

Comments to Area Agency on Aging Board - Legislative Committee – 11/12/2008

My name is Fred Buhr and I am president and CEO of Metasteward LLC. I live at 6112 Exchange Street, McFarland, Wisconsin.

I have lived in Dane County since 1970, moving here when I accepted a position with the (then) Division of Family Services (DFS), as a Social Services Planning Specialist. I have been a social worker since 1963 and was one of the first group of planning specialists to be hired, by the newly formed DFS after the Wisconsin State government was streamlined, and the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) was created under the Kellett reorganization bill of 1967.

During the early 1970's, DHSS was a comprehensive umbrella organization, headed by a part time citizen board. DHSS then contained a number of divisions including (among others): Health, Mental Hygiene, Corrections, Family Services (composed of the former Department of Public Assistance and the Division for Children and Youth), Vocational Rehabilitation and a Division on Aging. The Board of Health and Social Services appointed the secretary who served at its pleasure. The Department became a cabinet agency in 1976 with secretaries, from that point, appointed by the Governor.

During the 1970's and early 1980's, "state supervised - county administered" social services were implemented according to a coherent goal oriented framework that included County Plans for Social Services (1972), the Computer Reporting Network (CRN) in 1973, and Community Aids in 1978. Older Americans Act (OAA) programs were established in the latter part of the 1960's and early 1970's as programs having a separate funding mechanism and were not included in Community Aids.

In the 1990's and 2000's, I participated as a member of the Center for Uniformity, Security and Privacy (CUSP) in the planning and implementation of the Health Insurance Accountability and Portability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) in the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) and established a data stewardship program intended to include all 450 (or so) databases in DHFS. The SAMS system data elements, probably because of the separate funding stream under OAA, were not included in the definitions of data elements (catalogued in a metadata registry) that were, by Department policy, adopted for all DHFS databases.

In January, 2008, as a volunteer data entry operator, I received instructions relating to entering nutrition assessment information for individuals into the SAMS system. I tested entry of the information into my own record and had a visceral reaction that my privacy was being invaded. I sent an email to the originators of the mandate in the Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources (BADR) requesting that they cite the authority for the mandate. Since that time, I have only received a general answer that the mandate is required by the federal government.

The decision item narrative for Family Care Expansion (DIN 5711) indicates that the functional screen tool for setting capitation rates must be converted because the current platform uses outdated technology. Because the SAMS nutrition screening tool is used to assess over a hundred thousand seniors and disabled each year, some of whom will participate in Family Care, COP, Partnership, or CIP, I am bringing the tool to the attention of this committee as the worst example of an assessment process that I have ever seen produced by a state or local agency and one that needs to be changed.

Because of the OAA funding constraints, I would suggest that the Department of Health Services (DHS) consider providing additional funding and support to BADR in constructing a screening tool and assessment process that would meet the standards set by DHS' other screening tools, as a part of its expansion plans for Family Care.

I would urge this legislative committee to review the nutritional screening form and request that DHS provide the necessary funding to develop a nutrition screening tool that would be on par with the other screening tools developed by DHS.

Thank you.