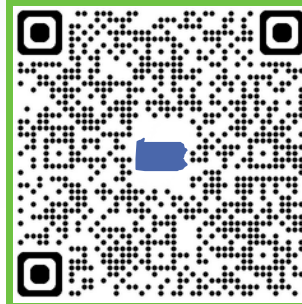


Budget Provides Relief, But More Investment Needed

Pennsylvania's 25/26 budget includes a \$10.7 million increase to PENNCARE - the first boost after years of insufficient funding. This is crucial first step for 548,000 older Pennsylvanians who rely on the Area Agencies on Aging's essential services. However, with older adults projected to account for 1 out of every 3 Pennsylvanians by 2030, sustained funding is essential. Read more about services older adults rely on.

Scan to read the story



“It's unconscionable to me that we're able to support these people in their homes and prevent this kind of damage to somebody because... a lack of funding.

These are real people.

**This is my mother,
my grandmother,
my neighbor.”**



Rebecca May-Cole
Executive Director, P4A



SUCCESS STORIES

JIM OVERLY

“I was lost. That place saved my heart.”

After losing his mother, Jim faced grief and loneliness until he discovered his local Area Agency on Aging (AAA), Active Aging, Inc. in Meadville, PA. There, he found friendship, support, and activities for socialization and personal enrichment.

JIM OVERLY



CAROLYN & CARL SMITH

“We are blessed to have a second person to fall in love with.”

After both experiencing personal losses, Evelyn and Carl were encouraged by their friends and family to visit their local Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), Active Aging, Inc. in Meadville.

From a chance meeting at a painting class to a Valentine's Day dinner, their romance blossomed quickly. Within months, they were married, proving that love has no age limit.



Evelyn & Carl Smith

CAROLYN CAPOZZA

“AAAs serve as advocates for older adults. That's what I do, I'm an advocate.”

After witnessing firsthand the benefits her local Area Agency for Aging (AAA) had on her, Carolyn decided to get involved and become an advocate for AAAs. For the past twenty-five years, Carolyn has fought for funding for AAAs so they can continue serving older adults across Pennsylvania.

Carolyn Capozza



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

- *Standard-Journal*: “The 'human side' of protective services work” - AAA leaders share the impact of protective services work on older adults.
- *Lock Haven Express*: “Protecting older Pennsylvanians: Balancing transparency, accountability and dignity” - P4A's Karen Leonovich highlights protective services work and debunks false information.
- *Morning Call*: “Your View: Pennsylvania must do more to support its older residents” - OpEd published by P4A Executive Director Rebecca May-Cole on needed increased AAA funding.

SCAN TO
READ MORE



PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF AREA AGENCIES ON AGING (P4A)

For more than 50 years, Pennsylvania's 52 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) have served the Commonwealth's 67 counties by providing information about resources and service providers, assessing needs for service, making referrals to case managers, and linking to services. The 52 Area Agencies on Aging provide a coordinated network of care in implementing statewide initiatives, which are designed to **help older Pennsylvanians maintain their independence and give them assistance**, when needed, in articulating their concerns and changing needs.

