



## Programs in Cook County October 2020

### ***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 Tracy Chase at (218) 259-4524 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 Cindy Slater at (218) 878-5004.

**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 assistance with DWP, contact Anna Ross at (218) 410-5317.

**Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM)**—The FAIM program is a matched savings project to help low-wage earners build assets through purchase of a home, pursuit of higher education, or launching a small business. Eligible participants can place up to \$40 a month from their earned income into Family Asset Accounts which will be matched 3:1. Income limits apply, and participants are provided financial literacy and asset-specific education in either homeownership, college preparation, or business development. For eligibility requirements, contact Tracy Chase at (218) 259-4524.

**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 Cindy Slater at (218) 878-5004.

**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 Cindy Slater at (218) 878-5004.

**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 Cindy Slater at (218) 878-5004.

**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 Cindy Slater at (218) 878-5004.

**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. Contact Cindy Slater at (218) 878-5004 for additional information and assistance.

**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 Tracy Chase at (218) 259-4524.

## ***HEAD START***

**Early Head Start**—Early Head Start provides early, continuous, intensive, and comprehensive child development and family support services to low-income infants and toddlers and their families and pregnant women and their families. The principles are designed to nurture healthy attachments between the parent and child; emphasize a strengths-based, relationship-centered approach to services; and encompass the full range of a family’s needs from pregnancy through a child’s third birthday. Applications are always welcome. Call Jerry Crittenden at (218) 748- 7351 for additional information.

**Head Start**—Head Start provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children and their families from birth until the child’s fifth birthday. The program’s services and resources are designed to foster stable family relationships, enhance children’s physical and emotional well-being, and establish an environment to develop strong

cognitive skills. For eligibility requirements or enrollment questions, contact Jerry Crittenden at (218) 748-7351.

## **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.

**Energy Assistance Program (EAP)**—AEOA's Energy Assistance Program helps low-income residents heat their home throughout the winter by providing help and information needed to manage their fuel costs. The program provides financial grants to be used toward energy costs for residential heating bills with additional funds available for crisis situations and energy related repairs. Households must provide verification of their incomes for the eligibility period to qualify for this program. For information on energy conservation practices or to apply for services, call (218) 735-6839 or (844) 568-0149.

**Homebuyer Assistance/First-time Homebuyer**—The Homeownership Assistance Program is designed to promote and encourage homeownership by providing training and counseling to first-time homebuyers. We conduct a series of Homestretch Workshops, open to anyone interested in learning how to buy a home. The classes are open to anyone currently in or interested or previous homeowners. Down payment and closing cost assistance may be available to income-eligible, qualified first-time homebuyers who complete the workshop. For eligibility requirements or to register for the Homestretch Workshop, contact Autumn Holweger at 218-735-6895 or Sandy O'Fallon at (218) 999-0828.

**Homeless Services**—AEOA's homeless services are designed to keep community members housed, either through prevention resources or rapid rehousing. This includes assistance in finding housing and other support services, as well as direct assistance with rent, security deposits, mortgage, and other assistance targeted for families, single adults, and youth who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Those experiencing homelessness or precariously housed should start the eligibility process by calling 211 for an intake.

**Single Family Rehabilitation** - AEOA administers a variety of programs for eligible homeowners to make basic improvements to the safety, livability, energy efficiency and accessibility of their home. Examples of improvements include: electrical wiring, furnace or boiler replacement, window and door replacements, siding and roofing, plumbing and septic system upgrades, mold and radon mitigation and

lead-based paint hazards. You may be eligible if you: own and occupy your home, are current with property tax and mortgage payments, have homeowner's insurance and meet program income limits. To request additional information, contact Kim Perrella at (218) 735-6879.

**Weatherization Assistance Program**—Weatherization Assistance services are available to income-eligible homeowners. AEOA's highly qualified Energy Auditors provide client education and perform energy audits to evaluate energy usage. AEOA's experienced and Skilled Work Crews will then complete improvements to reduce heating costs. Examples of improvements include: exterior wall and attic insulation, air sealing, and home heating systems repair. Services are free for low-income households who qualify. For additional information, contact Liz Iammatteo at (218) 735-6822.

## ***SENIOR SERVICES***

**Bone Builder Classes**—Bone Builders is an RSVP Signature Program, developed by the research from Tufts University. Participants use a combination of weight-bearing exercises, balance, and strength training guided by a trained instructor. The idea behind the program is to increase muscle and bone density in seniors, reducing the risk of falls associated with osteoporosis. To find locations and dates of Bone Builder classes, contact Kirsten Ryden at (218) 409-5991.

