

NEWSLETTER



WINTER 2026

VOL. 1

Welcome

Welcome to the first NCAOA newsletter. This quarterly update will share highlights from across North Carolina's aging network, including programs, policy updates, and opportunities to connect and learn.

Each issue will spotlight innovative work, share timely information, and provide updates that are relevant to professionals and partners serving older adults. We hope this newsletter serves as a helpful resource and strengthens collaboration as we work together to support older adults across the state.



Meet the NCAOA Board of Directors



Sandy Pace
President



Steve Hahn
Vice-President



Brad Allen
Treasurer



Leslee Breen
Secretary

Board Members

Ron Bellini • Suzanne Lafollette-Black • Annette Eubanks • Thessia Everhart-Roberts
Katie Kucher • Kristen Perry • Sandra Phelps • Brian Roberts • Janice Tyler



Greetings from the NCAOA President

Sandy Pace, Retired Director of the Virginia S. Tillett Community Center in Dare County

Welcome to the first edition of NCAOA's quarterly newsletter! On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am excited to introduce this new way to connect, inform, and strengthen collaboration across North Carolina's aging network.

This newsletter will serve as a space to share updates, highlight member work, and keep you informed about issues and opportunities impacting aging services across the state.

The North Carolina Association on Aging (NCAOA) supports professionals, organizations, and advocates serving older adults through education, networking, advocacy, and shared resources. Membership offers access to policy updates, professional development, conferences, peer connections, and a statewide platform to share innovative work.

Whether you are a long-time member or new to NCAOA, we invite you to stay engaged, share your work, and consider joining or renewing your membership.

Together, we are stronger advocates for North Carolina's older adults and those who serve them.



Annual Conference Update: Spring 2027

After thoughtful consideration, the North Carolina Association on Aging Annual Conference will pause for one year and return in Spring 2027.

This pause allows NCAOA to plan a strong and meaningful conference experience that reflects the needs of our members and the evolving aging network.

During this time, NCAOA will continue to support members through ongoing opportunities for connection, learning, and engagement.

We appreciate your continued support and look forward to welcoming you back in Spring 2027.



Join Us. Stay Connected. Make an Impact.

NCAOA's strength comes from its members. We encourage you to join or renew your membership, share this newsletter with colleagues, and become an active part of North Carolina's aging network. Your involvement helps ensure that aging services professionals have a strong, unified voice, access to timely information, and opportunities to learn from one another.

By joining the North Carolina Association on Aging, you are investing in your own professional growth and the future of aging services across our state. To join or renew your membership, visit www.ncaoa.org.

What's Happening in Aging in North Carolina

Advocacy & Policy Updates

Across North Carolina, aging service providers continue to advocate for strong federal and state funding to support nutrition, transportation, in-home services, and caregiver programs.

With continued uncertainty around federal budgets, NCAOA encourages members to stay engaged with their legislators and share the real-world impact these programs have on older adults in their communities.

This quarter, we are also monitoring implementation of the new Medicare drug pricing reforms and the Part D out-of-pocket spending cap, both of which represent major policy wins for older adults.

Nutrition & Wellness Highlights

Senior nutrition programs across the state are exploring ways to incorporate more fresh fruits and vegetables and healthier options into congregate and home-delivered meals without increasing costs. As part of this effort, NCAOA Advisory Board members are offering input on menu improvements that balance nutrition standards, affordability, and client satisfaction.

These efforts align with a growing focus on wellness, chronic disease prevention, and food security for North Carolina's aging population.

Transportation & Access to Care

Transportation remains one of the greatest challenges facing older adults, particularly in rural communities. Agencies across the state continue to leverage 5310 and other funding streams to expand service areas, replace aging vehicles, and address waitlists.

NCAOA will continue to share best practices and funding opportunities to help local programs improve access to medical appointments, nutrition sites, and essential services for older adults statewide.

Workforce & Volunteer Spotlight

Aging service providers across North Carolina continue to face workforce and volunteer recruitment challenges, yet dedicated staff and volunteers show up every day to support older adults with meals, transportation, in-home services, and social connection.

As agencies adapt, many are exploring flexible scheduling, new community partnerships, and creative recognition efforts. By sharing these ideas statewide, NCAOA hopes to strengthen and sustain the aging services workforce.

NCAOA will highlight innovative strategies and successful programs in future newsletters that strengthen and sustain the aging services workforce.

Did You Know?

