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Inside *Aging*

The Official Newsletter
of the Pennsylvania Department of Aging

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Focus On ***Aging News***



Governor Shapiro's Budget Proposal Protects Older Pennsylvanians through Investment and Reforms



Governor Shapiro's proposed 2026-27 budget includes more than **\$6 million** in additional investments in Department of Aging services. In his budget address, Governor Shapiro also called for long-overdue updates to the **Older Adult Protective Services Act (OAPSA)**. With reports of suspected abuse of older adults increasing rapidly, particularly financial exploitation, the Governor's proposal calls for adding financial exploitation as a crime; expanding background check requirements for caregivers; creating a waiver process for determining employment eligibility; updating outdated lists of criminal offenses; expanding mandatory reporting practices; and creating older adult fatality review teams to identify gaps in the system in the event that abuse results in death.



Kevin and Deb Marsh, a retired couple from Montgomery County, were among Governor Shapiro's guests during his budget address. In 2024, criminals impersonating employees at their bank stole more than \$850,000 – their entire life savings – from them. Governor Shapiro highlighted their story in his call for updates to OAPSA to include financial exploitation.

"We're sharing our story because we want people to know this can happen to anyone. We were embarrassed and ashamed — it took us six months to even talk about it — but scammers count on that silence. They isolate you, create panic, and make everything feel urgent, and before you know it, a lifetime of savings is gone. We worked our whole lives for that money. We're veterans, caregivers, working people — and we were still targeted. That's why we're grateful Governor Shapiro took the time to listen to our story and is taking action

to help protect other Pennsylvanians. If speaking up helps even one person pause, ask questions, or avoid what happened to us, then telling our story is worth it.” – Kevin and Deb Marsh

The Department appreciates Governor Shapiro and his administration’s continuing commitment to meeting the needs of older adults and protecting them to build an age-friendly Pennsylvania for all.

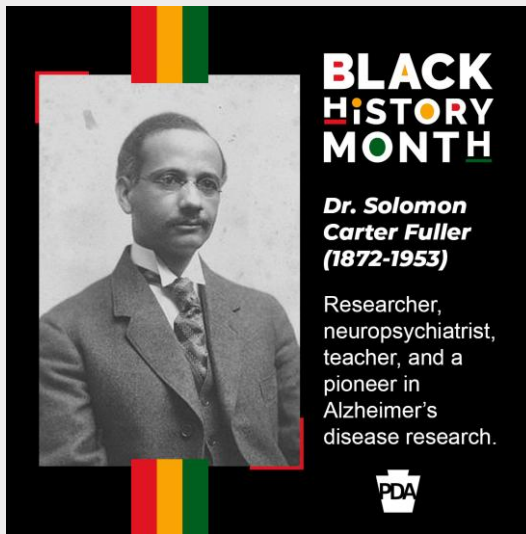
Budget Address Recording with American Sign Language Interpreter

Black History Month: Celebrating A Century of Black Contributions Made to Support Older Adults and People Living with a Disability

February commemorates Black History Month, with this year’s theme being *A Century of Black History Commemorations*. [Dr. Carter G. Woodson](#), known as the Father of Black History, initiated a celebration of Negro History Week in 1926. Fifty years later, this celebration expanded to the entire month of February.

This year’s theme urges everyone to explore the impact and meaning of Black History and life commemorations in transforming the state of Black people in the modern world. The Department of Aging honors some of the individuals whose leadership, research and advocacy helped transform public understanding and supports for older adults and people living with a disability today.

Pioneering Alzheimer's Research



Dr. Solomon Carter Fuller (1872-1953) – Dr. Fuller was a researcher, neuropsychiatrist, teacher, and a pioneer in Alzheimer's disease research. Dr. Fuller became the nation's first black psychiatrist at the age of 25. He worked with Dr. Alois Alzheimer, who was studying what was called presenile dementia at the time. Dr. Fuller published in 1912 what is now referred to as the first comprehensive review of Alzheimer's disease. He included an account of his own patient with the disease,

which was said to be the ninth case ever discovered.

Documenting the Black Aging Experience



Jacquelyne Johnson Jackson, PhD (1932-2004) – Dr. Jackson was a sociologist, educator and researcher into aging in Black Americans. During her work in Tuskegee, Alabama, she learned about a Black older couple who had to sell their home and everything they owned to pay their medical bills, which fueled her research and advocacy. Dr. Jackson drew attention to the lack of data and study of aging people of color and was among the first to recognize the intersection

of racism, economics and isolation in the Black aging experience. She contributed her work to 80 scholarly journals and published two books: *These Rights They Seek* and *Minorities and Aging*.

