

Changes Coming To Bond County Transit & Senior Meals Programs

Bond County Senior Center, Greenville, Illinois - www.bondseniors.org

Press Release
Bond County Senior Center
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Due to the absence of a state budget, AgeSmart, the regional area agency on aging that serves Bond County has announced a reduction in funding for the seven counties in their service area. "We have been notified that as of February 1, 2016, no funding will be made available to pay for transportation for seniors. In addition, funding for meals on wheels will be limited to only four days per week." said Center director, Anna Oestreich. This response to the budget impasse is in addition to the mandatory waiting list for those seeking meals on wheels that was implemented in October of this year.

In order to adjust to the reduction, the Center will not provide meals on Fridays. The building will remain open for other services. "If seniors would like to come and enjoy a social time on Fridays, they are more than welcome." Bond County is fortunate to have more than one funding stream for transportation, so unlike some areas, senior transportation will not disappear completely, but there will be an increase in the senior fare - \$1.50 per trip, which is still discounted from the regular adult fare. There will be no free rides. This affects all trips, including travel to doctors, hospitals, grocery stores, etc. It does not affect Medicaid trips or general public transit trips.

"We are urging anyone affected by the service cuts to call and write to our legislators, the Governor, and the Speaker. Citizens should be outraged at the fact that an inability to come to agreement on the Illinois budget is affecting those in our community who are the most vulnerable!" said Oestreich. A statewide survey conducted by the aging network this fall projected that by the end of February, 84,500 seniors across Illinois would be without services. In January, between 5,000 and 6,000 seniors lost home and community based services. Ninety FTE jobs have been lost. Bond County currently has 35 individuals across the county receiving meals on wheels and a dozen more that qualify on the waiting list. It is an established fact that home and community based services like meals on wheels and transportation permit people to maintain their dignity by remaining in their homes: happier, healthier, and at a lower cost to them, as well as to Illinois, than alternative options like nursing homes. Illinois' share of providing a home delivered meal to a senior for a whole year is less than the part A deductible for a single hospital admission!

Bond County Senior Center provides services that are not entirely paid for by state and federal sources and works very hard to raise additional funds just to cover the cost of basic services for

seniors. That amount for FY15 was over \$90,000. This is the case for providers of Older Americans Act services across the nation. "We simply can't raise enough to underwrite the complete cost of services over an extended period of time." The Center is preparing to begin a major annual nutrition fundraiser, March for Meals. It is hoped that community support for the event will be over the top this year, helping them to compete for a first place grant award of \$20,000 from Meals on Wheels Association of America. "That would be a huge financial boost for the program, and it wouldn't hurt our morale either!", said Oestreich.