



## Programs in Aitkin County October 2020

*AEOA does not operate Head Start programming in Aitkin County.*

### **EMPLOYMENT and TRAINING**

**Adult Basic Education (ABE)**—AEOA’s Adult Education program provides a full spectrum of learning options for community members who are age 17 years or older and are not enrolled in or required to be enrolled in any school in the K-12 system. In addition, the individual must lack a secondary high school credential and/or function below the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level in any of the basic academic areas including reading, math, and ability to read, write and understand English. ABE services include: basic skill and computer training, GED preparation, English language learning (ELL), college and career preparation, and industry-specific training (i.e., entrepreneur training, carpentry pre-apprenticeship, ServSafe food manager certification, para-professional certification). Services are available in-person and on-line. Contact Denise Rodgers at (218) 910-8986 for assistance.

**CareerForce**—As a partner with CareerForce, AEOA provides under-employed and unemployed individuals with information on coping with unemployment, seeking and applying for employment, maintaining employment, as well as providing information on training opportunities and other forms of employment and training assistance. Job Clubs offer an opportunity for job seekers to network with other job seekers and to share experiences in their search for employment. For additional information, contact Luke Christensen at (218) 360-9896.

**Diversionsary Work Program (DWP)**—DWP is a four-month program that helps low-income Minnesota families find a job. The program is aimed at helping participants obtain employment quickly and preventing them from needing additional public assistance services. Most families are enrolled in this program when they first apply for County assistance and can only be referred to AEOA by a County Financial Worker. For additional information, contact Luke Christensen at (218) 360-9896.

**Minnesota Family Resiliency Program (MFRP)** - MFRP is a program provided to individuals who have transitioned from a relationship through separation, divorce, death, or disability. You must have provided unpaid household services for at least two years, have lost your primary source of income, and now find that you must support yourself or your family. Employment Counselors help individuals seek employment, assist in budgeting, teach stress management skills, and provide guidance and support, among other things. There are limited financial resources to assist clients with training costs, transportation, childcare, and housing assistance. For additional information, contact Luke Christensen at (218) 360-9896.

**Minnesota Dislocated Worker program (DW)**—DW helps workers who lost their job through no fault of their own find a new career. An individual typically must qualify for Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits to be eligible. DW staff work with the unemployed worker to re-enter the workforce in a stable job within a high-demand occupation. For eligibility to this program, you must be 18 years of age or older, worked six of the last 36 months, and have written documentation of your employment separation. For additional information, contact Luke Christensen at (218) 360-9896.

**Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)**—MFIP is the state’s public assistance program for low-income families with children. The program focuses on the overall family’s well-being and provides resources to move to employment quickly, whether this be through up-skilling or through help with interview and job search skills. Referral to this program can only be provided to AEOA by a County Financial Worker. For additional information, contact Luke Christensen at (218) 360-9896.

**Senior Community Service Employment (SCSEP)**—SCSEP is designed to promote part-time, temporary employment through which program participants are engaged in community service and receive work experience and job skills that can lead to unsubsidized employment. It is AEOA’s goal to enhance employment opportunities for older individuals and to promote older workers as a solution for businesses seeking a trained, qualified, and reliable workforce. This program serves individuals age 55 and over and has income eligibility guidelines. To receive more information on SCSEP, contact Jan Francisco at (218) 748-7332.

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**—SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps, is a program provided to adults with or without children who are seeking employment. AEOA Employment Counselors help SNAP clients in gaining the appropriate skills and abilities to obtain employment to gain self-sufficiency. For additional information, contact Luke Christensen at (218) 360-9896.

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP Outreach)**—The Adult Education program provides screening to community members to help them determine if they are eligible for SNAP services. That goal is to help people make an informed decision about what hunger resources are available to them to ensure an overall successful transition from poverty to self-sufficiency. For additional information, contact Denise Rodgers at (218) 910-8986.