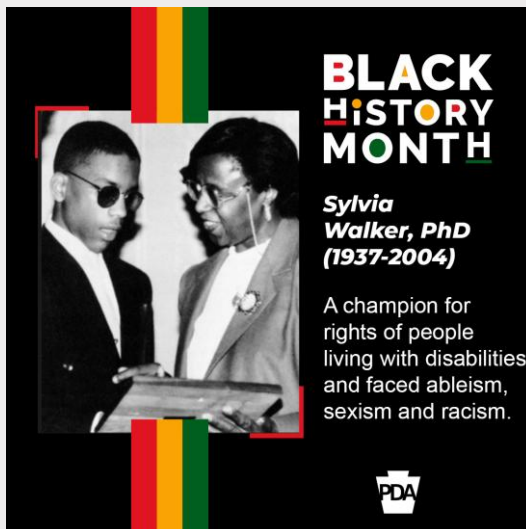
Championing Civil Rights for People Living with a Disability



Brad Lomax (1950-1984) – Lomax was born in Philadelphia and became a Civil Rights leader and disability rights activist. He was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in his teens. After moving to Oakland, California, Lomax began participating in the disability rights movement after he was unable to access public buses without being physically lifted into them. He opened the Center for Independent Living in East Oakland. Lomax played a role in leading the “504 Sit-in” in San

Francisco in 1977, which resulted in the passage of Section 504 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act, creating and extending civil rights to people living with a disability.

Powering the Passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act



Sylvia Walker, PhD (1937-2004) – Dr. Walker was a champion for rights of people living with disabilities and faced ableism, sexism and racism. Having an eyesight impairment as a child, Dr. Walker became legally blind at 14 but that didn’t stop her from obtaining four college degrees. Dr. Walker became a professor at Howard University, where she also led the Research and Training Center, focusing on people of color living with a disability. Dr. Walker’s research contributed

to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. In 1995, she founded the American

Association of People with Disabilities, an organization that works to expand the overall economic and political power of people living with a disability.

PDA Welcomes Nearly 600 Attendees to Alzheimer's, Dementia and Related Disorders Symposium



The Department of Aging (PDA) hosted its Alzheimer's, Dementia and Related Disorders (ADRD) Virtual Symposium to provide information and highlight progress being made on issues related to ADRD, as well as [resources available](#) for Pennsylvanians and their loved ones who are living with ADRD.

The ADRD Symposium attracted nearly 600 attendees and highlighted treatment breakthroughs, research and brain health, and caregiver support. It included presentations on risk reduction, early detection, and advancements in treatments for ADRD, biomarkers, and resources from Dementia Friendly Pennsylvania, the Alzheimer's Association, AARP, and PDA's [PA CareKit](#) – an innovative resource for the Commonwealth's unpaid caregivers that was the first major tool developed under [Aging Our Way, PA, Pennsylvania's 10-year strategic plan to improve aging services](#). The establishment of the ADRD Office within PDA was also among the priorities in *Aging Our Way, PA*.

The Department presented this symposium in partnership with the Pennsylvania Association of Area Agencies on Aging (P4A), Dementia Friendly Pennsylvania and the Alzheimer's Association.

Governor Josh Shapiro's 2025-26 budget [delivered a \\$5 million investment in first-ever, secured funding](#) to be administered by the Department of Health to help the Commonwealth become a leader in research on neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's, ALS and Parkinson's.

You can watch the ADRD Symposium's morning and afternoon sessions.

ADRD Symposium Morning Session

ADRD Symposium Afternoon Session

[Learn more about ADRD-related resources by visiting the Department of Aging's website.](#)

Living with and caring for ADRD is among the topics of an initiative called *Aging Together in PA*. Produced in partnership with public broadcasting stations WVIA (northeastern PA) and WITF (southcentral PA), the project is aimed at presenting programming and driving discussion about resources for Pennsylvania's rapidly growing older population. *Aging Together in PA* is designed to educate and inform audiences about the challenges and opportunities impacting older Pennsylvanians.

