

**Final Report
Minister's Mission to
Orlando, Florida
June 22-28, 2006**



Executive Summary

Minister of Seniors and Community Supports Yvonne Fritz met with groups and officials in Orlando, Florida and explored their unique approach to providing services for seniors and people with disabilities.

Mission Objectives/Accomplishments

Aging and Disability Resource Centre

Florida's Aging and Disability Resource Centres (ADRC) have been opened as part of a pilot project to improve access to information, provide referrals and services, streamline eligibility determination and improve fiscal control and management of programs. The pilot project is supported by the Florida Department of Elder Affairs.

On June 23, Minister Fritz met with several officials from the Senior Resource Alliance including Dr. Douglas Beach, Chief Executive Officer, who developed and operates the centres, and Sarah Lightell, Head of the ADRC, and Catese Chafee, Assistant to Dr. Beach. The Minister also met with Oree Johnson of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, and Ann Elias, Director of Operations, from Florida's Alzheimer Association.

Discussion items

- The centres offer a one-window approach to:
 - provide functional, financial and assessments of the needs and options for seniors and people with disabilities,
 - act as a referral point to services including Meals on Wheels, the Mental Health Network and the Alzheimer's Association, and
 - provide intake assessment using both federal and state eligibility requirements.

- The centres also use a 2-1-1 telephone hotline to provide information and referrals to seniors and their families about:
 - rent and utility assistance
 - Meals on Wheels
 - personal care, and
 - other community services.

- The Delta Partnership Project was introduced in 2001 to develop a strategic long-term care plan for Central Florida. The project involves creating:
 - a centralized access system
 - a strategic plan for services, and
 - new tools to track efficiencies in access, capacity and overall system performance.
- Ann Elias of the Alzheimer Association presented some of the Associations innovative initiatives, including:
 - a 24/7 toll-free helpline
 - support groups for caregivers and families, and
 - outreach groups targeted primarily to those who may be at increased risk.
- The Minister was also provided information about the Independent Transportation Network (ITN) Orlando—a non-profit, membership organization dedicated to helping seniors and the visually impaired with their transportation needs.

Institute of Food Technology's Annual Meeting and Expo

At the Institute of Food Technology's Annual Meeting and Expo, Minister Fritz met with international presenters involved with food development to discuss quality assurance, nutrition and preparation as it relates to services in continuing care facilities.

Discussion items

- The Minister spoke with North American and International consulting firms working in the area of food safety and education. Specifically, the Minister discussed the potential to audit food in an institution for:
 - nutrition
 - variety
 - food safety, and
 - preparation standards.
- The Minister also met with a number of producers, manufacturers and researchers regarding:
 - natural antioxidants in food
 - the health/nutritional benefits of organic foods, and
 - dietary supplements manufactured for increased absorption.

Senior Housing Management of Orlando

Minister Fritz toured the Oak Leaf Landings Seniors Home in Orlando. She was hosted by Beverly Hougland, CEO and Jill Wood, Housing Director of the Osceola County Council on Aging.

Discussion items

- Oak Leaf Landings is comprised of a 50-unit and 70-unit apartment complex, which provides housing for low- and moderate-income seniors. The Minister met with the seniors home operators and viewed the resident rooms and common areas.

- The Council on Aging’s Senior Housing Management Division operates the seniors home and provides a variety of special services including:
 - case management
 - transportation
 - housekeeping
 - personal care
 - nutrition
 - congregate meals, and
 - pharmaceutical assistance.

Osceola County Council on Aging

At the Osceola County Council on Aging’s Senior Centre, Minister Fritz met with approximately 30 people who lead the various programs offered by the council, which employs over 300 staff members and has numerous volunteers.

Discussion items

- The senior centre’s health promotion program involves both volunteer and contracted health professionals who provide advice on issues including:
 - disease prevention and education
 - screening for osteoporosis
 - medication management
 - elder abuse, and
 - injury and fall prevention.

- The senior centre also offers a Senior Day Program run by a Registered Nurse. Family members who care at home for a senior, but work during the day, can bring their loved one to this program located at the Oeceola’s Council on Aging’s senior centre.

- Minister Fritz met with many of the participants, including the oldest who was 102. Several of the residents had participated in the program for eight to 10 years.

- The program runs from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the week, and offers:
 - recreational activities
 - nutritional consulting services and meals
 - health care services (e.g. oxygen, mobility assistance, personal hygiene care), and
 - assistance to many of the clients who have complex needs, including dementia, and were being well-cared for in a “homelike/family setting.”

- The senior centre has a variety of other programs for seniors on a “drop-in” basis including:
 - free health services provided by volunteer physicians and nurses
 - afternoon recreational activities, including bingo and exercise classes, and
 - comprehensive information services on how to access various services (e.g.health, nutrition, housing, benefits).

Long-Term Care Ombudsman

Minister Fritz met with William Teague, a regional coordinator with the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program operated by the Florida Department of Elder Affairs. The program is volunteer-based and addresses the needs of seniors living in a variety of continuing-care settings including nursing homes, assisted living facilities and adult family care homes.

Discussion items

- Minister Fritz discussed the ombudsman program's structure, which includes 17 local councils throughout the state, which offer free services—including complaint resolution—for residents and their family. Complaints resolved can range from communication issues to quality of care issues.
- Ombudsmen services also include:
 - monitoring of legislation related to long-term care facilities and making recommendations when necessary for policy changes
 - maintenance of a statewide reporting system to collect and analyze data, and
 - performing annual inspections of facilities, to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the residents.
- The regional coordinator's office fields all complaint and concern reports made by, or on behalf of, long-term care residents. The complaints can range from issues of communication to quality of care issues. The regional coordinator's office enters all complaints in a database.
- Under law, the complaints must be assigned to an ombudsman within 24 hours, and the ombudsman will begin an investigation within five days.
- The volunteer ombudsmen are assigned to cover a certain number of facilities throughout the region. They are compensated for out of pocket expenses such as mileage. Although the amount of time can vary, ombudsmen volunteer an average of 20 hours a month.
- Ombudsmen go through a training and certification process which involves in-house training on federal and state statutes and the process, as well as in-field training, where they conduct investigations with an experienced ombudsman.
- In addition to conducting annual inspections—which are mandated under federal and state laws—the ombudsmen will also conduct unannounced visits throughout the course of the year. Complaints can be generated as a result of the inspections and visits, which are then followed up on through a subsequent investigation. By law, ombudsmen have 24-hour unfettered access to the facilities.
- The Ombudsmen program takes an advocacy point of view on behalf of the resident. They will try to correct the situation, rather than penalize, in an effort to negotiate the best possible outcome for the resident. This can involve providing facilities and staff information on federal and state laws.

- Where appropriate, the volunteer ombudsmen will refer the complaint to the appropriate agencies. For instance, in response to:
 - a licencing issue, the matter can be referred to the Agency for Health Care Administration.
 - cases of abuse or exploitation, Florida's Adult Protective Services would be brought in via the state's abuse hotline.
 - cases involving food preparation or food safety concerns, the matter can be referred to the Department of Health.
- Each of the 17 districts has an ombudsman council, which sends a representative to the state council. The state council works to address systemic issues and acts as an advisory board to the state ombudsman, who reports to the Secretary of Elder Affairs.

Seniors and Community Supports
August 2006