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Conferences

Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius Meets with AoA Staff

HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius paid a personal visit to AoA headquarters on Monday, October 5. Accompanied by Deputy Secretary William Corr and HHS Counselor Sharon Parrott, the Secretary spent time with Assistant Secretary Greenlee and then met with all staff in an all-hands meeting. The Secretary praised AoA staff for its ongoing work in making a difference in the lives of millions of older Americans and their families, and she recognized the important role of human services programs in the Department's overall mission.

Assistant Secretary Greenlee Expresses Support for the People of American Samoa

Assistant Secretary Kathy Greenlee called American Samoa Aging Director Fa'afiti Pita Tauanu'u to express condolences for the loss of life and support for the people of American Samoa following the recent 8.0 magnitude earthquake and subsequent tsunami. Greenlee, along with AoA Disaster Preparedness staff in Washington, DC and Region IX have been closely monitoring the situation since the disasters struck in particular as it relates to elders who have been impacted or who may require assistance. President Obama issued a declaration of Disaster for American Samoa on September 29 which makes available both immediate resources for emergency response measures as well as federal funding for American Samoa.

ASA Greenlee Reiterates President Obama Proclamation of October as National Breast Cancer Awareness Month 2009

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

I am so pleased that President Obama has issued a proclamation recognizing October as "National Breast Cancer Awareness Month 2009." Breast cancer is a tragic disease that affects millions of women every day. Chances are that each one of us knows someone who has been affected by breast cancer. This is a disease that impacts families, friends, and co-workers.

The risk of breast cancer increases with age. More than half of breast cancers are diagnosed in women age 65 or older, and as many as 45 percent are diagnosed after age 70. Older women who do not follow regular screening guidelines often are diagnosed at a later stage, when breast cancer is more difficult to treat. While there have been advances in the fight against this

terrible disease, we know there is more to be done. Everyone has a role and responsibility. It is critically important that all women over the age of 40 take the necessary steps to get screened for breast cancer. Early detection is an important piece of prevention and can be a lifesaving step.

All women with Medicare ages 40 and older are eligible to receive a screening mammogram every 12 months. This is an important preventive benefit that I highly recommend. For more information about Medicare coverage for breast cancer screening, please visit

http://www.cms.hhs.gov/Mammography/01_Overview.asp

Please join me in encouraging the women in your lives to do their part to stay healthy and to fight breast cancer. (*Kathy Greenlee, ASA*)

To read President Obama's entire proclamation, please go to http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Presidential-Proclamation-National-Breast-Cancer-Awareness-Month/

ASA Greenlee Continues to Interact with the Aging Network

Below is a glimpse of some activities on ASA Greenlee's October schedule:

October 7: National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA) Annual Conference in Washington, DC <http://www.nhcoa.org/conf/>

October 25: National Citizens Coalition for Nursing Home Reform Conference in Washington, DC <http://www.regonline.com/Checkin.asp?EventId=729671>

October 29: National Adult Protective Services Association Conference in San Antonio, TX <http://www.apsnetwork.org/>

AoA Awards More than \$32 Million for Home and Community-Based Services and Support for Older Americans and Individuals with Disabilities

HHS Assistant Secretary for Aging Kathy Greenlee recently announced the awarding of grants totaling more than \$32 million to expand and support community-based programs that help promote health, independence and community living for older Americans, veterans and people with disabilities. The grants will fund a range of activities, the Community Living Program (CLP)/Veterans Directed Home and Community Based Program (VDHCBS), Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC), Alzheimer's Disease Supportive Services Program (ADSSP), and Community Innovations for Aging in Place.

“This new funding complements President Obama’s designation of 2009 as the ‘Year of Community Living,’ which supports community living options for all people with disabilities,” said U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. “These grants are important investments that will help us strengthen services in the community so that more older Americans and individuals with disabilities can remain in their homes and communities.”

To learn more about the various awards and to learn which states and organizations were selected to receive the awards, please read the entire press release at

http://www.aoa.gov/aoaroot/press_room/for_the_press/pr/archive/2009/september/09_29_09.html

Other HHS News

Flu Vaccinations Update

AoA is continuing to provide new information about flu vaccinations as it becomes available. The Center for Communicable Disease Control and Prevention within CDC adds new information to the www.flu.gov website on an ongoing basis. A September 30 addition provides answers to questions that have been raised about the timing of H1N1 vaccinations for people age of 65 and over. As noted in the document, seniors seem less susceptible to H1N1; however, if they contract this virus, the consequences can be much more serious. Please share the following website with others who are direct concerned with prevention efforts. We refer you to:

http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/vaccination/vaccine_seniors.htm

Robust Medicare Health and Drug Plan Coverage Continues in 2010; Beneficiary Protections Strengthened

Annual enrollment period begins November 15

Earlier this week, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced that Medicare beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare health and prescription drug plans will continue to have a wide range of plan options in 2010, and those beneficiaries who decide to change plans should find choosing a new plan simpler than in previous years. The same percentage of Medicare beneficiaries who have access to a Medicare Advantage plan today (99.9 percent) will have access to a Medicare Advantage plan in 2010. In addition, all Medicare beneficiaries will have many prescription drug plans from which to choose. Plan marketing begins today.