Check Out Aging Together in PA Videos

SHARE Program Expands Affordable Housing, Companionship Opportunities for Older Adults



Lancaster County has joined 14 other counties to participate in the Shared Housing and Resource Exchange (SHARE) program. Other participating counties are Allegheny, Bucks, Carbon, Crawford, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Monroe, Montgomery, Northampton, Northumberland, Pike, Snyder, Union, and Wayne.

SHARE pairs up homeowners who want to remain in their homes, may want some companionship and are willing to share their homes with someone who is looking for housing in exchange for rent, helping around the house, or both.

Both the homeowner and the potential occupant are vetted to ensure the chemistry is right. SHARE coordinates a written home-sharing agreement, provides trial living periods and offers support for the duration of the contract.

To connect with Timothy Burchett, Lancaster County SHARE counselor, either email aging@lancastercountypa.gov or call 717-299-7979.

To connect with SHARE counselors in the other participating counties, or to learn more about the SHARE program, [visit the Department of Aging's website](#).

What's New ***in the Commonwealth***



Older Adults Can Now Apply for Their 2025 Property Tax or Rent Rebate

Program's Income Limits Have Increased Again This Year, More Pennsylvanians May Qualify



The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program is now accepting applications from older adults for rebates on property taxes and rent paid in 2025.

This year's income limit for homeowners and renters is now \$48,110 – up more than \$1,500 from last year. In 2023, Governor Josh Shapiro signed legislation into law that included a key component that ties the program's income limits to the cost of living and ensures they are evaluated annually. The legislation also increased the maximum rebate from \$650 to \$1,000.

Older adults can submit their application for free through myPATH in [English](#) or [Spanish](#). Free assistance is available across the state at [Department of Revenue district offices](#), [local Area Agencies on Aging](#), or state legislators' office.

Older adults must reapply for a rebate every year as they are based on annual income and property taxes or rent paid during the prior year.

Learn more about the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program on the [Department of Revenue's website](#).

DHS Provides New Tool to Support SNAP Recipients with Volunteer Opportunities to Meet Federal Work, Reporting Requirements

The Department of Human Services (DHS) announced that Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients can now use [PA Navigate](#) to search for volunteer opportunities by zip code in their area. Adding volunteer listings helps SNAP recipients meet the new federal work and reporting requirements for the program so they can keep their benefits.

If SNAP recipients do not meet those requirements, they can only receive three months of SNAP benefits in a three-year period. If someone loses SNAP benefits, they can reapply for SNAP anytime and should reapply if they start to meet work, training, education, or volunteering requirements or if they [meet an exemption](#).

[Learn more about the federal work and reporting requirements and other SNAP resources by visiting DHS's website.](#)

Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Now Underway, PA MEDI Is Here to Help



The annual Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period runs from January 1 to March 31. During this time, beneficiaries who have a Medicare Advantage plan can switch to a different plan or to original Medicare. Changes to their enrollment will take effect on the first of the month following the month in which they enroll.

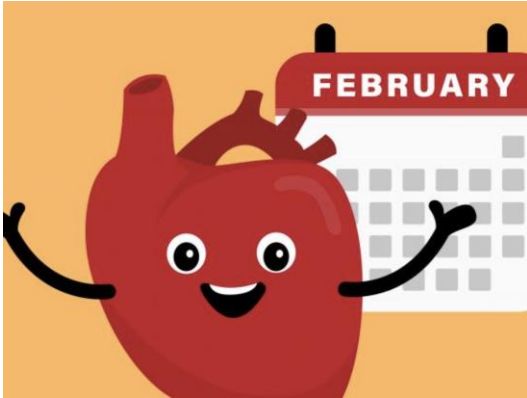
Pennsylvania Medicare Education and Decision Insight, or PA MEDI, Pennsylvania's Medicare counseling program, is available through local Area Agencies on Aging to help seniors with their

Medicare questions. Older adults can receive unbiased, no-cost Medicare assistance from trained PA MEDI counselors who can walk them through their options to assist in making informed health insurance decisions that optimize their cost-savings and access to health care and benefits.

PA MEDI counselors do not sell Medicare insurance products, nor do they endorse any insurance company, product, or agent. Counselors will not recommend policies, companies, or insurance agents but will provide free, confidential, and unbiased personalized assistance.

Older adults can contact their [local Area Agency on Aging](#) to schedule a personalized counseling session. For more information, call the toll-free PA MEDI Helpline at 1-800-783-7067 from 8 AM to 5 PM Monday through Friday. To find a PA MEDI event or presentation, [visit the Department of Aging's website](#).