- **Nearly 1 in 5 North Carolinians will be age 65+ by 2030.**
- **Transportation is consistently ranked as one of the top barriers to aging in place.**
- **Senior nutrition programs often serve as the first line of wellness checks for isolated older adults.**



Upcoming Dates to Watch

February–March: Agencies begin preparing for FY27 budgets and grant renewals

Spring 2026: Medicare Part D drug pricing reforms continue rolling out

May: Older Americans Month – plan now for recognition events and outreach

Speaker Hall Launches New Committee to Examine Property Tax Reform

Recently, North Carolina House Speaker Destin Hall announced the formation of the House Select Committee on Property Tax Reduction and Reform, tasked with delivering meaningful relief for homeowners statewide.

The committee will examine the drivers of rising local property taxes and explore practical ways to reduce the burden on homeowners without undermining local services. This includes reviewing relief programs, revaluation practices, constitutional flexibility for counties, and local spending and debt trends that affect assessments.

Working with experts in government, finance, and property valuation, the committee will develop recommendations and potential legislation ahead of the 2026 short session.

The 23 state representatives on the committee are:

Co-Chairs: Julia Howard (R-Davie), Mitchell Setzer (R-Catawba), Erin Paré (R-Wake)

Vice-Chairs: Brian Echevarria (R-Cabarrus), Neal Jackson (R-Moore)

Members: Jonathan Almond (R-Cabarrus), Tricia Cotham (R-Mecklenburg), Keith Kidwell (R-Beaufort), Larry Potts (R-Davidson), Dennis Riddell (R-Alamance), Mike Schietzelt (R-Wake), Harry Warren (R-Rowan), Sam Watford (R-Davidson), Diane Wheatley (R-Cumberland), Jeff Zenger (R-Forsyth), Eric Ager (D-Buncombe), Becky Carney (D-Mecklenburg), Maria Cervania (D-Wake), Carla Cunningham (D-Mecklenburg), Frances Jackson (D-Cumberland), Abe Jones (D-Wake), Nasif Majeed (D-Mecklenburg), Brian Turner (D-Buncombe)



Changes to the North Carolina Senior Center Certification Program

The current North Carolina Senior Center Operations and Program Evaluation (SCOPE) certification program will discontinue effective January 1, 2026. The Division of Aging is excited to share that a new certification program will be launched under the name Pillars of Excellence (NC P.O.E.). This is a model that highlights quality standards, leadership, innovation, and measurable community impact.

The NC P.O.E. program will improve upon the SCOPE model by:

- Shifting from a retrospective 5-year review period to a forward looking 3-year cycle
- Introducing scoring rubrics to promote transparency and reduce subjectivity
- Emphasizing engagement in an ongoing, continual improvement process in all aspects of senior center operations, services, and programming.

Centers will demonstrate their unique strengths in five foundational areas or "pillars" of excellence: Engagement, Impact, Quality, Adaptability and Sustainability demonstrating their engagement in a process of continuous quality improvement.

More information will be shared as the evaluation and development processes continue and a detailed formal announcement about the new program and transition will be shared once all the details have been finalized.

Senior Center of the Year Nominations Now Being Accepted

The North Carolina Senior Center Alliance, NCSCA, is now accepting nominations for the 2026 10th Annual Ann Johnson Senior Center of the Year Award & Grant for Excellence in the Field of Aging, in honor of Ann Johnson and her dedication, hard work, and vision that helped pave the way for seniors and those who work with older adults. The NCSCA is excited to see what programming and initiatives your Senior Centers accomplished!

This year's award winner will receive an award plaque and a grant check for \$300.00

Senior Center's eligibility – Senior Centers that have a current active membership with the NCSCA and have not received an award in the past three years. If you are not certain if your Center is eligible, contact your parent organization or the NC Senior Center Alliance at Weyland Prebor using the information at the end of this article.

To Nominate a Senior Center

For questions contact Weyland Prebor at 828-659-0823 or email wprebor@mcdowellseniorcenter.org with

[Nomination Form](#)

Covering the center performance period of January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025, nominations will be rated on the following criteria:

- Creation of innovative approaches to enhance and expand direct services to older adults in the community.
- Delivery of high-quality programs and dedicated staff
- Providing strong leadership and organizational management to their organization and the aging network
- Notable contributions which address and elevate issues important to the field of aging
- Positively impacting seniors and the community through advocacy or other methods

The NCSCA will accept nominations through Friday, February 13, 2026. The winner will be determined and notified by Monday, March 31, 2026.