AAA SERVICES



Safety



Meal Delivery



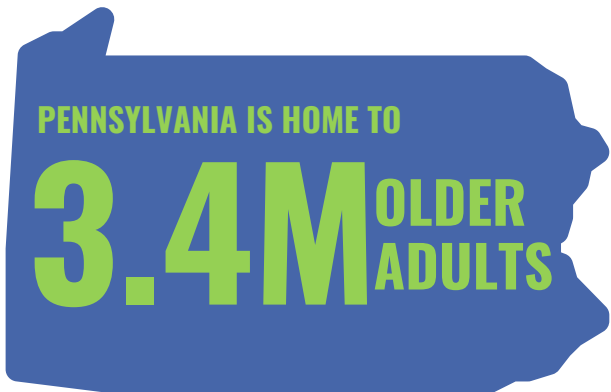
Health Promotion



Senior Centers



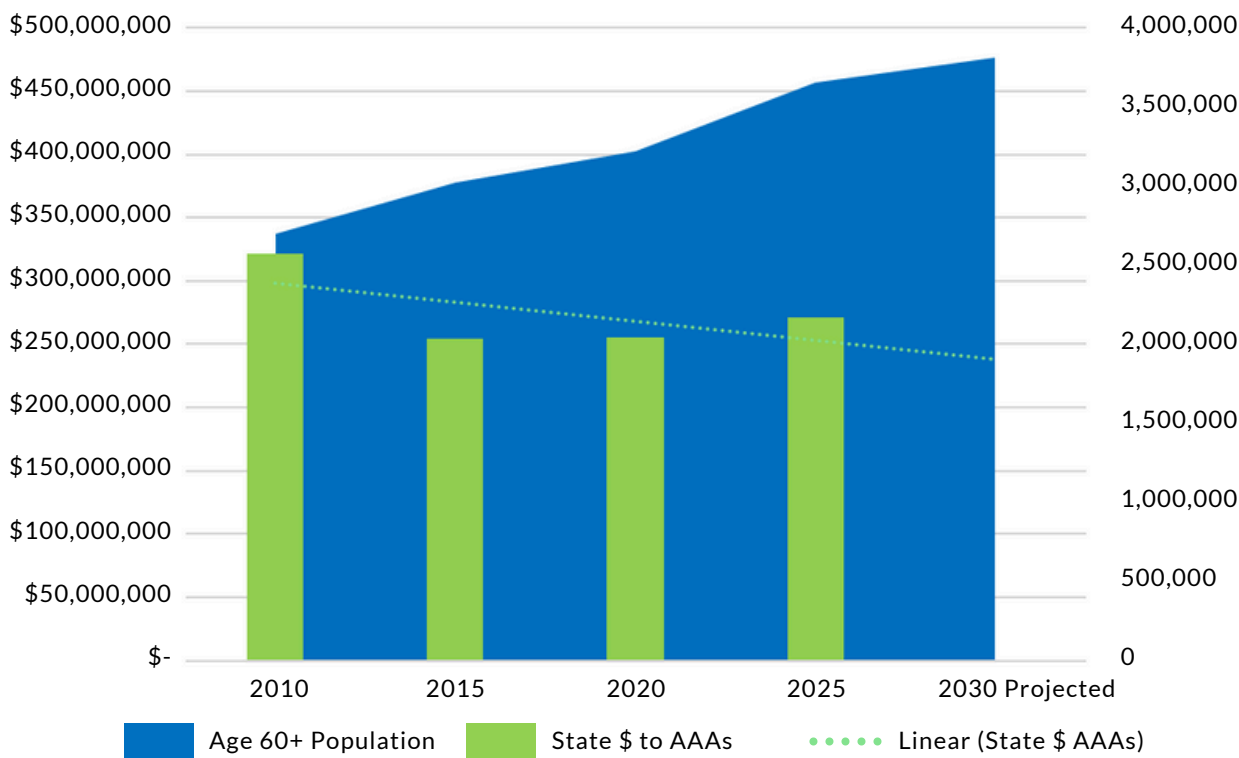
In-Home Care



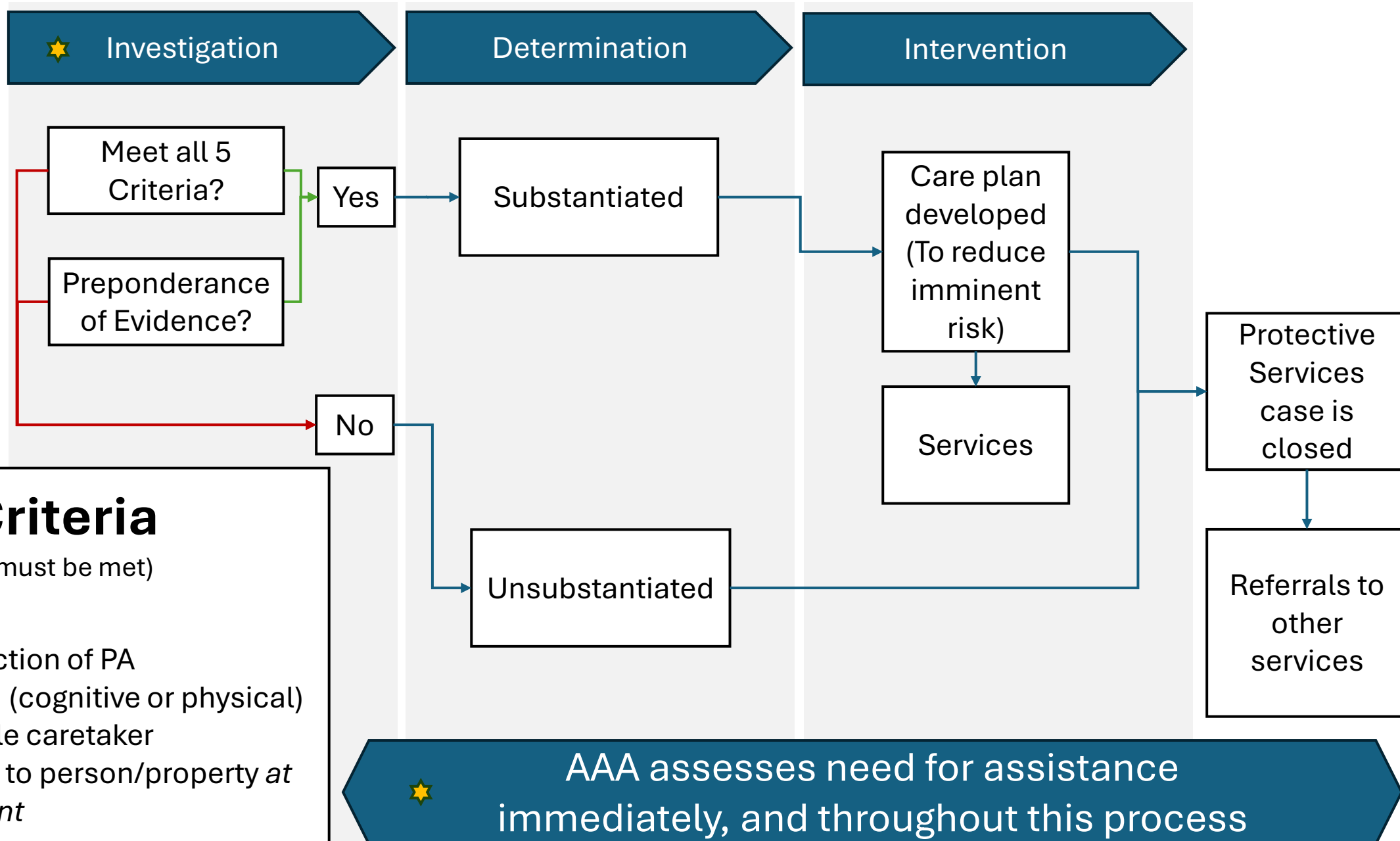
Addressing Funding Gaps Amid a Growing Aging Population

