



Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR) News

Nice to Know

We're Hiring: Veteran Self-Directed Program (VSDP) Care Consultant

This role involves travel across North Chicago, Tomah, Madison, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis VAMC catchment areas.

Ideal candidates will have a degree in Social Work or related field (Bachelor's required, Master's preferred) and be based in Central, South-Central, or South-Eastern Wisconsin.

View the full job description:

<https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2008591>

View or share on LinkedIn: <https://bit.ly/48tiHEF>

View or share on Facebook: <https://bit.ly/4iPGF1B>



Advocacy

[Janet Zander](#), Advocacy and Public Policy Coordinator

Nice to Know

[AB 598](#) / [SB 578](#) – Patient Representative (Next-of-Kin) Legislation

Last week, the Assembly's Health, Aging and Long-Term Care Committee recommended passage of AB 598, as well as two amendments made to the bill. This legislation allows for the creation and hospital appointment of Patient Representatives who will have the authority to consent to admissions to nursing homes and assisted living facilities without requiring a petition for guardianship or protective placement. **The two amendments made to the legislation do not address our concerns and aging, disability, and legal advocates remain opposed.** The Senate Health Committee has not yet voted on the two amendments to SB 578, but the initial bill was recommended for passage back in November 2025. **AB 598 and SB 578 are now teed up for a vote by the full Assembly and Senate as soon as February!**

TAKE ACTION: If you have not already done so, **please reach out to your Senator and Assembly Representative using WAAN's Action Alert** to share your concerns. <https://bit.ly/4qXAtaA>

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For those not able to directly ask their state legislators to oppose the legislation, please share your concerns regarding the bill's disregard for patients' rights and your stories about what happens when decision makers don't honor the individual's/patient's choices and instead make self-serving decisions. **Please feel free to personalize the action alert email.**

We do not believe AB 598/SB 578 addresses the issue it seeks to solve and remain concerned that the legislation will result in new issues. Feel free to include any of our talking points below in your email:

SB 578/AB 598 Does Not:

- Require any screening or background checks to prevent individuals with financial motives or history of abuse from being appointed as a patient representative.
- Establish a process for contesting the appointment of a patient representative whose decisions or priorities conflict with those of the individual.
- Set limits on how long a patient representative can make decisions on behalf of the individual.
- Require that the finding of incapacity – or the appointment of a patient representative – be communicated to the individual. As a result, a person may lose their right to make their own decisions without knowing who is acting for them and why.
- Provide a mechanism for the individual to object to decisions made by the patient representative (other than the decision to admit)
- Ensure oversight of health care decisions. Instead, the bill grants the patient representative decision-making authority that is equivalent to that of a guardian of person, but without any court oversight. Patient representatives could override the individual's wishes and authorize involuntary care (with some exceptions).
- Specify when or whether an incapacitated individual must be re-evaluated for capacity, who can/must perform the evaluation, or who is responsible for ensuring it occurs.
- Provide any requirements or timelines for a court to hear a petition reviewing the patient representative's conduct.
- Authorize a court to remove the patient representative.
- Provide a process for a patient representative to resign or address what happens if the patient representative becomes incapacitated or dies.
- Define what is included in "health care expenditures."
- Clarify whether a patient representative can liquidate assets (including real estate) on limits of the PR's ability to liquidate assets (including real estate) to privately pay for placement and/or to spenddown to be eligible for Medicaid.
- Clearly authorize a patient representative to access bank accounts, retirement accounts, life insurance policies, and other financial information used to verify Medicaid eligibility.
- Speak to what happens when a patient is transferred to a different facility or between facilities.
- Address decision-making for incapacitated individuals while they are in the hospital.

Please share this action alert (<https://bit.ly/4qXAtaA>) broadly and ask others to contact their state legislators too!

Elder Services Task Force Report Release

On Friday, Jan. 23, 2026, the Speaker's Task Force on Elder Services released their report - <https://bit.ly/4qDyZCz>

The report includes six pieces of draft legislation which will be released for co-sponsorship soon. Please watch for a new action alert to encourage state legislators to sign on as co-sponsors for some/all of the bills.

Caregiver Designation Legislation ([AB 798](#)/[SB 795](#))

In late December, the Caregiver Designation legislation (AB 798/SB 795) was formally introduced.