CMS encourages beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare Advantage and Medicare Prescription Drug plans to review their current health and drug plan coverage for any changes their plans may be making for 2010 before the annual enrollment period begins November 15. Beneficiaries should also remember that at no time will they lose their Medicare coverage, no matter what business decisions have been made by their Medicare Advantage or Prescription Drug Plan.

To read the entire press release, please go to <http://www.cms.hhs.gov>

For additional information from CMS on Medicare Advantage, Medicare Prescription Drug plans and the annual enrollment period for 2010, please go to the following websites:

Open Enrollment Center: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/center/openenrollment.asp>

State Drug Plan Information:

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/Partnerships/STDDrugPlanInfo/list.asp>

State Fact Sheet:

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/Partnerships/STDDrugPlanInfo/itemdetail.asp?itemID=CMS1203854>

2010 Landscape Data Files:

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/PrescriptionDrugCovGenIn>

HHS and USDA Unveil New Food Safety Consumer Website

Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack, the co-chairs of the Obama Administration's Food Safety Working Group, unveiled a new consumer website at www.foodsafety.gov

The site is designed to help consumers and families get all the latest information on food safety and food recalls in one convenient place. It also features information from all the agencies across the federal government that deal with critical food and food safety information, including preventive tips about how to handle food safely, alerts on life-saving food recalls, and the latest news from the key agencies. Consumers can sign up in one easy place to receive email and RSS alerts on recalled or potentially unsafe food and hear from the top scientific experts across the government on food safety.

To learn more about this new tool, please go to www.foodsafety.gov

AHRQ Offers New Resources to Help Keep Patients Safe and Healthy

Over the past decade, medical errors in the United States cost more than \$17 billion annually. In that same time period, each year nearly 100,000 patients have died as a result of hospital medical errors.

The Department of Health and Human Services' Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) recognizes that patient safety means more than just preventing medical errors and health care-associated infections. It means ensuring that when people seek health care, they don't end up sicker than when they started.

In its continuing effort to improve health care by helping the medical community avoid errors and preventable infections, AHRQ has developed a number of new materials to help keep patients safe and as healthy as possible. Included among these free tools are a ten minute DVD available in English and Spanish and several information guides.

The video and the guides are available at <http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/errorsix.htm>

To learn more about AHRQ, please visit its website at <http://www.ahrq.gov/>

New HHS Report Puts Spotlight on the Value of Information Technology to Health Care in Rural America

A new HHS report, *A Success Story in American Health Care: Using Health Information Technology to Improve Patient Care in a Community Health Center in Washington*, underscores the particular promise health information technology holds for rural areas.

Of the approximately 65 million Americans who live in communities with shortages of primary care providers, nearly 50 million of them live in rural areas.

The report concludes that health information technology, and specifically electronic health records, can improve health care quality and patient safety, promote care coordination and continuity, and assist in clinical decision making and the use of evidence-based guidelines.

Also noted in the report is that increased provider productivity can enable providers to help more patients in the same amount of time, and increased workplace satisfaction can encourage people to practice in those areas that need them most.

To read the report in its entirety, please go to
<http://www.healthreform.gov/reports/ruralsuccess/index.html>

HHS Awards \$46 Million in Recovery Act Funds to Create Jobs and Spur Economic Improvement

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently awarded \$46 million to 84 grantees under a new program, the Strengthening Communities Fund (SCF), created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The purpose of the grants is to improve the ability of nonprofit organizations to promote the economic recovery of people with low incomes.

To learn more about this program, please go to
<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2009pres/09/20090930d.html>

Secretary Sebelius Releases \$7.6 Million in Recovery Act Funds to Support Health Professionals Serving in High Need Areas

HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius recently announced 63 awards totaling more than \$7.6 million to help states recruit new health care clinicians and alleviate their debt burden. The funds are part of the \$500 million allotted to HHS' Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to address workforce shortages and encourage diversity in the health professions.