P4A is grateful for the increased allocation of \$10 million to the PENNCARE line item in Fiscal Year 2025-2026. This investment directly supports the essential services AAAs provide for older adults in the Commonwealth. However, **due to the growing population of older adults a history of stagnant funding, we remain vulnerable without the funding stability to stabilize services in the future.**

STATE FUNDING VS. POPULATION 60+



Protective Services Flow Chart





October 23, 2025

Spotlight PA's ongoing articles raise vital questions but don't portray necessary context on how Pennsylvania safeguards its older residents from abuse and neglect. The story points to a painful truth: every time an older adult is left at risk, our collective promise to protect the vulnerable is broken.

As someone deeply invested in the integrity of our older adult protective services system, I agree that transparency matters. However, it is equally important that public conversations about these complex issues reflect both the challenges and the progress underway.

Understanding 'at risk' vs. 'imminent risk'

In the world of Older Adult Protective Services, terminology matters. Being deemed "at risk" does not necessarily mean that an older adult is in immediate danger or that an Area Agency on Aging (AAA) failed to act. This designation means that during a monitoring review, the Department of Aging found that part of an investigation or documentation did not fully meet every procedural requirement — for example, a delay in paperwork.

By contrast, "imminent risk" signals a far more serious situation — one in which an older adult faces an immediate threat to their safety or well-being and urgent intervention is required.

In Northumberland County, for example, six older adults were deemed "at risk" in 2022 out of 22 sample cases — roughly a quarter. While any number above zero is unacceptable, the figure must be understood in context: the AAA's protective services program handled almost 700 reports that year, many of which resulted in swift intervention, providing support services or removal of an older adult from dangerous environments.

In Northumberland County, no older adults were found to be at imminent risk during the time period referenced by Spotlight PA. The individuals identified as "at risk" were safe — but their case files reflected administrative delays caused by extraordinary staffing challenges.

The human reality behind the numbers

Like many human services agencies nationwide, Northumberland County's Area Agency on Aging was deeply affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the "Great Resignation." Out of five protective services staff, only one investigator and one supervisor remained for much of that period.

Despite these challenges, the dedicated staff worked tirelessly to ensure no older adult was left in harm's way. Every case received attention and care — even when documentation lagged behind the pace of response. These staff prioritized what mattered most: safety, intervention, and compassion.

Confidentiality is not secrecy

Spotlight PA suggests that withholding data on "at-risk" determinations amounts to shielding information from the public. The truth is more nuanced. Under Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law, noncriminal investigative materials are protected to preserve confidentiality, so caseworkers can candidly document, families can report concerns without fear, and investigators can assess complex personal situations.

The Department of Aging has already pledged to release more responsive data. However, transparency must not come at the expense of privacy and dignity, which are essential to ethical oversight.

