Assisted Living Advisory Council (ALAC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 27th, 2022
10:00 AM
\*The meeting was held virtually via Zoom\*

ALAC members: Donna Bucca, EOHHS (experienced technical issues during the meeting), Mary Jo Boynton, Nicole Breslin, Matt Salmon, and David Santos.
EOEA staff: Secretary Elizabeth Chen, Assistant Secretary Carole Malone, Matt Casey, Michelle Carter, Trisha Marchetti, and William A. Travascio.

1. Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 AM by Secretary Chen.
2. Welcome and Introductions:

Secretary Chen thanked members of the Council, stakeholders, and members of the public for attending.
3. Approval of the Minutes:

The minutes from the June 28th, 2022 meeting were presented and approved by all those present.
4. EOEA Updates:

Secretary Chen encouraged people to receive their COVID-19 booster and flu shots, as it will help keep people safe around the holidays. There are over 800 retail sites around the state that someone can get their vaccines. In addition, the State can administer the vaccinations in the home if someone is unable to travel. Currently, the only booster available is the updated booster. The Secretary asked if any ALR has trouble organizing a booster clinic for their resident and staff, to please let EOEA know. Residents can receive the both the flu shot and the updated booster at the same time.

The Secretary noted Landmark at Longwood in the Mission Hill neighborhood of Boston is in the process of closing, their last day in operation as an ALR will be October 5th. There are still residents in need of a place in the community. She asked Council members to reach out to the Long-Term Care Ombudsman if you know of a place willing to take those on SCO or PACE plans.

Matt Casey, General Counsel – EOEA, noted that EOEA filed emergency regulations on September 7th to extend the notice requirement period for when an ALR closes. Previously, it was 90 days and now that has been extended to 120 days for all future closures. Since they are emergency regulations, they went into effect upon filing. However, EOEA does need to file a notice of compliance with the Secretary of State’s office. As part of that, a hearing will be held on October 27th at 10:00 AM. Everyone is invited to attend the hearing, in addition testimony can be sent to Siobhan Coyle, EOEA’s Deputy General Counsel & Legislative Liaison. If no changes need to be made, then the regulation will become permanent. The hearing notification along with the edited version of the regulations will be posted on EOEA’s website.

Trisha Marchetti, Director of Assisted Living Certification – EOEA, noted that Mary Ellen Heine has been hired by EOEA to fill the open Assisted Living Clinical Lead position. In addition, the ALR Certification Team has been working on an updated Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) to address communications logs and incident reporting.
5. Industry Updates:

Matt Salmon mentioned two Salmon Health and Retirement properties had certification visits. He thanked the ALR Certification Team for the level of communication before, during, and after the site visit. He added that after the visits he received an invoice for the two visits that had to be paid within 10 days. He noted a 10 day turn around might be difficult for some operators. He added that COVID-19 cases will likely go up now that we are heading into the fall, however he felt that operators now have a better sense of how to respond when outbreaks happen. Increased visitation is also leading to an increase in cases, and visitors are encouraged to wear masks at ALRs. All families have received communications noting that they should not visit if they are not feeling well.

Nicole Breslin noted a balance her team has struck is that visitors can dine with their loved one, but in a separate area, not in the main dining room. That way if there is an exposure, it is the loved one and not another residents. With respect to planning around the holidays, if Youville Place holds a holiday party, guests will be asked to take a COVID-19 test before they step into the party. This was done for a similar event, when Youville Place celebrated 25 years in operation last summer.
6. Updates from Consumer Members:

Mary Jo Boynton echoed what Matt Salmon said, outbreaks in ALRs are a huge challenge. It is important to keep buildings open for visitation, but also maintain safety. She felt that sometimes visitors can be lax. Masks and proper air circulation works.

David Santos agreed, anything operators can do to mitigate risk is important. He noted how unbeneficial closed dining rooms and no visitation was for the mental health of residents during the height of the pandemic. He felt that staffing has stabilized, he thanked operators for their work in retaining staff.

The Secretary asked if it is helpful when EOEA writes letters to ALR residents and their families about COVID-19 precautions. Matt Salmon felt having those communications is important, as it demonstrates to families that the precautions the residences are taking is the right thing to do.
7. State Assigned Seats:

No updates.
8. Comments from Visitors:

Elissa Sherman, President of LeadingAge Massachusetts, appreciated the FAQ going out. She noted that LeadingAge MA held a meeting recently and there were a lot of questions about incident reporting. LeadingAge at the national level is celebrating [National Workforce Development Month](https://mailchi.mp/8186772c2e5b/yvvjz1uvnc). The purpose is to celebrate caregivers and other workers in aging services.

Brian Doherty, President & CEO of Mass-ALA, noted there have been no issues experienced by Mass-ALA members scheduling or hosting COVID-19 booster clinics. He noted the State’s Paxlovid phone line has been an important tool, residents often get a call back within 30 minutes by a nurse. In addition, Mass-ALA has updated their Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement toolkit and held its first ever training on how to use it in ALRs. Over 70 ALR staff members attended the 7-hour training. Staffing is still the top issue many ALRs have, Mass-ALA will also be launching a public awareness campaign in October to highlight careers in ALRs.

No other comments from visitors.
9. Other items for discussion:

Bill Travascio, Council Secretary – EOEA, noted that the December Council meeting will fall on December 6th or 13th. He added that the Governor’s office has extended the appointment of public members of the Council through to July 12th, 2023.
10. Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 10:39 AM. The next meeting will be held on a Tuesday in December at a date to be announced.