In making the announcement, Secretary Sebelius stated "These funds will help place full-time primary care health professionals in shortage areas and help hundreds of thousands of Americans get primary care they might not otherwise receive."

To learn more about this program, please go to
<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2009pres/09/20090930c.html>

Secretary Sebelius Awards \$40 Million to States to Find, Enroll Children in CHIP, Medicaid

HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius recently announced \$40 million in grants to 69 grantees in 41 states and the District of Columbia to help them find and enroll children who are uninsured but eligible for either Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

"Today's awards will help fulfill President Obama's pledge to assure the health and well-being of our nation's children," said Secretary Sebelius. "With millions of Americans either out of work or otherwise struggling to make ends meet during this recession, there is an even greater urgency to bring steady, reliable health care to children in these families who may have lost their coverage."

To learn more about this program, please go to
<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2009pres/09/20090930a.html>

Federal Funding Opportunities

HUD Makes \$20 Million Available for Assisted Living Conversion Program

HUD is making \$20 million available for the Assisted Living Conversion Program, a grants program for the physical conversion of some or all of the dwelling units in an eligible project into assisted living facilities for frail elderly persons.

The application deadline is November 5, 2009.

For additional information on this funding opportunity, please go to
www.hud.gov/offices/adm/grants/nofa09/alcpssec.pdf

NIH to Fund Partnerships between Academic Research Centers and Community-Based Organizations

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has announced the availability of \$30 million provided by the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) to support the development of partnerships between academic research centers and community-based organizations. This funding opportunity, developed in collaboration with the Administration on Aging (AoA), supports the development of infrastructure and staff for productive and sustainable academic-community research partnerships. The goal is to accelerate the pace, productivity, dissemination, and implementation of research translation in community-based settings by strengthening and transforming relationships between academic centers and community organizations.

Academic research centers must take the lead in applying for these grant funds, but they are required to have a full collaboration with community-based organization(s). This grant announcement gives special attention to projects that involve partnerships with HHS funded networks, including the AoA supported Aging Services Network. NIH anticipates awarding 30 or more grants with a funding maximum of \$1 million per applicant.

The deadline for Letters of Intent is November 12, 2009. The application deadline is December 11, 2009.

For additional information on this funding opportunity, please go to
<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-OD-09-010.html>

AHRQ Issues Funding Opportunity Announcement for Comparative Effectiveness Research

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) anticipates making 20 to 25 awards that together total \$29.5 million for new projects to extend the reach and impact of Comparative Effectiveness Research Reviews and associated products, particularly Comparative Effectiveness Research Summary Guides, which are prepared by the John M. Eisenberg Clinical Decisions and Communications Science Center, part of the AHRQ Effective Health Care Program.

The deadline for Letters of Intent is November 19, 2009. The application deadline is December 16, 2009.

For additional information on this funding opportunity, please go to <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-HS-10-004.html>

More Aging News

Latest NCD Report Recommends Health Care Changes for People with Disabilities

In its latest report, *The Current State of Health Care for People with Disabilities*, the National Council on Disability (NCD) focuses the nation's attention on the health care disparities experienced by people with disabilities, and provides recommendations that can help eliminate health care inequities for people with disabilities.

To access the full report, please go to <http://www.disability.gov/search/list>

Community Aging Services and Long Term Care: Two Sides of the Same Coin

There are many private, religious and government organizations across the country that provide supportive services for older people. Many of these services center around helping people stay in their homes and avoid having to go to live in an institution or perhaps move in with family. Because of the emphasis on helping people remain independent, many community aging programs could be viewed as long-term care programs. In fact it's probably just a matter of semantics; long-term care and community aging services are just two sides of the same coin. Other community services may provide socialization or training opportunities. Community aging programs might include:

For more information about community aging services, please go to the State Care Planning Councils website at http://www.longtermcarelink.net/a15state_councils.htm

Treasury Provides Answers to FAQ about Reverse Mortgages

The Department of the Treasury's Comptroller of the Currency has released a new Consumer Advisory that responds to a number of questions about reverse mortgages. The advisory is designed to help individuals who are age 62 or older, or those who are about to reach that milestone, and are considering a reverse mortgage to add to their retirement income or to meet health care or other financial needs to better understand reverse mortgages.

To read the advisory in its entirety, please go to <http://www.occ.gov/ftp/release/2009-115.htm>

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http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/Press_Room/For_The_Press/medadv/Share_Story.aspx

Conferences

Stay up to date with the latest aging meetings and conferences by visiting the AoA events calendar at:

http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/Press_Room/events/events_List_Day.aspx#title

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