[AB 798: <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2025/proposals/ab798>](#)

[SB 795: <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2025/proposals/sb795>](#)

In the 2023-2025 legislative session, Wisconsin created a process that offers people the option to have emergency contact information included in their electronic record when applying for or renewing their driver's license, learner's permit, or state identification ([Wisconsin Department of Transportation Emergency contact](#)). <https://bit.ly/3O44yqG>

The Caregiver Designation legislation builds upon the emergency contact information process by also providing for an option for people to designate themselves as the primary caregiver for up to three people in their electronic record.

On Tues., Jan. 20, 2026, the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government held a hearing on SB 795. GWAAR provided [testimony](#) in support of the bill: <https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2008886>

This common-sense legislation linking care-recipient contact information to a driver's license or state ID, helps to prevent crisis situations where a person with complex needs might go for hours or even days without care. We hope the Assembly Transportation Committee will also hold a hearing soon, so this important constituent-informed legislation can move quickly through the process and be signed into law this session!

Memory Care Designation Legislation Seeks Co-Sponsors

Shared on behalf of the Alzheimer's Association – Wisconsin Chapter

Legislation to strengthen training standards in Wisconsin's memory care facilities has just been released, and your help is needed.

A new bill introduced by Senator Romaine Quinn and Representative Dave Armstrong will require staff in a facility advertising "memory care" to receive training so they understand how best to support people living with dementia. This is a critical step toward improving quality, safety, and transparency for families across Wisconsin.

Legislators have until January 28 to sign on as original cosponsors, and early, bipartisan support is essential to moving this bill forward.

The Alzheimer's Association of Wisconsin asks that advocates contact their State Senator and State Representative and urge them to cosponsor this legislation using this Advocacy Alert <http://alz-wi.quorum.us/campaign/CosponsorMemoryCare> and to share with their networks.



Federal Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Budget

Last week, Congress leaders released a bipartisan, minibus appropriations package to fund the departments of Defense, Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, Labor, Education and other related agencies. Fortunately, this latest funding package was released ahead of the Jan. 30th deadline (when the current continuing resolution expires) and is expected to pass in time to avoid another government shutdown.

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The funding package sets FY 2026 funding levels for the Older Americans Act (OAA) and other aging services programs and includes modest increases for OAA Title III B Supportive Services and Title VI Native American Aging Programs. Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP) also received an increase which was directed by Congress for demonstration grants related to the National Family Caregiver Strategy and won't be a part of III E formula grants to states. All other OAA programs at HHS, including the rest of Title III were protected from cuts.

Other programs important to older people were also protected, including the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the AmeriCorps senior volunteer programs. The Department of Labor's OAA program, Title V Senior Community Service Program (SCSEP), received a \$10-million cut. This cut, though disappointing, is a significant improvement over the full program elimination proposed earlier by the President and the House.

On Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026, by a vote of 341-88, the House passed the three-bill minibus appropriations package. The Senate is expected to take up the bills next week and get them to the President's desk to be signed into law ahead of the Jan. 30 deadline.

See USAging's updated [appropriations chart](https://bit.ly/4qB4Kw4) for additional details: <https://bit.ly/4qB4Kw4>

Survival Coalition – “Community Organizing to Maximize Power the Impact” – online training series

January 28, February 11, February 25 / 10:00 a.m. -1:00 p.m.

This 3-part, 9-hour training is free to members of the disability community in Wisconsin who want to explore the principles of collective action to impact issues important to the disability community. Whether it's cuts to Medicaid and SNAP, the lack of caregivers, quality education, or other issues important to the disability community, this training will give participants the connections and skills to have greater impact on public policy.



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

This series will also serve as training to help attendees prepare for Disability Advocacy Day, which will be March 19 at Monona Terrace and the Capitol in Madison. (more information below)

Training Session Dates & Registration

- Session #1 (January 28): Learning the basics of power, control, and how to motivate others.
- Session #2 (February 11): Identifying challenges and developing strategies for change.
- Session #3 (February 25): Forming cohesive groups and maximizing strengths for bigger impact

Questions about the trainings: Contact Jeremy Gundlach at jeremy.gundlach@wisconsin.gov .