Give Your Heart and Health Some Love During Heart Month



February is designated as Heart Month. It is an opportunity to educate friends, loved one and ourselves about the importance of heart health and to encourage people to take steps to protect their health. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S. but impacts some communities disproportionately.

[Learn more on the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute's website.](#)

Recognizing and Honoring Caregivers on National Caregivers Day



Friday, February 20 is National Caregivers Day. It's traditionally the third Friday in February and serves as a time to recognize and honor caregivers and their valuable contributions to families, communities and healthcare systems.

Here in Pennsylvania, there are nearly 2.4 million unpaid caregivers. To support those caregivers, the Department of Aging launched the [PA CareKit](#) last year. Caregiving rarely comes with instruction, and that's where the PA CareKit steps in to provide training, connections to respite services, and

personalized tools to help caregivers like spouses, adult children, and grandparents raising grandchildren address their unique situations.

Printed materials from the PA CareKit are available for free at community libraries, the 52 Area Agencies on Aging, and Senior Community Centers across the Commonwealth – and [an electronic version is available on the Department's website](#).

The Department of Aging's [Caregiver Support Program](#) also provides supports to caregivers – including those who care for older adults, grandparents raising grandchildren, and older caregivers of adults living with a disability – with the purpose of alleviating stress and promoting well-being to help sustain a healthy ongoing caregiving relationship.

Both the PA CareKit and the Caregiver Support Program are among the topics of *Aging Together in PA*. [You can watch those videos](#).

Get Some ***Good Feels***



Show PDA Your 'Good Feels' Moments

Whether it's volunteers giving of their time and talent, a PEER graduation, or a fun exercise program, PDA wants to see your 'good feels' moments. Send photos and some details to agingcomms@pa.gov, and you could see your moment in a future edition of Inside Aging and on [PDA's Facebook page](#).

In-Person and Virtual ***Events***



Register Now for the Volunteer Network Conference April 14-16



Registration is now open for the 2026 Aging Network Volunteer Conference, to be held April 14-16 in State College.

The Department of Aging is hoping to see familiar and new faces in its volunteer network who give of their time and talent. If you are a volunteer with the ombudsman program, PA MEDI, home-delivered meals, protective services, Area Agencies on Aging, home-delivered meals, protective services, Area Agencies on Aging, Foster Grandparent program or senior center, register today! Registration closes March 13.

[**Register for the Volunteer Conference**](#)

Join Dementia Friendly Pennsylvania for a Free Webinar – The Alignment of Age-Friendly and Dementia Friendly Initiatives

Dementia Friendly Pennsylvania will present a free webinar at 11:30 AM on Wednesday, February 11 on put together Age-Friendly and Dementia Friendly initiatives.

[**Register for the Webinar**](#)

Update on ***Legislation***



Looking Back

Committee Hearings

- The House Aging & Older Adult Services Committee met on February 2 to vote on House Resolution 389 (Madden) – a resolution recognizing the month of February 2026 as "Senior Independence Month" in Pennsylvania.

Looking Ahead

Budget Hearings

- House and Senate budget hearings will begin on February 23, 2026, and will continue through March 12, 2026.
- The Department of Aging will have its budget hearing with the House Appropriations Committee on Tuesday, March 10 at 1:00 PM.
- Other House Appropriations Committee budget hearings of interest:
 - Tuesday, February 24, 1:00 PM – Department of Health, Department of Drug & Alcohol Programs
 - Wednesday, March 4, 10:00 AM, 1:00 PM – Department of Human Services
 - Thursday, March 12, 10:00 AM – Budget Secretary/Executive Offices
- Other Senate Appropriations Committee budget hearings of interest:
 - Wednesday, February 25, 9:30 AM, 1:00 PM – Department of Human Services
 - Wednesday, March 4, 1:00 PM – Budget Secretary

2026 Session Schedule

House

- March: 23, 24, 25
- April: 13, 14, 15, 27, 28, 29
- May: 4, 5, 6
- June: 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30
- September: 28, 29, 30
- October: 5, 6, 7, 19, 20, 21
- November: 9, 10

Senate

- March: 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25
- April: 20, 21, 22
- May: 4, 5, 6
- June: 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30



Pennsylvania
Department of Aging



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