

NVAN

the Northern Virginia Aging Network

An Overview

History

The Northern Virginia Aging Network was established in 1976 following the break-up of the single regional Northern Virginia Area Agency on Aging into five Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs).

- City of Alexandria
- Arlington County
- Fairfax including Fairfax County and the Cities of Fairfax and Falls Church
- Loudoun County
- Prince William including Prince William County and the Cities of Manassas and Manassas Park

Members of the Advisory Council to the Northern Virginia AAA wanted to continue to meet together to address regional aging issues. The Council members and the five AAA Directors established NVAN. Required participants were the Chairs of the advisory councils to the AAAs and the AAA Directors. The five Commissions on Aging constitute the advisory councils mandated by the Older Americans Act. From its inception NVAN reached out to other regional human services and aging service providers and advocates – such as AARP and the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

Participants meet to discuss regional responses to critical issues affecting Northern Virginia's older adults. In its early years, NVAN planned and hosted regional conferences and undertook specific activities such as outreach to faith groups in the region. In 2006 NVAN won a national award from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

Organization

NVAN is an affiliation of the service providers and advocates who come together; it is not an incorporated organization. There are no dues. There are no members of NVAN and consequently, there is no voting at regular NVAN meetings. Decisions are made by consensus. The one exception is the voting on priorities for the next year's Legislative Platform.

NVAN holds regularly scheduled meetings on the third Tuesday of every other month [January, March, May, July, September and November]. In addition, NVAN holds a special meeting on the third Tuesday in April to brainstorm ideas for the next year's General Assembly legislative and budget platform. Since 2020, NVAN has met virtually.

The responsibility for chairing the meetings rotates among the Chairs of the five Commissions on Aging. The rotation of Chairs is outlined on each meeting agenda. The corresponding

Director is responsible for preparing the meeting summary of that meeting. The responsibilities of the AAA/CoA chairing the meeting are:

- Arranging for speaker
- Drafting the agenda and sending to the person responsible for sending out e-mails to NVAN} no less than 10 days before the next meeting
- Chairing the meeting
- Taking summary notes of meeting and sending them to NVAN e-mailer no less than 10 days before the next meeting

The agenda for the next meeting and summary of the previous meeting is sent out 10 days before the next meeting.

The Northern Virginia Regional Commission [NVRC] offers limited staff support. Prior to 2020, in-person meetings were held in their offices. NVRC serves as the fiscal agent for NVAN funds that are raised for the Legislative Breakfast, and they host the NVAN website:

<https://www.novaregion.org/353/Northern-Virginia-Aging-Network>.

Activities

NVAN's main activities are:

1. Hosting a short education program at the beginning of each bi-monthly meeting. The Commission Chair moderating the meeting identifies a speaker and arranges for the presentation.
2. Developing the annual Legislative Platform for the next year's General Assembly Session. NVAN has developed such an annual Platform since 1982. The Platform includes three legislative items and three budget items, as well as a listing of Continuing Concerns. The six items are selected at the May NVAN meeting by vote, from the list brainstormed in April.
 - Six committees are established at the May meeting – one for each of the six items. The committees each meet, generally remotely, to discuss, research, and fine-tune their assigned issue. They are charged with finalizing the language of the platform item and presenting it at the July NVAN meeting. The attendees at the July meeting may suggest modifications and then concur with the proposed language.
 - The six committees each develop a one-page background statement or “talking points” that advocates can use in their conversations with legislators. A deadline is given to the committee so that NVAN editors can work on the final version.
 - NVAN publishes an annual Platform “grip card” with the six priorities on the front and the continuing concerns on the back.
 - The governing bodies of the five local NVAN jurisdictions may adopt and or endorse items from the NVAN Platform, or the entire Platform, as part of their legislative agenda.

3. Holding a Legislative Breakfast at which the Platform is shared with the members of the Northern Virginia delegation to the General Assembly. The Breakfast is a large in-person event of between 150 and 200 aging advocates and service providers. (In 2020 and 2021, the Breakfast was a virtual event.)
 - A Breakfast Committee plans the event, by identifying a location, selecting a speaker and raising the funds for the event by recruiting sponsors. Breakfast participants pay a fee for the meal. NVAN members present the Platform items; and time is allotted for participants to converse with legislators.
 - See the more detailed Breakfast Committee outline [to be added]
4. Meeting with individual legislators, frequently remotely, to present the Platform and advocate for each of the legislative and budget items. A AAA Director may attend the meetings in their service area to provide context on the issue and answer questions about the impact to local constituents. One goal of these meetings is to encourage Legislators to agree to sponsor certain bills or to sponsor budget amendments for needs not included in the Governor's introduced budget. During the General Assembly session, NVAN tracks bills and budget amendments closely, and sends out alerts to its list of participants about needs for support.
5. Drafting occasional letters to policy makers to advocate for specific positions that have already been approved through the Platform process. An NVAN member volunteers to draft the letter, and it is reviewed by additional members. The letter must align with past Platform priorities. The letter is sent on NVAN letterhead and signed by the rotating Chair of the most recent NVAN meeting.
6. Collaborating with statewide groups on selected issues such as the Virginia Elder Rights Coalition and the Virginia Nursing Home Reform Coalition.