

# NorthWest Kansas Area

## Agency on Aging

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**From:** Glenna Clingsmith, Information & Assistance Supervisor

### **BUDGET CUT TO SENIOR CARE ACT MEANS CUTS TO SENIOR SERVICES**

A cut of \$2.1 million to the Senior Care Act program will undermine in-home services to senior citizens in Kansas and cost the state significantly more in the end, says Janis DeBoer, Executive Director of the Kansas Association of Area Agencies on Aging & Disabilities.

"These cuts are shortsighted. They will cause the frail and elderly to lose weekly in-home services and hasten the date when people are forced out of their own homes into nursing homes" said DeBoer. "Facts show that nursing homes cost thousands of dollars more."

The Senior Care Act program was enacted by the Kansas legislature in 1989. The legislature recognized that many older Kansans may face difficulties maintaining independence in their homes and wanted to avoid premature nursing home stays. They wanted a coordinated system of services to be developed.

Area Agencies on Aging were asked to coordinate the Senior Care Act services. For almost 30 years they have done so, effectively, until now.

"We are concerned about the impact of this significant cut on seniors and their caregivers. Over 4,500 seniors receive services, statewide, thanks to the Senior Care Act program," said Michelle Morgan, Executive Director of the Northwest Kansas Area Agency on Aging in Hays. "The cost of Senior Care Act services averages about \$200 per month compared to nursing home costs that average as much as \$4,000. How can these cuts be happening? It seems as though Kansas is creating a roadmap for seniors that leads only to nursing homes."

Directors of the eleven agencies met in Topeka on Friday to examine the impact of the cuts. The \$2.1 million reduction will result in a 30% decrease to the program, overall. The Directors estimate over 1,300 seniors will be negatively impacted. Letters will be sent to seniors as early as June indicating if services will need to be terminated or reduced. A Senior Care Act waiting list was initiated on Monday, May 23, statewide. The Directors had no choice. Their hands have been tied. "This cut is penny wise and pound foolish," said Julie Govert Walter, Executive Director of the North Central/Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging. "The cut to the Senior Care Act program makes no sense, whatsoever. We are concerned about what options seniors and their families will have in Kansas."

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