## ***HOUSING***

**Business Energy Retrofit Program (BER)**—The Business Energy Retrofit Program is designed to educate and help assist businesses within the Taconite Assistance Area with energy-efficient decisions and aid in financing the energy retrofit project. The BER program will support and provide the business up to \$20,000 in eligible retrofit expenses or one-third of the total project up to \$60,000. Applicants are required to obtain bids from local contractors and submit with AEOA’s application. Businesses interested in participating in the BER program should contact Vince Meyer at (218) 735-6828.

**Downtown Building Rehab (DBR)** – The Downtown Building Rehabilitation Program (DBR) is designed to help aid in financing code compliant construction and remodeling projects on main streets in downtowns. The DBR Program will support and provide 1/3 project cost up to \$50,000 in eligible expenses. Up to 10% of awarded grant funding may be utilized for professional services such as an architect or engineer. Applicants are required to obtain prevailing wage compliant bids from local contractors and submit with AEOA’s application. For more information, contact Vince Meyer at (218) 735-6828.

## ***SENIOR SERVICES***

**Nutrition: Senior Dining & Meals on Wheels**— AEOA’s Nutrition services provide a full spectrum of services for seniors to live healthy and independently. In addition to nutritious meals, the service includes nutrition screening, assessment, and education. A Registered Dietitian completes a nutritional analysis and approves the cycle menus. Meals comply with the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans and provide a minimum of one-third of the dietary reference intakes established by the Food

and Nutrition Board. The program specifically targets older adults 60 years of age or older with the greatest economic or social need, with attention to disabled, low-income, and minority individuals, as well as older adults in rural communities, older adults with limited English proficiency, and older adults at risk of institutional care. To complete a registration form and verify eligibility, contact the Senior Services Department at (218) 735-6899.

- a. **Bundled Service Program**—For dining patrons 60 years of age or older who live in remote areas, AEOA’s Bundled Services program makes twice-a-month deliveries to seniors that offers prepared meals that are frozen, food shelf commodities, and Nutritional Assistance Program for Seniors (NAPS) food box. Bundled Services also serves as a safety net for participants as telephone contacts, and check-ins offer opportunities to convey their day-to-day concerns.
- b. **Meals on Wheels**—Also known as Home Delivered Meals, this is a service for dining patrons 60 years of age or older who have been assessed and are deemed “homebound.” Once prepared, the meals are packed for home delivery by volunteers. Service is available at a discounted rate. For many home-delivered meals recipients, the volunteer delivering the meal may be the recipient’s only human contact of the day.
- a. **Senior Dining**—Dining services are offered at numerous locations such as senior housing, community or senior centers, and some restaurants for individuals 60 years of age or older. Dining patrons enjoy the company of peers, great conversation, and meals that provide over 40% of the daily intake of most key ingredients. Dining is open to all individuals 60 years of age or older with the opportunity for a reduced rate. Call (218) 735-6899 for dining locations.

**Senior Carnival/Expo**—Annually, AEOA hosts an All-County Senior Carnival/Expo. This event is held at the Eveleth Range Recreation and Civic Center in June. The event attracts hundreds of seniors of all ages from the seven-county region. The day is filled with fun and games, exhibitors, demonstrations, and entertainment. The Center is decorated in a festive carnival theme so that attendees feel like they are attending an old-fashioned carnival. To volunteer or request information, contact Senior Services at (218) 735-6899.

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP Outreach)**—AEOA’s Senior Services staff and the Adult Basic Education program provides screening to community members to help them determine if they are eligible for SNAP services. The goal is to help people make an informed decision about what hunger resources are available to them to ensure an overall successful transition from poverty to self-sufficiency. For more information or to apply, contact Kelsey Gantzer at (218) 404-8466 or email [kelsey.gantzer@aeoa.org](mailto:kelsey.gantzer@aeoa.org) or Marilyn Ocepek at (218) 748-7325 or email [marilyn.ocepek@aeoa.org](mailto:marilyn.ocepek@aeoa.org).

## **TRANSIT**

**Dial-a-Ride**— Arrowhead Transit’s Dial-a-Ride is an on-demand system that provides transportation to individuals in our service areas. Passengers only need to call our dispatch at 800-862-0175 and select the number for their county or city. All transit buses are ADA accessible and drivers are trained to assist passengers on and off the buses. To participate in Arrowhead Transit’s Dial-a-Ride service, dial 800-862-0175 for Aitkin County.