Training registration: <https://bit.ly/CommunityOrganizing2026>

View the training flyer: <https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2008874>

Reminder: Disability Advocacy Day of Action!

Thursday, March 19 / 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. / Registration opens Feb. 1

Starting at Monona Terrace, One John Nolen Drive, Madison, WI (and State Capitol)

Disability Day of Action is back in person! The event is focused on connecting Disability Advocates with their legislators to talk about issues that matter to them. Attendees are expected to participate in the morning briefing and visit their legislators in the afternoon.

Save the date Disability Advocacy Day of Action flyer: <https://bit.ly/3ZjUKLF>

Reminder: Federal Funding Fallout2025: Updates and Q&A

Friday, January 30 / 9:00 - 10:30 a.m.

English Registration: <https://bit.ly/FedFunds130>

Spanish Registration: <https://bit.ly/FedFundSpa130>



Emergency Preparedness

[Angie Sullivan](#), Health Promotion Program Specialist

Nice to Know

Reminder: Be prepared for emergency preparedness with 2026 calendars

Ready.gov and Ready Wisconsin have many helpful resources to share with older adults all year long. Both sites have content calendars to help you prepare as well.

Ready.gov 2026 calendar: <https://www.ready.gov/calendar>

ReadyWisconsin 2026 calendar:

<https://readywisconsin.wi.gov/resources/>

January is winter readiness

You'll find basic information about preparing for cold weather on the Ready.gov website and in their guide for older adults.

<https://www.ready.gov/winter-ready#adult>

Take Control in 1, 2, 3—Disaster Preparedness Guide for Older Adults:

<https://bit.ly/47hfW8B>

Check out Ready Wisconsin for additional information and resources for bitter cold weather: <https://readywisconsin.wi.gov/extreme-cold/>

February is National Canned Food Month #WinterReady

You can find NOURISH Step resources on the GWAAR website to help people prepare home emergency kits in case of bad weather or power outages. These can be found on the NOURISH Step page | <https://gwaar.org/nourishstep> | 2025 NOURISH Step Handouts and/or NOURISH Step Recipes and Simple Meal Ideas.

Emergency Food & Water Preparedness Checklist: <https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2008719>

Emergency Preparedness for Food & Water – Sample Meal & Snack Ideas:

<https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2008718>

Simple No-Cook Meal Ideas: <https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewfile/id/2008883>

Winters can bring unpredictability, with a potential for big storms that cause power outages, and an increased risk of illness as more people gather together indoors. Winters also bring unique risks for food safety: <https://www.foodsafety.gov/blog/winter-weather-food-safety>

To help mitigate that risk, and keep people safe, you can share these 3 easy food safety tips for winter:

- **The outdoors isn't a reliable fridge** - Even when there's snow and ice, temperatures can vary, potentially causing food to enter the "danger zone" between 40°F and 140°F. Plus, there's a risk of animals getting into your food. **Danger zone information:** <https://bit.ly/4kau4GT>
- **Wash hands often** - Wash your hands and surfaces often, including before, during, and after preparing food. If soap and clean water aren't available, hand sanitizer may be a good alternative. **Handwashing information:** <https://fightbac.org/handwashing/#Mythbusters>



- **When in doubt, throw it out** - Think your leftovers might be too old? Unsure how long your power went out after a storm? When in doubt, throw it out! If you're trying to avoid waste, you can check the [FoodKeeper App](#) for food storage information. *Learn about FoodKeeper App:* <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app>

Family Caregiver Support

[Bryn Ceman](#), Caregiver Programs Specialist

Need to Know

⚠ Update for Caregiver Program Staff!

The NFCSP and AFCSP reference sheets have officially been updated to include the new PeerPlace service types, units, and definitions! 🎉

These updates will help ensure consistent reporting and clearer guidance across programs statewide.

