Miami-Dade County Office of Community Advocacy

Elder Affairs Advisory Board

Monthly Public Meeting

Thursday, March 26, 2026

Westchester Regional Library

9445 Coral Way, Miami, Florida 33165

MINUTES

Members Present: Deborah "Debbie" Lowe, Armando Riera, Barbara "Barby" Morales, Winnie Tang, Alejandra Cortina, Brenda Lampon

Members Excused: Johnnie Kerr, Marina Blachman

I. Welcome

Vice Chair Deborah Lowe called the Miami-Dade County Elder Affairs Advisory Board Monthly Public Meeting to order at **10:18 a.m.**

A roll call was conducted and a quorum was established.

II. Reasonable Opportunity for the Public to Be Heard (2 minutes per person)

Vice Chair Lowe opened the floor for public comment.

Susana ("Susie") Weddle from First Quality Medical Supplies introduced herself and provided a brief overview of her organization and services. She explained that First Quality Medical Supplies specializes in continence and medical supply services and works with managed care organizations and programs serving older adults and individuals with disabilities. She expressed appreciation for the opportunity to attend the meeting and learn more about the Board's work.

No additional public comments were offered.

III. Approval of Agenda – March 26, 2026, Meeting (Vote)

Vice Chair Lowe presented the March 26, 2026, meeting agenda for approval.

Motion: Approve the March 26, 2026, Agenda.

Motion by: Winnie Tang
Seconded by: Alejandra Cortina

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

IV. Approval of Minutes – February 26, 2026, Meeting (Vote)

Board members reviewed the February 26, 2026, meeting minutes.

Motion: Approve the February 26, 2026, Meeting Minutes.

Motion by: Winnie Tang
Seconded by: Alejandra Cortina

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

V. Approval of Minutes – January 29, 2026, Meeting

Board members reviewed the January 29, 2026, meeting minutes.

Motion: Approve the January 29, 2026, Meeting Minutes.

Motion by: Barby Morales
Seconded by: Winnie Tang

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

VI. Presentation: Alliance for Aging

Presenter:

Martine Charles, MPH
Director, Planning and Population Health
Alliance for Aging, Inc.

Vice Chair Lowe welcomed Ms. Charles and thanked her for attending the meeting. She acknowledged the efforts of Brenda Lampon and Vanessa Garcia Azzam in facilitating collaboration between the Alliance for Aging and the Elder Affairs Advisory Board.

Ms. Charles thanked the Board for the invitation and explained that one of her goals was to strengthen collaboration between the Alliance for Aging and the Elder Affairs Advisory Board by helping Board members become ambassadors for services available to older adults and caregivers throughout Miami-Dade County.

Ms. Charles provided a comprehensive presentation regarding the Alliance for Aging, explaining that the organization serves as the designated Area Agency on Aging for Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties and has fulfilled that role since 1988. She reviewed the structure of the aging network, beginning with the federal Administration for Community Living, the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, Area Agencies on Aging, and contracted service providers that deliver services at the community level.

The presentation included an overview of major service areas funded through the Older Americans Act and other federal and state programs, including:

- Information and referral services through the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)
- Congregate and home-delivered meal programs
- Home and community-based services
- Transportation assistance
- Homemaker and chore services
- Personal care services
- Family caregiver support and respite services
- Adult day care services
- Disease prevention and health promotion programs
- SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders) counseling services
- Elder abuse prevention and awareness initiatives
- Veterans Directed Care Program
- Emergency Home Energy Assistance Program (EHEAP)

Ms. Charles emphasized that the primary mission of the aging network is to assist older adults in remaining safely in their homes and communities for as long as possible while avoiding unnecessary institutionalization. She explained that home and community-based

services are significantly less costly than nursing home placement and generally align with the preferences of older adults and their families.

The Board engaged in extensive discussion regarding eligibility requirements, waiting lists, service availability, funding limitations, caregiver support programs, elder abuse prevention efforts, and outreach strategies.

Ms. Charles reported that Alliance for Aging currently administers approximately **$65 million** in federal, state, and local funding, with the majority directed toward direct services for older adults. She noted that demand for services continues to increase and that funding levels remain insufficient to fully meet community needs.

A significant portion of the discussion focused on the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) and the challenges associated with lengthy wait times for callers seeking information and services. Ms. Charles explained that the Alliance received more than **215,000 inquiries** through its helpline during the previous year and acknowledged the need for operational improvements. She reported that the Alliance recently hired an Information and Innovation Officer to explore technological solutions that may improve efficiency and reduce wait times while remaining sensitive to the needs of older adults who may have difficulty navigating automated systems.

Board members asked questions regarding:

- Eligibility requirements for programs and services
- Services available to adults with disabilities
- Long-term care and Medicaid-related programs
- Homeowner eligibility concerns
- Caregiver respite services
- SHINE counseling services
- Elder abuse reporting and referrals
- Waitlist management
- Technology improvements and accessibility
- Outreach opportunities and educational workshops

Ms. Charles encouraged residents to contact the Alliance for Aging Helpline as the first step in applying for services and reminded members that eligibility determinations should

be made through the formal application process rather than assumptions regarding income, homeownership, or immigration status.