**Rural Rides Program** — Rural Rides is a transportation program, assisting individuals in Aitkin County to get to and from work, job-search activities, or job-specific training. Each person is provided an individualized transportation plan that utilizes public transportation, volunteer drivers, and ride share resources to meet their temporary transportation needs. To learn more on Rural Rides in Aitkin County, contact Luke Christensen at (218) 360-9896.

**Scheduled Services**—Arrowhead Transit has scheduled stops and provides a Dial-A-Ride Service in many areas. For information on Arrowhead Transit Services in your area, visit [www.arrowheadtransit.com](http://www.arrowheadtransit.com) or dial 800-862-0175.

**Volunteer Driver Program** – The Volunteer Driver Program assists individuals on Medical Assistance to get to and from medical appointments. Arrowhead Transit has contracts with four major insurance companies and with various counties in the area. The Volunteer Program encourages the individual to contact their insurance provider to see if they qualify for the program. The Volunteer Driver Program operates in eight counties including Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, Pine, and St. Louis, and can perform medical rides in other counties in Greater Minnesota as requested by the insurance companies. To learn more about the Volunteer Driver Program, please contact Colette Hanson at (218) 735-6814 or Martin Lepak at (218) 410-9755.



## Aitkin County Services

### Mission:

AEOA's mission is to strengthen communities by providing opportunities for people experiencing social and economic challenges. AEOA provides services to community members through five major departments including Employment and Training, Head Start, Housing, Senior Services, and Arrowhead Transit. Not all departments operate programs in every county within AEOA's service area.



### Key staff and board members:

Executive Director: Scott Zahorik

Department Directors: Jan Francisco (Employment & Training); Emily Celley (Fiscal Services); Skip Ferris (Head Start); Cathy Pazzelli (Human Resources and Assistant Executive Director); Dave Johnson (Housing Services); Beth Peterson (Planning); Marilyn Ocepek (Senior Services); Jack Larson (Arrowhead Transit).

AEOA Board: The Agency is governed by a 27-member board, representing an equal cross-section of low-income individuals, public officials, and private sector parties. Currently, there is one representative of Aitkin County on the Board.

Board Officers: Jeff Kletscher (Chair), Kevin Adee (Vice-Chair); Laura Perry (Second Vice-Chair); Dana Waldron (Secretary); Tom Cvar (Treasurer)

**Number of staff members:** Two (2) employees work in Aitkin County.

**Contact information:** Birch Street Center, 20 3<sup>rd</sup> Street NE, Aitkin, MN 56431  
(218) 735-6123, 800-243-3209; <http://www.aeo.org>

### In Aitkin County, AEOA served...

- Last year, approximately 83 people who were low-income, on public assistance, or were dislocated workers were assisted with employment- and/or education-related needs.
- Adult Basic Education provided service to 17 Aitkin County residents. This could include basic skills improvement, GED preparation, college and career readiness, employment skills, digital literacy, life skills, and English language learning.
- Senior Employment Programs provided two (2) individuals with an opportunity to build a pathway into employment for our low-income, older citizens, ages 55 and older. Entering the workforce, they learn and apply new skills while earning a paycheck.
- The Business Energy Retrofit program assisted three (3) community business owner in achieving energy related improvements.
- Senior Nutrition provided 15,460 nutritious meals to seniors, roughly averaging 42 meals per day. Of those meals, 9,167 were delivered to older people who are homebound.
- Arrowhead Transit provided 14,105 rides to Aitkin County passengers, totaling 47,252 miles.
- Rural Rides provided 1,635 work-related rides to obtain or maintain employment.
- The Volunteer Driver Program had 7 volunteers and provided 3,067 rides.

*AEOA is committed to continuing our strong partnerships within Aitkin County. We are proud of the work we do to help struggling households meet their basic needs met; homebound seniors live in their own homes; and to help people find work and have the transportation to get there. We currently have two (2) people working in Aitkin County who contribute to the local economy and are very dedicated to the services they provide.*