniors including:

- Caregiver Support Group – led by an Alzheimer’s Association trained facilitator. We look to add a second facilitator in FY 2025, and potentially add a group at a second location.
- Coffee Klatch – a weekly gather for coffee and conversation Mondays in Ionia.
- Equipment Exchange Program – nearly 620 items were distributed in FY 2024 under our traditional, donations-based program. Starting in June, we partnered with local agencies to launch the new “Brief Bank,” and to receive supplies through the State of MI for Seniors at or below 200% of the fpl. This much needed service is continuing into FY 2025!
- 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 – 164 counseling hours were delivered in FY 2024. Now with 2 counselors, we hope to assist even more clients in FY 2025. We also offered appointments at 6 different sites in Ionia County this year.
- Memory Café – for individuals with memory issues and their caregivers.
- Meal & Movie nights – a popular night out in Ionia
- Senior Project Fresh – 794 coupon booklets were distributed to 409 individuals in FY 2024.

¹⁰ FY 2023 was our best year on record for client class sessions delivered.

- Tax Returns and Tax Credits –22 individuals were helped with MI Tax Credits in FY 2024. We are working with the United Way to reopen a full VITA/TCE site in Ionia in FY 2025.
- Tech Savvy Senior Workshops – hosted quarterly in Ionia, we are also looking to host a workshop outside Ionia.
- Volunteer led programming includes our Painting Group, Euchre Group and Yarn Circle.

Additional Senior Center activities and programming are developed throughout the year.

Office staff include 6 full-time positions: ICCOA Director (Administrator), Nutrition Director, Direct Care Services Director, Transportation Coordinator, Wellness & Healthy Aging Specialist and one full-time position split between casework and administrative/program support.

Part-time positions include: 2 part-time caseworkers, one part-time MMAP counselor, one seasonal Senior Center staff member and 3 part-time administrative/program aides who provide direct client services along with supporting all ICCOA departments.

ICCOA Volunteers remain integral part of service delivery. Approximately 1,300 volunteer hours were documented in FY 2024.
