

**JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE OF HEATH AND HUMAN SERVICES.
FEBRUARY 4, 2005**

Madame Chair and members of the committee, my name is Susan Kohler and I am the Area Agency on Aging Director for Missoula and Ravalli Counties. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you today.

I am here to tell you that our programs are in a funding crisis and I would like to ask you to increase your funding for Aging Services from the current 1 million to 7 million state-wide. Let me tell you why. This year, Missoula Aging Services approved a budget with a 50,000 deficit in order to maintain existing levels of service. We are out of options for increasing our revenue to not only maintain but to meet the growing demand for our services. Our approach to funding has always been through the development of partnerships including the City, County, United Way, fund raising, grants, community donations, revenue received by clients that has amounted to 1/3 of the Meals on Wheels budget, Federal and State. All of these partners have been maximized with the exception of State funding. If you look closely at the Aging Services line item you will see that after 25 years we have are only up to a little over 1 million dollars in support of our programs. Let me give you some startling facts about the growth in our two counties.

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one ~~supp~~
our Dir.
Director*
*require
match
limited
not
competitive*

Aging Services is known best for the Meals on Wheels program. Missoula County is one of the few counties that actually provide Meals on Wheels seven days a week. We utilize nearly 150 volunteers to deliver these meals. In 1990 we delivered 59,000 meals. By the end of our current fiscal year we anticipate serving 70,200 meals. This is a 20% increase in just five years. In Missoula County the 2000 census says we have 12,800 seniors who are over the age of 60 with 17% of this group being at or below the poverty level. The over 65 age group data indicates that 40% of that population has one or more disabilities. This data is already five years old. So you can see why we have had such a growth in this program.

*103-Mom
74 Daughter
50% have
no other
services*

Because good nutrition is such a vital part of healthy aging we also offer a program to low-income seniors called the Senior Diner Club. This program offers low-income seniors coupons to eat at restaurants or the senior center where we have a contract. Coupons are limited and in 2000 17,749 meals were served and at the end of this fiscal year the meal count will be 25,600. This is a 44% growth in just five years. We have had periodic waiting list for this program over the years. Before I speak about Ravalli County I want

to give you additional information on other very important services offered in Missoula County and the growth they are experiencing.

All area agencies on aging offer a service we refer to as information and assistance or the Aging Services Helpline. This program regularly collects information on available services for elders and is managed in a sophisticated data base system. In Missoula, we have over 600 services listed to help elders and their families understand services available to them. Our goal is to provide them the education they need to be good consumers as they navigate through the complexities of the long term care system. The beauty of this system is that we have no financial interest in the information we can help families develop a specific plan for their situation. We are seeing a huge increase in adult children accessing this service. In addition to local resources we are connected into a nation-wide system of Information and Assistance that can help adult children who are caring for aging parents outside the community or state.

Drug Discant

*- DRUG DISCOUNT-coalition
- WORK w/ APS - 70% self neglect
- FRAUD*

In 2000 information and assistance provided 5000 units of service. In 2005 we expect to finish the year with 8,000 units or an increase of 60%. This has been done with no additional staff.

Another service we provide financial support to is transportation. Last year our main transportation provider, Mountain Line, provided 19,000 rides on their Para transit service. This service is for persons who have been determined eligible by their physician or case worker indicating they could not access the regular public bus system. This year they will serve 20,000. This is a 9% increase in just one year.

Ok, let me tell you some facts about Ravalli County. Ravalli County is one of the 50 fastest growing counties in the United States. They have an over 60 population of 7,535 with 20% of that population at or below 100% of poverty.

Just recently, they had to cap their meals on wheels program in one of their largest communities because they were over projected meal counts and did not have the resources to support this increase. In addition, they do not have the personnel to recruit and train volunteers to keep up with the demand. Further, they can not keep good staff as they can not afford to provide health insurance to their employees. Consequently, staff ends up leaving when they can find a job that offers health insurance. Ravalli does not have the

same funding options as even Missoula. What will they do in the coming years? Based on the census the fastest growing age group in Ravalli was those 45-54 years of age. It grew by 95% from 1990 to 2000. The second fastest was the over 85 and it grew by 47%.

Ravalli County aging services is the only public transportation available to not only seniors but to the general population. They do not have enough funding to operate the number of buses needed to meet the demand of even the senior population.

Another important service we offer is our long term care ombudsman program. This program ensures that patient rights in long term care facilities are protected and gives residents and family members an outside person to mediate any conflicts or alert any licensing issues to the proper source. The proliferation of beds in long term care facilities and the growing complexity of issues that arise are beyond the current staff's capabilities of serving in an adequate manner.

of beds/Facilities
904
Hi. Homes
Facilities
4 N.
1 TCU
18 (Assisted Li.)
1, 2

Other services include homemaker, home chore, and the home maintenance programs. All of these services have a greater demand than we can serve. This does not include other services we are being asked to provide but do not have the resources to support such as sliding scale respite and non institutionalized adult day care centers.

There is much emphasis on Medicaid funding and people eligible for Medicaid are truly the lowest income seniors. Once they are eligible and receiving services they are often better off than the seniors who are between 100% and 200% above poverty. They often are more at risk than those on Medicaid. This is why services are so vital to their ability to maintain their independence and dignity.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I hope I have given you a better understanding of why we are in a crisis and how important State funding is to the aging network.

on ~~Thursday~~ wed - 47 Seniors - most Senior Corp
Prog

Senior Corp

→ Even w/ increase of funds does not deal w/ funding for the Older Montana's Trust account
- Focal Point for people to come