Past Ann Johnson Award Members Include:

2025 - Siler City Center for Active Living

2024 - Rufty-Holmes Senior Center

2023 - Garner Senior Center

2022 - Davidson County Senior Services Lexington Senior Center

Senior Center Alliance Steering Committee Elects New Chair



At the December meeting of the North Carolina Senior Center Alliance Steering Committee, **Anna Claire Kelly**, of Davidson County, was elected as the new committee Chair.

Anna Claire is the Senior Activities Coordinator with Davidson County Senior Services, Senior Center in Lexington.

2021 - Pitt County Council on Aging

2019 - Davie County Senior Services

2018 - East Wake Senior Center

2017 - The Robert and Pearl Seymour Center

2016 - Resources for Seniors





Providing “Help for the Journey” to North Carolina’s Aging Adults

The North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) is a statewide agency that exists to provide “help for the journey” to adults aged 65 and over—helping them remain safe, connected, and independent in their own homes. Through 14 specialized outreaches, NCBAM addresses the leading causes of loss of independence among older

adults, including falls, poor home safety, isolation, and caregiver burnout.

NCBAM Call Center (877-506-2226) connects older adults with trusted volunteers and community partners who meet tangible needs such as wheelchair ramps, grab bars, transportation assistance, and home safety modifications.

NCBAM’s One Hope Initiative focuses on reducing isolation and promoting social connection.

A key feature is the Hope Line, which offers a caring voice daily from 9 a.m. – 9 p.m. Staff and trained volunteers provide friendly conversation, encouragement, prayer if desired, and connection to community resources.

To strengthen networks of care across North Carolina, NCBAM’s Care Village model equips churches in meeting the needs of aging adults—creating sustainable systems of safety, purpose, and connection.

NCBAM’s Regional Directors serve all 100 counties of North Carolina and are available to assist with referrals, presentations, and collaborative initiatives.

For more information about NCBAM’s mission, programs, and volunteer opportunities, visit ncbam.org.

Share Your Story

Have a program success, innovative idea, or community partnership you’d like featured in the next NCAOA newsletter?

Send your content and photos to
thessia.everhart@davidsoncountync.gov

We’d love to spotlight your work.

Technology & Scam Awareness

Reports of phone, email, and text scams targeting older adults continue to rise across North Carolina. Aging service providers are encouraged to share prevention tips with clients, including never giving personal information to unsolicited callers and reporting suspected fraud to local law enforcement or the NC Attorney General’s office.

To help, the North Carolina Attorney General’s Office has staff available to come out and speak directly with seniors about common scams and fraud prevention.

To request a presentation, go to: <https://ncdoj.gov/public-protection/outreach/>

Three Medicare Prescription Drug Changes Coming in 2026

Medicare Part D will see several important changes in 2026 aimed at lowering prescription drug costs and improving access for older adults.

Lower prices on 10 high-cost drugs:

For the first time, Medicare will offer negotiated lower prices on 10 brand-name Part D drugs with no generic alternatives. These medications treat conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and autoimmune disorders. Nearly 9 million enrollees who use these drugs are expected to save about \$1.5 billion in out-of-pocket costs in 2026.

Additional rounds of negotiated pricing are planned for future years, with more drugs expected to see reduced prices starting in 2027 and beyond.

\$2,100 annual cap on drug costs:

In 2026, Medicare Part D will include a \$2,100 annual cap on out-of-pocket prescription drug costs, up from \$2,000 in 2025. This cap limits how much beneficiaries pay each year, offering significant financial protection for those with high medication needs.

The maximum Part D deductible will also rise slightly, from \$590 to \$615, though many plans may offer lower deductibles or none at all. The cap and deductible will be adjusted annually based on drug spending trends.

Prior to these changes, Part D had no spending ceiling, which often forced seniors to skip doses or delay refills due to cost.

Lower-cost weight-loss medications:

Medicare plans to begin offering lower-cost access to popular GLP-1 weight-loss drugs around mid-2026.



Under an agreement with drug manufacturers, medications such as Wegovy and Zepbound are expected to be available to eligible beneficiaries with copays of about \$50 per month after deductibles.

Coverage will focus on individuals with obesity and related health conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes risk, high blood pressure, or chronic kidney disease. This marks the first time Medicare will broadly cover these medications for weight-related treatment.

Rachel Nania and Tony Pugh. 2025, December 18. 3 Big Medicare Prescription Drug Changes Coming in 2026. aarp.org



The **NC Division of Aging moved** into the new NC Department of Health and Human Services building in October 2025. They are on the 8th floor.

Their new physical address is: 1915 Health Services Way (For GPS, use 3905 Reedy Creek Rd.) Raleigh, NC 27607. Their mailing address remains the same: 2101 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2101.