The Board thanked Ms. Charles for the informative presentation and expressed interest in continued collaboration with Alliance for Aging through future presentations, educational programs, community outreach events, and the possibility of hosting a future Board meeting at Alliance for Aging's offices.

VII. Community Outreach Committee Updates

A. Older Adult Resource Fair 2026
Ms. Vanessa Garcia Azzam provided an update regarding planning efforts for the Fifth Annual Older Adult Resource Fair scheduled for April 30, 2026.

Discussion included:

- Event flyer development and distribution
- Vendor recruitment and outreach efforts
- Planning and logistics
- Community outreach strategies
- Participation by community organizations, healthcare providers, nonprofit agencies, and government partners

Board members discussed strategies to maximize attendance and continue promoting the event throughout Miami-Dade County.

B. Older Adult Resource Guide 2026
Ms. Azzam provided an update regarding the 2026 Older Adult Resource Guide.

Discussion included:

- Updates to the English, Spanish, and Creole editions
- Distribution plans
- Opportunities to expand outreach through community organizations, libraries, senior centers, and public events

Members emphasized the importance of maintaining the guide as a comprehensive resource for older adults and caregivers throughout the County.

C. Community Outreach Committee Business

Vice Chair Lowe opened discussion regarding the Community Outreach Committee and the upcoming committee meeting scheduled for April 23, 2026, at the Stephen P. Clark Center.

Board members discussed the challenges associated with designating all Board members as committee members. Members noted that requiring the full Board to constitute committee membership created difficulties in achieving a quorum and limited the Committee's ability to conduct business efficiently.

Members agreed that establishing a smaller voting committee while continuing to welcome participation by all interested Board members would improve committee operations.

Board members also discussed the possibility of allowing committee meetings to include a virtual participation option, subject to County policies, technological capabilities, and verification of applicable procedures. It was understood that individuals participating virtually would not be eligible to vote unless permitted by County policy.

Motion: Community Outreach Committee Membership

Motion: Limit voting membership of the Community Outreach Committee to three Board members.

Motion by: Winnie Tang
Seconded by: Alejandra Cortina

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

Motion: Virtual Participation Capability

Motion: Explore the feasibility of providing virtual participation capability for Community Outreach Committee meetings, subject to County policy requirements and available technology.

Motion by: Brenda Lampon
Seconded by: Alejandra Cortina

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

The Board then discussed committee membership.

Motion: Appointment of Community Outreach Committee Members

Motion: Appoint Winnie Tang, Barby Morales, and Debbie Lowe as voting members of the Community Outreach Committee.

Motion by: Winnie Tang
Seconded by: Alejandra Cortina

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Old Business

Ethics Refresher Training

Ms. Azzam reminded members that the Ethics Refresher Training presented by Robert Thompson of the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust was scheduled for the May 28, 2026, Board meeting.

2026 Meeting Calendar and Locations

Board members discussed future meeting locations and opportunities to host meetings in different areas of Miami-Dade County, including locations in the southern portion of the County to increase accessibility and community participation.

North Dade Regional Library Resource Fair Invitation

Ms. Azzam informed the Board that the Miami-Dade Public Library System invited the Elder Affairs Advisory Board to participate in an Older Adult Resource Fair scheduled for **May 30, 2026**, at the North Dade Regional Library from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Board members discussed the opportunity and recognized its potential value in increasing outreach and visibility for the Board. Members also noted potential scheduling conflicts and staffing limitations due to other community events occurring during the same weekend.

The matter was tabled for further consideration pending additional discussion and confirmation of staffing availability.

IX. New Business

Request for a Proclamation Recognizing Older Americans Month

Vice Chair Lowe introduced discussion regarding obtaining a proclamation recognizing **Older Americans Month 2026**.

Board members expressed support for continuing the annual recognition of older adults and their contributions to the community.

Motion: Authorize staff to request an Older Americans Month Proclamation on behalf of the Elder Affairs Advisory Board.

Motion by: Winnie Tang
Seconded by: Barby Morales

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

X. Announcements

Vice Chair Lowe reminded Board members that:

- Board members may not abstain from voting unless there is a conflict of interest.
- Board members must submit their 2025 Financial Disclosure Form by July 1, 2026.
- The July 30, 2026, Board Meeting would be held at:

Sunkist Grove Community Center
12500 NW 13th Avenue
North Miami, Florida 33167.

Additional announcements included:

- The Alliance for Aging Annual Conference scheduled for May 7, 2026.
- Continued collaboration opportunities with Alliance for Aging.
- Upcoming outreach and educational opportunities for older adults throughout Miami-Dade County.

XI. Adjournment

There being no further business before the Board, **Vice Chair Deborah Lowe adjourned the meeting at 12:01 p.m.**