



LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR
DARYL G. PURPERA, CPA, CFE

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GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF ELDERLY AFFAIRS

The Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs could be a better advocate for the elderly in the state if it had an executive director and could tailor the data it collects to ensure money is being spent on programs that benefit senior citizens in need, according to a report released Monday by Legislative Auditor Daryl Purpera.

The office's last executive director resigned in 2012. The performance audit said that while federal law requires state offices on aging "serve as a visible leader and advocate for the elderly," the Louisiana office "could better manage if it had an executive director."

The report said that in the 2013 fiscal year Councils on Aging in the state assessed 25,948 individuals as having high nutritional risks, including individuals who ate fewer than two meals a day or lacked sufficient types of food. However, 34 percent of them – 8,815 – "did not receive a nutrition related service although they were assessed as high nutritional risk" the report said.

The state auditor's report also said that GOEA should require all 64 parish Councils on Aging to standardize their management practices so the agency can better compare administrative costs and other indicators of efficiency. Auditors compared administrative costs to total funding and found that the administrative overhead ranged from 0.03 percent at the Ascension Parish Council on Aging to 81.8 percent for the Iberville Parish COA for fiscal year 2013.

The report also points out that the state faces "a number of challenges" in how it delivers services to its aging population, including "gaps in data management practices, the lack of funding especially in rural areas with poor tax bases, and the increase in the population needing services."

Although the agency collects data on services provided and the demographics of recipients, it does so mainly for compliance with federal reporting. The data system, known as the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) could also be used to better identify the needs of the elderly and whether its services are meeting their intended goal – "to help elderly individuals remain in the community and to prevent nursing home or other institutional placement."

The report also indicated that state and federal funding for services for the elderly have remained flat for the last four years. GOEA allocates a minimum of \$12,000 a year to each parish's operations then dispenses other funds based on a formula that takes into account factors such as the number of citizens older than 60 and older than 75, the size of the parish, the number of individuals over 60 who are in poverty-based areas on federal data.



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Other factors that “may better target social need” – such as the number of minority elderly, their level and type of disability, or whether the senior lives alone or with a family member – are not included, although other states use them. It recommended that the funding formula be re-evaluated by GOEA to consider “additional or alternative factors” to better allocate funding to parishes with the greatest needs.

“The unique structure of the aging network (in the state) and the environment in which it was created resulted in a larger network of entities with unclear roles and responsibilities,” the report said. Louisiana’s structure is different from other states because local councils can function as both the AAAs and service provider, which sets up the potential for conflicts of interest.

The report said that Louisiana has the third-most federal Area Agencies on Aging – 36 – in the nation, largely because the Councils on Aging can operate in both capacities.

For more information, contact:

Daryl G. Purpera, CPA, CFE
Legislative Auditor
225-339-3800

On Twitter: Report takes look at management and oversight of state’s elderly network.