

CHANGING SYSTEMS, CHANGING LIVES

THE FIRST ANNUAL “EXCELLENCE IN ACTION” AWARDS

On Tuesday, February 23, 2010, the Administration on Aging held its first annual Excellence in Action Awards program to formally acknowledge exceptional work performed during the past year by Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), Community Living Programs (CLPs), and Veteran-Directed Home and Community-Based Services programs. The awards were presented at the Administration on Aging/Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Service (CMS) 2010 National Grantee Conference entitled “Changing Systems, Changing Lives.”

Eligible nominees were State Units on Aging (SUAs), Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), Centers for Independent Living (CILs), State Independent Living Councils (SILC), Aging Disability Resource Centers (ADRC), Community Living Programs (CLP) and their partners or networks of these programs. Winners demonstrated exceptional commitment, creativity, leadership and success in achieving goals related to the conference theme.” Awards were given in the following categories:

- Changing Systems Award
- Changing Lives Award
- Exemplary Partnership Award

The 2010 Excellence in Action awardees:

Changing Systems Award

Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut, New Haven, Connecticut

Description of award

AoA’s vision for ADRCs, CLPs and VDHCBs programs is that they modernize long-term care service systems by promoting community living; simplifying access to information and services; informing individuals about all available long-term service options; improving the quality and capacity of services, including the long-term care workforce; and demonstrating cost-effectiveness, flexibility and strong partnerships among aging, disability and related federal, state and local service systems. Engaging in systems change is a multifaceted undertaking requiring strong and committed leadership; thorough knowledge of internal and external factors that impact long-term care services--both public and private; team-building skills that result in mutual understanding and effective working partnerships among diverse entities; and the ability to leverage new and existing resources to ensure program quality and sustainability.

Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut, New Haven, Connecticut

The AAA of South Central Connecticut (AASCC) has simultaneously piloted the CLP, ADRC and VDHCBS projects in its commitment to achieve long-term systems change in the state. The program cuts across aging and disability networks and maximizes use of diverse resources through its MOU with the local CIL, its formal Provider Service Agreement with the local Veterans Administration Medical Center and its many formal partnerships with diverse partners in aging and disability services. Coordination among various programs ensures that all clients receiving a comprehensive LTC options assessment from the ADRC are automatically screened for the Choices at Home program (the consumer-directed Cash & Counseling program) and can be seamlessly transferred to the program for services without having to undergo another assessment. AASCC is providing streamlined access to information, assistance and services using IT communications and appropriate software for effectively collecting information and tracking and monitoring clients. The program operates a consumer-directed cash and counseling program through flexible use of TitleIII-E and state-funded respite money and seeks to leverage resources and achieve sustainability through strong collaboration and partnerships. The program is working to estimate cost savings achieved through efficiencies in the service system by participants in the Choices for Care program and the ADRC consumers who received the comprehensive assessment, options counseling, and remained in the community and off Medicaid for at least six months.

Changing Lives Award

Central Texas AAA/ADRC & Alamo Service Connection/Bexar Area Agency on Aging

Description of award

ADRCs, CLPs and VDHCBS programs require grantees to engage in person-centered and consumer-directed activities that significantly impact the quality of life for older adults, people of all ages with all types of disabilities, family members, and informal and formal care providers. Changing lives requires programs to focus on people rather than programs. ADRC, CLP and VDHCBS programs and their partners are charged with engaging in activities that empower people to maximize their strengths and abilities, achieve the goals they choose, to respect and accommodate their preferences and values, to provide access to resources and services that enable them to live independently in their chosen setting, and to develop services, supports and resources that are person-centered, consumer directed and responsive to changing needs.

Central Texas AAA/ADRC, Belton, Texas

The ADRC has successfully created and leveraged diverse partnerships to bring evidence-based programming for family caregivers to the community. Not content to “rest on their laurels” Central Texas proactively searches out to develop partnerships that will help them provide community-services enabling people to live in the community of their choice. Evidence-based programs they currently offer to families are CDSM, Matter of Balance Fall Prevention, Central Texas Support Teams, REACH II, Savvy Caregiver and Care Transitions. They operate the CLP and VDHCBS programs and partner closely with the Rosalyn Carter Institute for Care giving and Scott & White Memorial Hospital to bring family care giving to the community. Data from their 2007-2009 grant project indicates a significant decrease in caregiver stress, burden and depression. Consumers benefited from less burdened caregivers.

