

**STATE OF WISCONSIN  
BOARD ON AGING AND LONG TERM CARE  
BOARD MEETING**

**Wednesday, May 14, 2025**

**9:30 A.M.**

**In Person at:**

DoubleTree Madison East

Two Lakes Ballroom

4402 E Washington Ave

Madison WI

<b>Members Present:</b>	Dr. Marianne Bloch	Mary Bouche	Jackie Gordon
	Abigail Lowery	Tanya Meyer	Dr. Valerie Palarski
	Dr. Dale Taylor		

<b>Staff Present:</b>	Jessica Trudell	Kim Marheine	Kristen Johnson
	Nick Lutes	Rachel Selking	Jenny Novey
	Liza Morrow	Becky Mulhern	

<b>Guests Present:</b>	Cindy Ofstead	Travis Martin
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**1. Welcome and Call to Order**

Chair Dr. Valerie Palarski called the meeting to order at 9:32 am. It was noted that this meeting was properly noticed under the Open Meetings Notice Law. Board members and staff completed introductions.

**2. Change to Agenda**

There were no changes to the agenda.

**3. Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved as submitted. M/S/C (Bouche/Taylor)

**4. Approval of Minutes from February 18, 2025**

The minutes from the February 18, 2025 Executive Committee meeting were approved as presented. M/S/C (Meyer/Bloch)

The minutes from the February 18, 2025 Board Meeting were approved as presented. M/S/C (Lowery/Bloch)

**5. Office on Aging Overview** – *Cindy Ofstead, Director, Office on Aging, Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources, Wisconsin Department of Health Services*

Ms. Ofstead presented on the Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources, focusing specifically on the Office on Aging. She described its authorization and organization at the state and federal levels. She also described the roles of the Older Americans Act Programs, Adult Protection and Dementia Services, the Office for Resource Center Development, the Office for the Promotion of Independent Living, and related boards, councils, and committees.

During her presentation, Ms. Ofstead answered questions about federal and state funding for the Office on Aging, the connection between Aging & Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) and county/tribal aging units, the history of how the Coalition on Social Isolation and Loneliness was developed, and the impact of recent changes within the federal Department of Health & Human Services. She emphasized the importance of educating the public and decision-makers on the role of the Office on Aging and how it is organized.

**6. Assisted Living Expansion and Volunteer Ombudsman Program Updates** – *Liza Morrow, Volunteer Services Supervisor*

Ms. Morrow shared updates for the Volunteer Ombudsman Program, including updates on outreach efforts, volunteer recruitment and resignation, recent trainings for volunteers, and the recent presentation of the Louise Abrahams Yaffe Volunteer Award to volunteer Ed Bauer.

Ms. Morrow also presented an overview of the assisted living expansion, including the goals and results of the assisted living pilot project, the differences between assisted living and nursing homes, and the changes to the Volunteer Ombudsman Program coverage map. There was a discussion about why certain counties are not included in the program, and Ms. Morrow explained that the areas of coverage are based on the geographic location of the coordinators. Ms. Marheine added that some counties that are not included in the program do not have nursing homes.

Three counties – Eau Claire, Chippewa, and Clark – will now be covered by the new Resident Advocacy Specialist position as part of the Inclusa Foundation grant that was received in September. Ms. Morrow described the role of the Resident Advocacy Specialist position, which combines the strengths of volunteer coordinators and ombudsmen. The project position was approved by the Joint

Finance Committee on April 4 and recruitment is underway. Ms. Morrow answered questions about how volunteer training will work in those counties, if there are plans for expanding to other counties, and if assisted living facilities would be included.