Continuous improvement and oversight

The department's new monitoring system has already driven measurable improvements across Pennsylvania counties. When deficiencies are identified, counties must submit performance improvement plans and undergo follow-up reviews. In the last year, many have implemented new supervision standards and care practices.

Pennsylvania's aging network — from local caseworkers to state oversight teams — carries one of the most demanding missions in public service. These professionals work under heavy caseloads, limited resources, and emotionally charged conditions. Accountability is both fair and necessary. But true transparency must also include context and compassion.

We cannot overlook the realities that caseworkers face. Older Adult Protective Services investigators routinely enter unsafe or uncertain situations to protect older adults. They do so while working long hours and spending time away from their own families. Recognizing their challenges deepens our understanding of the system and strengthens efforts to improve it.

Respecting the right to self-determination

Another important thing that people sometimes forget is that older adults have the right to make their own choices. Under Pennsylvania law, adults over 60 have the right to make their own decisions, unless determined otherwise by a medical professional.

Protective services workers cannot override those rights. Their mission is to empower older adults with information, resources, and choices — not to impose unwanted interventions.

Autonomy and protection must go hand in hand.

A call for balanced accountability

Protective services work is not simply about compliance and paperwork. It is about compassionate response, ethical accountability, and respect for human dignity.

We should continue to press for transparency to help Pennsylvanians understand how well counties protect older adults. At the same time, we must protect the integrity of ongoing investigations and the privacy of those involved.

True accountability is not about blame — it's about building a system that learns, adapts, and prevents future harm.

Karen Leonovich, Director of Policy and Programs, PA Association of Area Agencies on Aging, and former Agency Administrator for the Northumberland County Area Agency on Aging

March 30, 2022

Secretary Torres
PA Department of Aging
555 Walnut Street, 5th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

As regional representatives of the Area Agencies on Aging, we want to thank you for your continued advocacy on behalf of the state's AAA network. The collective 52 Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) are tasked by the Department of Aging with providing certain services to older adults in all areas of the Commonwealth. Our AAA network, in coordination with the Pennsylvania Association of Area Agencies on Aging (P4A), strives to ensure that we do more for our consumers than simply provide a service. It is our goal to ensure that our staff have the necessary tools at their disposal to provide comprehensive, high-quality, and appropriate assistance to those we serve. Our collective focus over the past few years has turned to quality assurance and best practices. We have worked together to share and disseminate information that has allowed our staff to gain a greater understanding of various aspects of their job responsibilities. During this process, we have learned that there are several core competency areas that we believe require additional specific and focused training.

Understanding the fact that P4A is the Department's current grantee carrying out PDA's direction for training and education for most of the Aging programs, and also understanding that this function is going to be going through a standardized procurement process in the near future, we are writing on our own as directors not representing P4A. This letter is not a reflection of P4A's past work, nor a recommendation about using P4A in the future. This letter is solely focused on the content of training provided and/or approved by PDA.

We have had many conversations with you that demonstrate your personal desire to support those professional development opportunities that are substantially responsive to the needs of the AAA network. Please know the AAAs appreciate this commitment.

The critical training areas and AAA rationale for each are summarized as follows:

Professional Development

The AAA have always benefited from the presence of institutional knowledge. Over the past decade both the network and the Department have experienced the loss of many of

our long-standing leaders. In anticipation and recognition of these changes, the Leadership Development Institute was created in 2012. The Leadership Development Institute (LDI) offered staff the chance to develop and enhance the managerial acumen and competencies tailored specifically to the PA Aging network. This project prepared many for their advancement through various leadership positions within the AAA system. Many AAA directors or administrators participated during that timeframe to ensure that their skills were commensurate with the demands for their jobs. Over the course of those eight (8) years, 113 graduates benefitted from this experience. We know that 73% of those graduates have remained with their AAAs, and 40% have been promoted since their graduation. These results are resounding proof of the benefit of LDI. Since PDA decided to discontinue this training in 2020, AAA leaders and staff have lacked assistance and support to succeed or advance, even as AAAs still face the ongoing loss of significant expertise and detailed historical proficiency. We believe this investment should continue to enhance and develop current and future leaders. In fact, we feel strongly that a supervisory level course of the same kind would further benefit the performance of the AAAs.

