Health Policy
NEWSLETTER

Vol. 25, No. 3 | **SUMMER 2012**

Health Policy Forums

Pennsylvania's Aging Initiatives: Planning for the Future

Brian Duke, MBE
Secretary of Aging
Pennsylvania Department of Aging

May 9, 2012

The May Health Policy Forum featured Brian Duke, Secretary of Aging for the Pennsylvania Department of Aging (PDA). Secretary Duke was nominated for this position by Governor Tom Corbett in February 2011. Duke has an extensive history working within the aging field and has previously held positions such as Director of the Bucks County Area Agency on Aging; Executive Director of the New Jersey Foundation for Aging; Consultant, US Administration on Aging and the AARP; and Director of Geriatric Program Initiatives with the Institute of Aging of the University of Pennsylvania Health System. He began his career as a hospital administrator for Thomas Jefferson University.

Secretary Duke first shared the mission of the Department of Aging: *Enhancing the quality of life of all older Pennsylvanians by empowering diverse communities, the family and the individual.* He identified two main goals: prevention and protection.

Prevention focuses on instability in health and well-being through assessment, service care coordination, nutrition programs, transportation, and Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE and PACEnet). Health and wellness programs such as Primetime Health, Healthy Steps, and Chronic Disease Self-Management are also included. Advocacy for consumers of long-term care and community partnerships are key components of prevention. The goal of protection also covers protection from abuse, which includes safeguarding the rights of residents in facilities.

Secretary Duke explained some important demographics in Pennsylvania. He characterized the state as the 4th grayest state in the nation, with more than 300,000 residents over the age of 85 and 22% of the population age 60 and over. Based on census data, it is projected that Pennsylvania's age 60+ population will increase by 1.04 million from 2010 to 2030. With the older population growing rapidly (including aging baby boomers), this larger population of older Americans will be more racially diverse and better educated compared to previous generations.

What are the implications of the increase in the aging population? Duke explained how Americans are living longer with more complex conditions and disabilities. This means that more Americans will be eligible for Medicare which, in turn, affects Medicare spending costs. Older adults tend to have chronic conditions (i.e. heart disease, diabetes, arthritis), and access healthcare more than younger adults.

Secretary Duke went on to discuss some of the department's programs and services. In Pennsylvania, there are 52 area agencies on aging. Pharmaceutical assistance (through PACE) provides prescriptions for over 520,000 older adults. The average person served by the PDA is a woman over the age of 80 who is widowed.

In the future Secretary Duke envisions more collaborations and, in particular, partnerships with academic centers. He wants to make sure that research is translated to practice and that best practices are identified and understood. Duke is committed to ensuring that Pennsylvanians will age and live well *and* communities are places to age and live well.

For more information on the Pennsylvania Department of Aging visit: http://www.aging.state.pa.us