Assisted Living Advisory Council (ALAC) Meeting Minutes
March 23rd, 2021
10:00 am
\*The meeting was held virtually via WebEx\*

ALAC members: Ryan Ambrose – DHCD, Brian Danaher, Steven Ellsweig, Kim Martone, and May Shields.
EOEA staff: Secretary Chen, Matt Casey, Siobhan Coyle, Trisha Marchetti, and William A. Travascio.
Presenters: Carolyn Fenn, State Long-Term Care Ombudsman and Director of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program – EOHHS, and Donna Bucca, Director of the Assisted Living Ombudsman program – EOHHS.

1. Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 am by EOEA Secretary Elizabeth Chen.
2. Welcome and Introductions
3. Approval of the Minutes:

The minutes from the last few Assisted Living Advisory Council meetings were presented and approved by all those members of the Council present. The minutes that were approved were from the following meetings:
- December 19th, 2019
- August 21st, 2020
- September 22nd, 2020
- December 14th, 2020
4. EOEA Updates:

Secretary Chen noted that this is May Shield’s last ALAC meeting. She is retiring after more than a decade on the Council. She has been an invaluable member and her tenure has been greatly appreciated. EOEA will be sending her a citation to thank her for her years of service. The citation reads:

*In recognition of over ten years of service to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a member of the Assisted Living Advisory Council (ALAC). The Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) offers its sincere appreciation for your tireless dedication to supporting and advocating for older adults, people living with disabilities, family and professional caregivers, and the Assisted Living community. EOEA would also like to extend our gratitude for your over two decades of commitment to the aging services network and wishes you a happy and healthy retirement.*

Trisha Marchetti, Director of Assisted Living Certification – EOEA, noted that the Annual Aggregate Data report for 2019 has been posted on EOEA’s website: <https://www.mass.gov/lists/annual-assisted-living-residence-alr-data-reports>

The 2020 Annual Aggregate Data report will also be going up on the website shortly as well. EOEA is planning to resume in-person assisted living certification visits. She added that they will be done in a way to ensure the safety of staff and residents. Once a plan has been developed, it will be communicated out to the network. Secretary Chen congratulated Trisha and her team for all the work they have done throughout the pandemic. The Secretary noted she receives daily updates from Trisha’s team of the number of COVID positive cases in ALRs, she also sits on frequent calls with ALR EDs, Local Boards of Health, and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. This work proves that you can be a regulator and a good partner.
5. LTC Ombudsman Presentation:

Carolyn Fenn, State Long-Term Care Ombudsman and Director of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program – EOHHS, gave an overview of the LTC Ombudsman program. She noted that over the next 9 months, the Assisted Living Ombudsman role within the LTC Ombudsman program will be expanded. Donna Bucca will be elevated to Director of the AL Ombudsman program. The goal is to hire and train 4 regional AL specialists in April, who will be placed around the state. The state would be broken down into approximately 5 regions. The hope is to start visits in May with a plan for volunteer recruitment to be released in October.

Carolyn noted that the goal of the Assisted Living Ombudsman is to receive, investigate and work to resolve problems so that Residents can live their lives with dignity and respect. The Assisted Living Ombudsman acts as a mediator and advocate for residents. Information is provided to assist the Resident in resolving the issue on their own. If necessary, and with permission of the resident, the Ombudsman will intervene on their behalf.

The initial contact with the Ombudsman is usually by telephone. Calls are placed by residents, family members, other professionals involved with the resident’s care, and others. If the caller is the resident, the Ombudsman will work with the resident to determine what their goals are and how they can be of assistance in achieving resolution to their concern. With the resident’s permission the ombudsman will contact the AL to gather further information, make the resident’s concern known to them, and begin working towards a resolution.

If the caller is not the resident than the Ombudsman will try to determine the relationship of the caller to the resident, and the condition of the resident. If the resident is capable of making decisions, the Ombudsman program will inquire what their concerns and goals are independent of the caller. If the resident shares the caller’s complaints or concerns, the Ombudsman will seek permission to intervene. If the resident is unable to give permission, the Ombudsman will look for a legally appointed substitute decision-maker, such as a POA, activated HCP, or guardianship. In situations where there is no legally appointed substitute decision maker, but the caller has been acting on the resident’s behalf, the program would work with the ALR and the caller to resolve the situation on the resident’ behalf.

The program can also assist residences by communicating to residents and their caregivers the limitations of ALRs. The members of the Council are welcome to reach out to the Ombudsman program should they have any questions.

Carolyn also noted that once the regional hiring managers are in place there will be a mailing, so that facilities in those regions know who their regional specialist is.

Several ALAC members and guests applauded the Governor’s and the Legislature’s investment in this program. They look forward to working with the new field specialists.
6. Industry Updates:

Brian Doherty, President & CEO of Mass-ALA, noted the success of the Federal Pharmacy Partnership Program (FPPP). As of last week, the uptake among ALR residents is 98% and among staff it is 78%. More third clinics are scheduled to take place. Mass-ALA is proud of all the assisted living providers in the Commonwealth. A lot of work was done to overcome vaccine hesitancy by educating residents and staff about the benefits of getting vaccinated.

Brian added that EOEA recently sent out updated consolidated guidance, which lays the ground work for reopening. This will allow residents to be more socially engaged with each other and visitors.

Secretary Chen thanked all the operators of assisted living residences for their efforts, she noted that there is a lot of behind the scenes organizing that has gone into hosting vaccine clinics. She added that there is more work to do with staff, she hoped that operators continue to encourage their staff to get vaccinated.

Elissa Sherman, President – LeadingAge Massachusetts, noted that there is a sense of optimism now across the network. She thanked Joe Carella from the Scandinavian Living for getting 100% of their staff vaccinated.
7. Other items for discussion:

None.
8. Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 10:39 am. The next meeting will be held Tuesday, June 22nd, 2021 at 10:00 am.