Alamo Service Connection/Bexar Area Agency on Aging, both of San Antonio, Texas

Nominated for their leadership in bringing together diverse community organizations to respond to new and emerging challenges that affect the safety and quality of life for seniors and people with disabilities. Two key initiatives were highlighted in this nomination to demonstrate the ways in which ASC has significantly impacted people’s lives.

In response to the deaths of two elderly sisters during an extreme heat wave, the ASC, in collaboration with numerous community-service organizations both public and private, developed education and awareness campaigns and forged working relationships that enabled the community to respond rapidly to seniors and people with disabilities affected by extreme weather conditions.

Their leadership improved the safety, health and comfort of numerous seniors and people with disabilities who were coping with extreme heat. The AAA developed and conducted education and awareness campaigns about the dangers of extreme heat which is especially problematic for seniors and people with disabilities.

In another program ASC lead a community-wide initiative to ensure that seniors and people with disabilities would have safe and affordable heaters to keep them warm in the winter. ASC staff raised money and combined that with Title IIIB funds to obtain and distribute over 100 heaters to people most in need. ASC worked with faculty of a local medical school to educate and inform more than 300 seniors and individuals about the dangers of extreme heat and how to cope in extreme heat conditions.

Exemplary Partnership Award

Hawaii County Office on Aging, Hilo, Hawaii

Description of award

A distinguishing feature of ADRC, CLP and VDHCB programs is that they proactively develop partnerships with diverse organizations to improve their operations and services across the spectrum of activities that include initiatives aimed at changing systems and changing lives for older adults, people with all types of disabilities, their family members and care providers. Nominees for the “Exemplary Partnership Award” meaningfully involving diverse consumers, stakeholders and other partners in the public and private sector in planning, implementing, operating and monitoring program activities, outcomes and impacts.

Hawaii County Office on Aging

Partnerships facilitated by the Hawaii State Unit on Aging and the ADRC, including buy-in from the mayor, resulted in co-location of nine major service provider organizations that are now able to serve elderly adults, care providers, persons with disabilities and others in a single location. Through this partnership program staff was able to provide much-needed space for the CIL and to expand services. For example, a new collaboration with the University of Hawaii School of Pharmacy now enables them to provide on-site medication management without costs to the consumers. Partnering organizations at the Hilo site hold regular interdisciplinary team meetings, cross train staff and exchange information and resources. The ADRC has established high standards, through rigorous staff training, for local staff to provide exceptional customer service. Long-term benefits and additional partnerships have already occurred as the result of the co-location initiative.

Outstanding Achievement Award

Wisconsin Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources, Madison, Wisconsin

Special Recognition

Wisconsin’s State Unit on Aging first envisioned the idea of an ADRC in 1986. The “full service” approach was expanded and incorporated into the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services’ proposal for “Redesigning Wisconsin’s Long-Term Care System” in 1997. As such, Wisconsin occupies a unique position as founder of the ADRC model nationwide. Wisconsin actively embraces AoA’s vision and goals for ADRCs, including serving as trusted sources of reliable and comprehensive information about long-term services and supports; enabling individuals to assess their long-term service and support options and make informed decisions that maximize their independence and

dignity; providing “one stop” access points for assessments, eligibility determinations and enrollment into publicly-funded long-term care service systems; developing effective working partnerships and that they demonstrating cost effectiveness; and ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and continuous quality improvement in program operations. The Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources is open to sharing the “wisdom of experience” with other ADRCs as they strive to develop, implement and sustain their programs. Wisconsin ADRCs have led the way in innovative programming such as the Disability Benefit Specialist program, development of program standards for information and assistance, developing training and operational policies for options counseling, and collaborating with the Aging Network on evidence-based prevention programming and Youth Transition Services.

Background on the Nomination & Award Process: Nominations were submitted online on the Technical Assistance Exchange – ADRC website (www.adrc-tae.org) in each of the three categories. A panel with representatives from Administration on Aging, the National Council on Independent Living, the National Association of State Units on Aging, The Lewin Group and National Resource Center for Participant-Directed Services reviewed the nominations and presented their recommendations to the Administration on Aging for a final determination.

Nominees

17 nominations were received for the first annual Excellence in Action Awards: six for the Exemplary Partnerships Award; five for the Changing Lives Award; and seven for the Changing Systems Award.