✓ **PeerPlace NFCSP Reference Sheet:** <https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewfile/id/2008887>

✓ **PeerPlace AFCSP Reference Sheet:** <https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewfile/id/2008888>

As always, if you have program questions, please reach out to Bryn at Bryn.Ceman@gwaar.org and with reporting/data collection question to Carrie at Carrie Kroetz Carrie.Kroetz@gwaar.org. Thank you for all you do to support caregivers and families across Wisconsin! ❤️

Nice to Know

CARE U Train-the-Trainer

February 25 and 26, 2026

⭐ Become a CARE U Trainer and help deliver meaningful education and support to family caregivers in Wisconsin. This is a great way to build local capacity and strengthen caregiver wellbeing statewide. ⭐ Brought to you by the Center for Aging Research and Education, UW-Madison School of Nursing

Registration: <https://bit.ly/49MUw4s>

View the flyer: <https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewfile/id/2008891>



Wisconsin caregivers: You're invited!

Thursday, February 26 / 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

The CARE U Workshop offers supportive, practical education to help caregivers navigate challenges like stress, communication, and day-to-day caregiving needs. ⚡ Brought to you by the Center for Aging Research and Education, UW-Madison School of Nursing ⚡ A great opportunity to learn, connect, and feel more supported. Please see the picture attached or click below to learn more:

More info and registration: <https://bit.ly/3LVvDM7>

View the flyer: <https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2008879>



Reminder: Updated DHS Publication – Caregiver Chapter Now Available

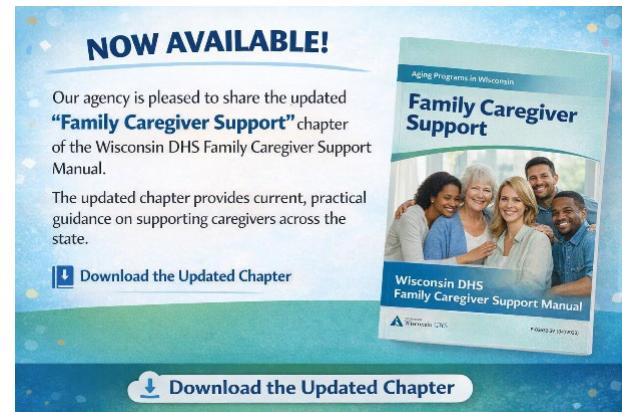
Wisconsin DHS has published an updated Family Caregiver Support chapter within the Wisconsin DHS Family Caregiver Support Manual. This updated guidance is a helpful reference for caregiver program administration, eligibility, service definitions, and best practices across AFCSP/NFCSP.

Publication Link:

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p03062-39.pdf>

DHS SharePoint (for registered users):

<https://bit.ly/4pRaZuF>



Reminder: New Resource for Working Family Caregivers (Virtual Support Group)

The ADRC of La Crosse County is offering a Virtual Working Family Caregiver Support Group for anyone balancing employment while caring for a loved one. Please share with caregivers you work with — or consider attending yourself.

📅 1st Wednesday of the month | ⏰ 6:00–7:00 p.m. | 🌐 Virtual

☎️ Register: 608-785-5700

❓ Contact: Kristine Meyer | 608-386-0922 | kmeyer@lacrossecounty.org

Fiscal Resources and Data Management

[Carrie Kroetz](#), Data Management and Technology Coordinator

Need to Know

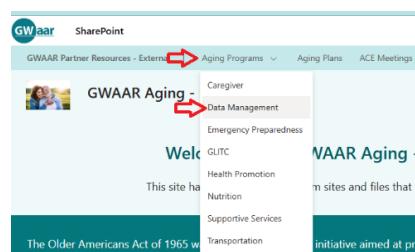
Reminders

All webinars are recorded and posted on the GWAAR Partners Resources site and accessed by registered users.

<https://gwaar.sharepoint.com/sites/PartnerResources> | Aging Programs | [Data Management](#)

<https://gwaar.sharepoint.com/sites/PartnerResources> | [Fiscal Resources](#)

ACE Meeting → [Fiscal Resources](#) [Advocacy](#)



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****End of Federal Year Reporting****

We have completed and submitted our NAPIS Federal Report portion to the state. If there are further questions GWAAR may reach out to Aging Units for clarification.

GWAAR Fiscal and Data will be hosting a webinar, date/time TBD, to provide information regarding the GWAAR NAPIS process and to ask Aging Units for feedback regarding what more we could do during the year to help facilitate this annual project.

****Remaining Transfers****

GWAAR Fiscal has received the remaining transfer contract, and an amendment will be sent out to Aging Units shortly. The updated allocations will be included in the Final Claim form.

