

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR HEARING OF COMMITTEE ON DEFICIT
REDUCTION**

March 10, 2009

Submitted by Shawnee Alliance for Seniors

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony from Shawnee Alliance for Seniors, a division of Shawnee Health Service and Development Corporation, on the Illinois Budget Deficit Reduction. For twenty-six (26) years, Shawnee Alliance for Seniors has been providing services to older adults in southernmost Illinois (lower thirteen counties). Shawnee Alliance is a case coordination unit and elder abuse provider agency. Shawnee Alliance provided services to 9,498 of the 59,199 older adults living in our thirteen county area during FY08 (16.04% of all persons age 60+).

The older adults served through the Shawnee case coordination units and elder abuse program are frail and vulnerable. They depend on the services provided for their health, safety, and ability to remain in their own home. These services provide for their necessary daily living tasks which enable them to remain in their homes and to protect them from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Shawnee Alliance for Seniors recommends continued priority be given to the following programs:

- **Comprehensive Care Coordination through the Case Coordination Units.** Case Coordination Units assist older adults through comprehensive care by assessing the needs, prescreening before a nursing home placement, and arranging for services and programs which enable older adults to remain home or return to their home following a nursing home placement. Shawnee Alliance for Seniors provided Comprehensive Care Coordination Services to over 5,037 older adults during FY08.
- **Elder Abuse and Neglect Program.** Shawnee Alliance for Seniors received 831 reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation during FY08. This represents an incidence reporting rate of 14.05. The statewide incidence reporting rate is 5.48. We are well aware of the significance of the elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation problem in southern Illinois.
- **Community Care Program.** The Homemaker, Emergency Home Response Systems, and Adult Day Services provide essential daily and safety needs for the most frail of our communities' older adults. Without these services they will be forced to reside in nursing homes in order to have their essential needs met.

- Long Term Care Ombudsman Program. The Ombudsman Program provides advocacy on behalf of nursing home residents. They provide them with a voice to resolve complaints and assure their rights as residents in licensed care facilities in Illinois. Persons in a nursing continue to be in need of advocacy and many have no ability or family to speak on their behalf.

Controlling cost and establishing priorities for funding is imperative for Illinois. Services being provided to older adults which enable them to remain in their own home and not enter a nursing are cost effective and provide a more long term cost savings for the State and for Medicaid. The community based long term care system in Illinois has proven to be extremely cost effective for the State of IL. Older adults want to remain in their community residence, as will we. As you work to establish priorities, assure the funding necessary to provide care, support the health and welfare, and protect older adults as they strive to remain in their own home. Do not cut funds to services which are absolutely essential in preventing inappropriate or premature nursing home placement. Do not cut funding to programs which protect older adults.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.

Carol Aronson
Director
Shawnee Alliance for Seniors