**7. Older Americans Act Performance System (OAAPS) Report** – *Kim Marheine, State Long Term Care Ombudsman. Ombudsman Program Updates* – *Becky Mulhern, Ombudsman Services Supervisor, and Rachel Selking, Asst. Ombudsman Services Supervisor*

Ms. Marheine provided an update on the annual OAAPS report and systems advocacy. She presented historical reminders of the Ombudsman Program and Wisconsin's advocacy timeline, an overview of OAAPS requirements and components, and highlights from FFY 2024 data. She described how volunteer, Family Care, and IRIS activities are captured within the OAAPS report, and she shared trends within nursing home, assisted living, and community settings. Ms. Marheine additionally updated the Board on the Federal Minimum Staffing Standards Rule, systems advocacy strategies and obstacles, Wisconsin priorities, and new or upcoming resources.

Ms. Marheine answered questions related to the structure of Ombudsman Programs in other states, conflict training resolution for volunteers, the reception that ombudsman and volunteers experience when visiting facilities, and the method for prioritizing work.

Following her presentation, Ms. Mulhern and Ms. Selking presented on the roles and responsibilities of the Ombudsman Program. They shared an overview of ombudsman duties, ombudsman training and certification, best practices, and recent trends. There was a discussion about how the minimum training requirements were established, and Ms. Mulhern and Ms. Selking answered questions about the difference between IRIS and Family Care and how ombudsmen handle complaints reported by legal guardians.

**8. Comments from the public**

Chair Dr. Valerie Palarski called for public comments. There were no comments from members of the public.

**9. Medigap Helpline Program Updates** – *Nick Lutes, Medicap Helpline Services Supervisor*

Mr. Lutes provided an update on the Medigap program, including the status of personnel, Medigap helpline data reporting, education and outreach, and Medicare and related insurance trends. He noted that ACL now requires website hits to be included in outreach reporting, which is why the number of individuals reached is significantly higher in this quarter compared to last quarter.

Following his presentation, there was a discussion on Medicare's newly-negotiated drug prices and which drug prices are being reduced.

**10. Executive Report: Administrative and Budget Updates** – *Kristen Johnson, Counsel to the Board; Kim Marheine, State Long Term Care Ombudsman; and Jessica Trudell, Executive Director*

Attorney Johnson shared a high-level overview of the federal budget process and the current status of that process and the budget reconciliation bill, which would include potential funding cuts related to Medicaid, the SNAP program, and the Affordable Care Act.

Ms. Marheine discussed the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, the federal changes to the Administration for Community Living, the timeline of potential threats to Medicaid, and the work that the Board on Aging and Long Term Care has done, in conjunction with a coalition from Wisconsin, in light of these changes and potential challenges.

Ms. Trudell provided an overview of the agency's budget and funding sources, including the impact of proposed federal funding cuts and the action that is being taken by the management team to identify areas of cost savings and plan for any potential funding limitations.

Following their report, there was a discussion on the importance of outreach from constituents, visibility within the legislature, how to respond to questions about potential fraud in Medicaid, and the background of how the Administration for Community Living was established.

**11. Action** – *Approval of Official Board Messaging and Template Documents Related to Program Operations and Budget*

The Board reviewed and approved official board messaging and a template letter to send to federal legislators on behalf of the Board on Aging and Long Term Care regarding federal funding for the State Long Term Care Ombudsman Program and the State Health Insurance Assistance Program. M/S/C (Lowery/Bouche)

**12. Board Business** – *Dr. Valerie Palarski, Chair*

- **Other topics or presenters Board members would like at future meetings**

Ms. Lowery proposed scheduling a future presentation on how the Ombudsman program handles complaints when working with guardians or legal decision-makers.

Attorney Johnson suggested adding a future agenda item to discuss the board meeting format, including switching some future meetings to a virtual format.

Ms. Ofstead recommended inviting Helen Sampson from the Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources to a future meeting to discuss the Coalition on Social Isolation and Loneliness.

- **Other issues to come before the Chair**

Attorney Johnson informed the Board that all Board Members' email addresses will be released as part of a recent open records request. She reminded the Board of best practices related to open records requests and responding to inquiries from members of the public.

- **Next meeting dates**

August 13<sup>th</sup>, November 5<sup>th</sup>

**12. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m. M/S/C (Lowery/Meyer)

Respectfully submitted,  
Jenny Novey, Recorder