**Food Shelves**—AEOA provides 501(c)3 status to seven Food Shelves across St. Louis County to provide emergency and short-term assistance to income-eligible individuals and families who have run out of options to alleviate hunger. Food Shelves currently operate in Aurora, Babbitt, Chisholm, Ely, Mt. Iron, Proctor, and Tower. Visit [www.aeo.org](http://www.aeo.org) or contact Dani Pieratos at [dani.pieratos@aeo.org](mailto:dani.pieratos@aeo.org) or call (218) 748-7328 for details on eligibility requirements and hours of operation.

**Medicare Partners** – Medicare Partners is a program which serves the same purpose as a Medicare supplement insurance policy to take care of medical costs that are not paid by Medicare. Unlike an insurance policy, SPC does not pay out any money. SPC provides access to a service that writes off 20% of Medicare patient responsibility bills which are not reimbursed by Medicare if a member uses a member provider and has a Medicare approved treatment. SPC is for people whose income is too large to be on Medicaid (Medical Assistance) but too low to afford a supplemental insurance policy. For more information or to apply, contact AEOA Medicare Partners at (218) 735-6826 or (218) 735-6899.

**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. **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.

- b. 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).

**Volunteer Opportunities: Arrowhead RSVP and Northland Volunteer Center**—The Arrowhead RSVP engages persons 55 and better in volunteer services to meet critical community needs and to provide a high-quality experience to enrich their lives. Northland Volunteer Center promotes volunteering by assisting people of all ages—including families—to find meaningful volunteer opportunities in their communities. Volunteer opportunities involve helping children read, delivering Meals on Wheels, preserving the natural environment, providing tourist information, friendly visiting, and more. For volunteer opportunities in your community, contact Patty Stensland Arrowhead RSVP at (218) 410-3090 or (218) 748-6832 and Kirsten Ryden in the Duluth area at (218) 409-5991.

## **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 Cook County.

**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

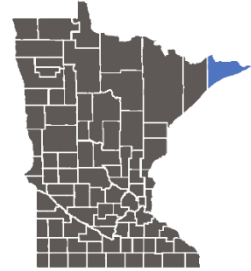
get to and from medical appointments. Arrowhead Transit has contracts with four major insurance companies and with various counties in the area. The Volunteer Program encourages the individual to contact their insurance provider to see if they qualify for the program. The Volunteer Driver Program operates 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.



## Cook 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 are three (3) representatives of Cook County on the Board.

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

**Number of staff members:** Four (4) employees work in Cook County

**Contact information:** Cook County Higher Education Office, 300 W 3rd St Grand Marais 55604, Grand Marais, MN 55604 (218) 878-5004; <http://www.aeo.org>

### In Cook County, AEOA served...

- Adult Basic Education provided service to 13 Cook County residents. This could include basic skills improvement, GED preparation, college and career readiness, employment skills, digital literacy, life skills, and English language learning.
- Last year, approximately 40 people who were low-income, on public assistance, or were dislocated workers were assisted with employment-related needs.
- Senior Employment Programs provided one (1) individual 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.
- Housing Services assisted three (3) individuals who were homeless in the past year.
- AEOA's Energy Assistance Program provided support to 182 households, including 81 crisis situations; and 7 energy-related repairs were provided.
- The Business Energy Retrofit program assisted one (1) community business owners in achieving energy related improvements.
- Arrowhead RSVP had 126 volunteers who donated over 8,263 hours, serving 19 Cook County non-profits, running the gamut from cultural heritage work to assisting natural resources organizations.

- RSVP Bone Builders in Cook County had two (2) sites Tofte and Lutsen with seven (7) volunteers who served 419 hours leading Bone Builders classes.
- Senior Nutrition provided 17,374 nutritious meals to seniors, roughly averaging 24 meals per day. Of those meals, 3,055 were delivered to older people who are homebound.
- Medicare Partners served 4 clients in Cook County.
- The Food Shelf served 426 individuals, providing over 53,020 pounds of food over 1,300 visits in calendar year 2019.
- Arrowhead Transit provided 20,063 rides to Cook County passengers, totaling 81,839 miles.
- Rural Rides provided 1,118 work-related rides to obtain or maintain employment.
- The Volunteer Driver Program had 11 volunteers and provided 43 rides.

*AEOA is committed to continuing our strong partnership with Cook 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 four (4) people working in Cook County who contribute to the local economy and are very dedicated to the services they provide.*