

NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**

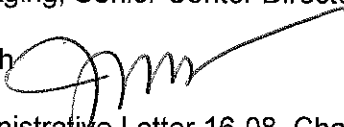
ROY COOPER • Governor

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JOYCE MASSEY-SMITH, MPA •  
Director, Division of Aging and Adult Services

**DAAS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO. 19-01**

**TO:** Area Agencies on Aging, Senior Center Directors

**FROM:** Joyce Massey-Smith 

**SUBJECT:** Rescinding of Administrative Letter 16-08, Charging Fees in Senior Centers

**DATE:** January 17, 2019

The purpose of this letter is to rescind Administrative Letter 16-08 that required senior centers to provide 60% of its health promotion, social, education and recreational activities to be provided at no charge. The intent of Administrative Letter 16-08 was to clarify previous Administrative Letter 11-07 and assure accessibility for those 60 and older to senior center programs and services funded by the Older Americans Act. The issuance of Administrative Letter 16-08 led to confusion and concerns about long-term impact.

The Division conducted a survey of the area agencies on aging and senior centers to gather input and suggestions on the new policy and how to better address the 60% requirement. Although the Division appreciated the input and suggestions it received, many of the suggestions offered would require all centers to be individually analyzed in specific detail based on the criteria chosen:

The following points were considered in making this decision:

- This policy seems at odds with the business acumen topic that we've been talking and training about, as well as the development of additional funding streams for accessibility;
- No other state prescribes a percentage so there is not a policy citation for support;
- If a center is successful in expanding its offerings through private revenue it frees the HCCBG dollars for services;
- There are concerns about long-term impact because we don't know what future funding looks like, nor can we predict future funding/funding cuts. If the long-term impact is negative, centers may be unable to replace this funding with revenue generated from the fees that would need to be charged for sustainability;
- A center that offers more activities must offer more at no cost. The equality of this comes into question since this could create difficulty for centers conducting a large number of activities to recover costs;
- Although many centers already offer mostly free programming, centers that are charging fees are thriving centers where charging fees does not seem to negatively impact attendance. Moreover, these centers usually offer scholarships or do not turn a person away if there is an inability to pay; and

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- Monitoring of the policy has the potential to be difficult because it is not objective, especially in terms of equity and quality.

Therefore, effective immediately, Administrative Letter 16-08 is rescinded. There is no longer a requirement for 60% of a senior center's health promotion, social, educational and recreational activities to be provided at no charge.

**Effective July 1, 2019, any senior center that receives Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) funding for senior center operations must have a policy that allows participants the opportunity to participate in fee-based activities if they are unable or unwilling to pay a required fee. Senior centers receiving General Purpose funding are expected to adhere to the requirements of the Older Americans Act and therefore should also have a policy that assures *programmatic accessibility* for all.**

The policy and process to provide opportunities for programmatic access to people who cannot afford, or are unwilling to pay, must provide complete confidentiality and to assure participant privacy and should be written to fulfill the intent of the Older Americans Act "a service provider that receives funds under this part may not deny any older person a service because the older person will not, or cannot, contribute to the cost of the service" [*Older Americans Act, Title II Regulations, Section 1321.67(d)*]. However, the policy should consider including exclusions such as expensive special events or trips.

Senior centers are strongly encouraged to offer a variety of free activities, regardless of how the center is funded.

This policy is intended only for activities and programs offered by the senior center and is separate from other HCCBG funded *services* requiring free access.

Effective September 1, 2019, area agency on aging staff will assure that an appropriate policy is in place when monitoring senior center operations. The senior center operations monitoring tool will be updated accordingly to address these changes.

Please be aware that Administrative Letter 11-07 is still in place. And, as a reminder, senior center staff **cannot** charge fees for the following:

- admission to the senior center for those 60 and older, even those 60 and older that live outside the center's catchment area (city, town, county and state); and
- admission, registration, "swipe" cards for participation, or replacement cards.

Additionally, HCCBG funds cannot be used to provide for scholarships for people to attend an activity with a required fee.

Please contact Leslee Breen ([leslee.breen@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:leslee.breen@dhhs.nc.gov)) if you have any questions.