Protective Services

As you are aware, our primary focus has been on the quality provision of protective services in response to the allegations outlined in the OSIG report, as well as the examination of monitoring results showing clear and common deficiencies across the network. These results plainly show that our current training program fails to focus on the basic investigatory competencies necessary to meet the Department's criteria or expectations. We must acknowledge that the scope and content of an investigation has changed dramatically over the last several years and that our training content has not kept pace. For example, there currently is no formal structured training utilizing adult learning principles and engaging techniques for new investigators that include a review of how to investigate, how to document the investigation, or how to enter all the information appropriately in SAMS. Yet these are heavily, and appropriately, emphasized during the monitoring process. AAAs are in dire need of this very specialized training to support their PS work. This very specialized training has been requested yet not delivered. We believe the intention to meet the training exists; however, there is a disconnect between what the AAAs need and what has been produced. We would be more than willing to work collaboratively with you and your staff to better communicate our needs so this training can be provided. We also want to ensure that such training is most consistent with the findings and recommendations for training noted within the state Office of Inspector General report on OAPSA. We believe "training" to be more than summaries or updates. They should consider adult learning principles and recognize that participants come from a variety of experience levels. They should also focus on the practical implementation of requirements, including working through scenarios and case studies, providing real examples pulled from previous investigations documented in SAMS.

We recognize that not all AAAs meet every requirement; however, we do believe that ongoing training, specific to any findings that arise from monitoring visits, should be available quickly. In acknowledgment of the Department's first goal in the State Plan on

Aging, we have worked to identify and disseminate current best practices across the network as a means of providing support to AAAs who are underperforming. We also offer support by connecting AAAs who you identify as performing certain tasks well with those who are underperforming as a supplement to what you are doing. We want to partner with the Department to meet these needs. Tenured staff lack the time and attention to train new investigators to the same degree they were trained, so we offer our suggestions to help meet this gap. Confident and skilled employees directly benefit Aging consumers.

We also appreciate the amount of effort the Department has given to providing regular reports to the AAAs so they can consistently monitor their own performance. We also acknowledge and appreciate that Denise Getgen and Barb Valaw have been participating in regular meetings with us, which we feel has gone a long way toward addressing the items we mentioned above. We look forward to continued discussions and stronger partnerships to strengthen the OAPS program.

Fundamental Fiscal Training (To Complement What PDA Currently Offers)

Our Fiscal staff have also identified competencies that they feel they are lacking in the provision of their duties. AAAs have repeatedly stated their concerns in ensuring that all organizational levels of fiscal operations (those who do the actual fiscal work, those who oversee that work, and those senior leaders who rely on the outcomes for sound program and administrative decision-making) do possess the basic, rudimentary skill sets to be able to perform their responsibilities well. However, a self-assessment of the AAA system reveals that individuals undertaking this work need additional training, ranging from basic, intermediate, to advanced accounting understanding, dependent upon their positions of responsibility.

While AAAs appreciate PDA's operational guidance and AccuFund system advice, previous Department suggestions to seek assistance from another AAA is no longer fruitful due to the loss of institutional knowledge. The AAAs feel strongly that the engagement of outside contracted accounting resources to provide insight on generally accepted principles and standards for the use and management of public funds for the three levels of performance described above is necessary for the AAA financial operations to perform at its highest level of efficiency. As one AAA appropriately noted, "AAA staff need first to know 'why' they are doing it so that they can then be in the position to understand 'how to do it.'" AAAs are audited by CPAs but receive no prior training from CPAs. We ask for these types of experts to provide needed training to our fiscal staff.

If our staff genuinely seek professional development to improve their job skills, it can only be a benefit to our agencies and to those we serve. Ultimately the objective should be to have the most competent people serving the older adults of Pennsylvania. That is our goal. We feel strongly that should be a shared goal.

We appreciate your willingness to reestablish the joint training committee and submit the attached comprehensive list of training topics we have internally identified as crucial. We

remain dedicated to our responsibilities to the older adults we collectively serve and hope that you will support us in our endeavors to do so with the highest level of proficiency.

Sincerely,

Holly Kyle
Union Snyder Area Agency on Aging,
Inc

Mark Shea
York County Area Agency on Aging

Jason Kavulich
Lackawanna County Area Agency on
Aging

Sandra Murphy
Chester County Department of Aging
Services

Krista Geer
Active Aging, Inc.

Clayton Reed
Lehigh County Office of Aging and Adult
Services

Connie Brode
Huntington-Bedford-Fulton Area Agency
on Aging

Jessica Jones
Berk County Area Agency on Aging

Karen Leonovich
Northumberland County Area Agency
on Aging

Vicki Huffaker
Adams County Office for Aging

Molly McNutt
Jefferson County Area Agency on
Aging, Inc.

Leslie Grenfell
Southwestern Pennsylvania Area
Agency on Aging, Inc.

Beth Herold
Butler County Area Agency on Aging