****2026 Draft Budget****

Due to upcoming changes taking effect in 2026 we have yet to post the 2026 Draft Budget. Once we have solidified the changes, we will update the form and inform Aging Directors and Fiscal staff of the posting. GWAAR Fiscal will also hold a webinar to inform Aging Unit staff of these changes and a review of instructions to complete the budget, waiver, and transfer requests. In the meantime, we have received the estimated allocations and have posted them in the Fiscal Resources library under Budget.

****2026 Claim Form****

GWAAR Fiscal will be updating the 2026 Claim Form with the 2026 allocations and changes to reporting requirements. We plan to have the form posted by early to mid-February. We will be hosting a webinar, date/time TBD, to review the updates and respond to questions.

****Upcoming Training****

Regional Trainings – GWAAR staff is working on scheduling Fiscal and Data Spring trainings again this year – once arrangements are finalized we will send out the registration information.

PeerPlace New Year's Training Series: These trainings will be held by individual programs and review how to enter participants and service data, how to run error reports to review basic (NAPIS) information and determined data entry inconsistencies, discuss errors found during the current NAPIS report, and address 1st FFY quarter (Oct-Dec) corrections.

Supportive and In-Home Services (IIIB) PeerPlace Training

Thursday, January 29 | 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Registration: <https://bit.ly/456otv8>

Nutrition Services (IIIC) PeerPlace Training:

Tuesday, February 3 | 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Registration: <https://bit.ly/4jD5aPT>

Caregiver Services (IIIE & AFCSP) PeerPlace Training

Thursday, February 5 | 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Registration: <https://bit.ly/4qgVDAt>

Health Promotion

[Angie Sullivan](#), Health Promotion Program Specialist

Nice to Know

Grant Opportunity: AARP Community Challenge

AARP is now accepting applications for the 2026 Community Challenge funding cycle that:

- Deliver tangible improvements to communities, such as new crosswalks, benches, bike lanes, housing designs, and public space enhancements.
- Leverage additional support from public, private, and philanthropic sources.
- Help overcome policy barriers and implement lasting change.
- Foster new collaborations and increase community engagement.

Attend the Q & A Webinar on January 27. Applications are due by 5 p.m. ET on March 4, 2026.

Click here to learn more: <https://bit.ly/3ZDSWND>

Q&A Webinar registration: <https://virtualevents.aarp.org/2026GrantWebinar/en>



Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection (WCSC) Social Media Toolkit Available

Each month, WCSC is sharing ready-to-use social media posts to help spread messages of connection. Post these directly on your own social media pages.

<https://connectwi.org/for-professionals/awareness-resources/>



Nutrition

[Kristi Cooley](#), Nutrition Program Specialist

[Jean Lynch](#), Program Specialist Manager

[Pam VanKampen](#), Nutrition Program & Senior Center Specialist

Need to Know

Major Gift Home Delivered Meals Application Process Meeting

Thursday, January 29 | 2:00 p.m.

GWAAR recently received a major donation to support Wisconsin's Elder Nutrition Program. These funds will help strengthen Home Delivered Meal services and ensure consistent and nutritious meals for older adults across our communities. We invite you to join us for a meeting to discuss this opportunity and next steps. We look forward to your participation.

The meeting will be recorded for anybody unable to attend at this time.

Microsoft Teams: <https://bit.ly/3Z49iPw> Meeting ID: 242 506 405 704 70 | Passcode: Cr2jH9kx

Dial in by phone [+1 608-338-1382,,366384731#](tel:+16083381382) | Phone conference ID: 366 384 731#

GWAAR Update: Discover the Power of Nutrition Day

Wednesday, March 18

GWAAR is excited to announce **Discover the Power of Nutrition Day**, a statewide nutrition awareness event taking place on **March 18, 2026**, as part of National Nutrition Month.

This initiative is a one-hour statewide virtual program focused on nutrition services, healthy aging, and community connection. GWAAR will host the statewide session, and we want local counties and tribes to gather participants locally. Consider promoting and having lunch, local discussion, or program highlights afterward at your agency.

