



Middle Alabama Area Agency on Aging

Regional Plan on Aging Fiscal Years 2018-2021

The Middle Alabama Area Agency on Aging or M4A was formed in 1989 by multi-jurisdictional agreement between the counties of Blount, Chilton, Shelby, St. Clair, and Walker. Shortly thereafter, M4A was designated as the Area Agency on Aging for these five counties. M4A is Planning and Service Area (PSA) 3 for the State of Alabama and comprises five of the six counties in the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham.

M4A's mission is to empower older individuals, people living with disabilities and their caregivers to self-advocate and to live independently and safely in the communities of their choice. M4A fulfills this mission through its various partnerships, programs, and special projects.

M4A's primary partner and funder is the Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS), the state unit on aging which receives and distributes federal funding from the Administration for Community Living (ACL). The Alabama Department of Senior Services also provides funding to the Area Agencies on Aging (or AAAs), like M4A, for SenioRx (medication assistance), Emergency Preparedness, Dementia Friendly Communities, Medicaid Waiver Programs, Information and Assistance, Long-term Services and Supports through the Aging and Disability Resource Center, the State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIP or Medicare counseling), the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), and Chronic Disease Self-Management.

M4A's other major partners are the five county governments which formed M4A and the numerous municipalities that have agreements with M4A to provide meals and other Older Americans Act (OAA) services. These agreements with municipalities for the senior nutrition sites are critical to the success of M4A's service delivery system as the local senior centers are major focal points not only for the dissemination of information and for the provision of services but also major focal points for consumer feedback and input into strengthening and changing the service delivery system.

Two significant challenges M4A faces over the next 4 years are the increase in the service population in the M4A region and the funding shortfall to keep pace with the growing older adult population. For example, the 65+ population in the M4A region is projected to grow 123% from 2010 to 2040. The state growth rate during the same time period for 65+ is 82.4%. In addition, both St. Clair County and Shelby County will have population increases in the 65+ age group that significantly outpace the state growth: St. Clair, 162.9%; and Shelby, 248.8%. Currently, the M4A region has approximately 462,289 people with approximately 22% or 101,704 people being 60+.



According to the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (or n4a), in 1980 the US Government budgeted \$9.24 for each American 65+. However, in 2010, the federal government spent only \$3.85 per American adult 65+. So, although more Americans are 65+ and more Americans are living longer with increased health care and home and community-based needs, the federal dollars to address these needs have decreased 58% in 30 years. The fact that M4A and other AAAs are heavily dependent on government funding makes us vulnerable and makes the need to innovate, change and diversify funding sources critical if we are to continue to fulfill our respective missions to serve older Americans.

Another challenge for M4A over the next couple of years is the implementation of Medicaid Managed Care under the Integrated Care Networks. M4A and the other Area Agencies on Aging (Regional Councils) in Alabama are currently undergoing transformation in order to contract with Integrated Care Networks. This transformation has created opportunities for improvement and innovation. Because most if not all the Area Agencies on Aging in the State of Alabama are heavily dependent on Medicaid funding, it is critical for M4A and other Area Agencies on Aging to, again, seek viable new funding streams. M4A has done this and will continue to do this over the next four years by examining the benefits of forming a nonprofit organization, expanding evidence-based programs including diabetes education and medical nutrition therapy to the public and private sector, emphasizing cost-share, and developing partnerships for Veterans-Directed Home and Community-Based Services. M4A will also and has also gone after additional grant funding and leveraged partnerships to increase donations of both supplies to help our clients and funding to pay for their needs.

For this Area Plan, the needs of the older individuals in the M4A region were determined by surveys, public hearing, and by recently published reports. In addition, data and statistics from the US Census Bureau and from the Administration for Community Living were used.

During FY 2017, M4A surveyed over 250 people and asked what the top senior needs were. The advantage of this survey was the number of surveys that was completed. The disadvantage of this survey was that most people surveyed were already familiar with M4A and/or consumers of M4A services. Another survey that was used to gauge the needs of older individuals in the M4A region was the EngAge report of the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham (CFGB). The advantage of this report is that it was done professionally, independently, and is statistically significant.

According to the M4A survey, the top needs of older individuals are transportation, food, money to pay for utilities, and home repairs. The EngAge report indicated that older individuals must have access to nutritious food and live in a safe home and community in order to successfully age in place. The EngAge report also indicated that only 5% of older individuals in the M4A region knew about M4A.

So, in its objectives for the next four years, M4A will address the need to increase its visibility as a no-wrong-door Aging and Disability Resource Center. In addition, M4A will develop innovative partnerships and initiatives to continue to feed older individuals, provide viable food options, examine ways to coordinate low



cost home modifications/home safety checks, and examine innovative transportation models for senior citizens. M4A will also continue to address financial or economic security of older individuals and enhance disease prevention and health promotion to improve health outcomes.

In addition to the priority areas above, the goals of M4A for this Area Plan complement those of the Alabama Department of Senior Services:

GOAL 1.0: Older adults, individuals with disabilities, and their caregivers shall have access to reliable information, helping them to make informed decisions regarding long-term supports and services.

GOAL 2.0: Empower older adults and individuals with disabilities to remain in the least restrictive environment with a high quality of life through the provision of options counseling, home and community-based services, and support for family caregivers.

GOAL 3.0: Empower older adults to stay active and healthy through Older Americans Act services, Medicare prevention benefits, recreation, job, and volunteer opportunities.

GOAL 4.0: Enable more Alabamians to live with dignity by promoting elder rights and reducing the incidents of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

GOAL 5.0: Promote proactive, progressive management and accountability of State Unit on Aging and its contracting agencies.

M4A will meet these goals and objectives working with its major partners including its County Commissions, senior centers, the Alabama Department of Senior Services and other Area Agencies on Aging, and many more. M4A will also learn from organizations that are successfully meeting the needs of rural, isolated older individuals, such as faith-based organizations and other community-based organizations. M4A will also partner with businesses in the private sector because older individuals and caregivers must be aware of private resources to meet long-term care and other needs.

The approved Area Plan for 2018-2021 is available online at: www.m4a.org. For questions regarding the plan, please contact Crystal Crim, Administrative Director, at ccrim@m4a.org.