§ 1321.53 Mission of the area agency.

(a) The Older Americans Act intends that the area agency on aging shall be the leader relative to all aging issues on behalf of all older persons in the planning and service area. This means that the area agency shall proactively carry out, under the leadership and direction of the State agency, a wide range of functions related to advocacy, planning, coordination, inter-agency linkages, information sharing, brokering, monitoring and evaluation, designed to lead to the development or enhancement of comprehensive and coordinated community based systems in, or serving, each community in the planning and service area. These systems shall be designed to assist older persons in leading independent, meaningful and dignified lives in their own homes and communities as long as possible.

(b) A comprehensive and coordinated community based system described in paragraph (a) of this section shall:

1. Have a visible focal point of contact where anyone can go or call for help, information or referral on any aging issue;

2. Provide a range of options;

3. Assure that these options are readily accessible to all older persons: The independent, semi-dependent and totally dependent, no matter what their income;

4. Include a commitment of public, private, voluntary and personal resources committed to supporting the system;

5. Involve collaborative decision-making among public, private, voluntary, religious and fraternal organizations and older people in the community;

6. Offer special help or targetted resources for the most vulnerable older persons, those in danger of losing their independence;

7. Provide effective referral from agency to agency to assure that information or assistance is received, no matter how or where contact is made in the community;

8. Evidence sufficient flexibility to respond with appropriate individualized assistance, especially for the vulnerable older person;

9. Have a unique character which is tailored to the specific nature of the community;

10. Be directed by leaders in the community who have the respect, capacity and authority necessary to convene all interested persons, assess needs, design solutions, track overall success, stimulate change and plan community responses for the present and for the future.

(c) The resources made available to the area agency on aging under the Older Americans Act are to be used to finance those activities necessary to achieve elements of a community based system set forth in paragraph (b) of this section. For the purpose of assuring access to information and services for older persons, the area agency