GWAAR has developed an **Agency Toolkit** and an **editable promotional event flyer**, now available via the link below. We encourage counties to review these materials, begin local planning, and place the event on their March calendars. A brief overview and opportunity to ask questions will be provided during the **Feb. 5 regional meeting**, but early review will help ensure a smooth and successful local experience.

What's Included:

- Local Toolkit with step-by-step guidance
- Editable Event Flyer for local promotion
- Key dates and hosting checklist for ease of implementation

Access the Toolkit and Flyer:

[March 2026 Discover the Power of Nutrition Event \(registered SharePoint users\):](https://bit.ly/3NDC5rL) <https://bit.ly/3NDC5rL>

We look forward to partnering with you to build awareness of nutrition services and strengthen community engagement across the state.

For questions, please contact Kristi at Kristi.Cooley@gwaar.org

Nice to Know

Reminder: Age Well: NOURISH — Small Steps for Big Health Benefits

Thursday, January 29 / 11:00 a.m.

Pam VanKampen leads this free webinar to help participants discover NOURISH Step — a fun, practical mindset to boost energy, health and well-being.

Shift your focus from restrictions to nourishing foods and simple habits that work in real life. Learn the power of protein, hydration and colorful meals to strengthen your body, improve mood and support independence. Take control of your health one small, doable step at a time and start the new year feeling energized and empowered.

[Learn more or register:](https://www.roadscholar.org/nourish) <https://www.roadscholar.org/nourish>



Reminder: NAC Recipe Taste Test Opportunity

Nutrition Directors are encouraged to add a taste-testing item to their next Nutrition Advisory Council (NAC) meeting to help expand the Recipe Bank with low-carbohydrate recipes aligned with diabetes management goals and the latest Dietary Guidelines.

Plan a taste test at your upcoming NAC meeting (many meet in February).

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Choose one or two recipes from the external SharePoint [Low Sugar Dessert and Sauce Recipe TESTING Needed](#), gather feedback, and indicate yes or no the recipe tested. <https://bit.ly/3ZkbZMT>

Email your results, including the recipe name and vote, to Kristi.Cooley@gwaar.org by Feb/ 28. Recipes receiving a majority of “yes” votes will be added to the Trustwell Database.

Thank you for helping ensure the Recipe Bank includes recipes participants enjoy and will use. If you have questions, please reach out to your program consultant.

Transportation

[Nick Musson](#), Transportation & Aging Plan Specialist

Nice to Know

Reminder: Transit Equity Day 2026: Wednesday, February 4

Transit Equity Day is a National Day of Action observed on February 4th to commemorate the life and legacy of Rosa Parks on her birthday and highlights the importance of public transportation and transit equity. Transit Equity Day aims to highlight the need for equitable and accessible public transportation for all.

The observance is an opportunity to advocate for fair transportation policies including such topics as affordable fares, reliable service, improved transit infrastructure and increased transit funding. Transit agencies, organizations, community groups, and activists often use Transit Equity Day to organize events, discussions, and advocacy initiatives aimed at promoting equitable and accessible public transportation. The goal is to engage the public, policymakers, and stakeholders in efforts to address transit-related disparities and work toward a more just and inclusive transportation system.

Check with your local transit agency to see what they have planned to celebrate Transit Equity Day.

Wisconsin Senior Medicare Patrol

[Ingrid A. Kundinger](#), Senior Medicare Patrol Program Director

Nice to Know

SMP travels across Wisconsin

The Senior Medicare Patrol is available for presentation and outreach events throughout the state. If you are looking for an educational program for your nutrition site, caregiver support group, or any other group that would be interested in learning more about Medicare-related fraud and how to Protect, Detect, and Report it, please contact us!

View the flyer:

<https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewfile/id/200889>



We Help Wisconsin Medicare Beneficiaries and Their Advocates Prevent, Detect, and Report Health Care Fraud, Errors, and Abuse.

How do we do this?



SMP travels across Wisconsin giving presentations.

SMP informative presentations, representatives from Wisconsin's Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) will help you recognize Medicare fraud and what you can do to stop it.

We would love to participate in your community events.

SMP representatives are available to staff a booth at events like Senior Expos, Health Fairs, or other Resource Events

Please reach out to us to learn more

[Contact Us](#)

+888-818-2611

smp-wi@gwaar.org

