



## **Guidelines**

### **DELEGATE ELECTION/SELECTION**

The Silver Haired Legislative Session (SHLS) body is comprised of 99 delegates and alternates. 75 delegates should be elected in county meetings, with one runner up that will serve as that delegate's alternate.

To assist in determining the number of delegates within your region to be selected, you will select one delegate with one runner up in each county within your area of responsibility. Each region will also appoint three alumni delegates, who will serve as delegates at large.

Elections shall not be held when there is only one candidate in a county. Every county in each Region should be represented. All remedies to obtain a delegate from each county should be exhausted before considering an alternate from another county. If a delegate is not available, one employee of the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is eligible to serve as SHLS delegates or alternates. This must be a last resort.

In addition to the 75 delegates who represent individual counties, there are 24 delegate-at-large positions. Each AAA Region should also appoint three at-large delegates who have served as SHLS delegates in a previous session. It is not necessary for each appointed delegate-at-large to have an alternate unless there are SHLS alumni willing to serve. An alternate that has previously received training may substitute for one of the at-large delegates.

Alumni delegates may solicit for their county delegate positions if they have not been selected as delegates at-large. The Division of Aging, Adult and Behavioral Health Services (DAABHS) encourages the Regions to solicit new delegates when possible. One of the goals for SHLS is to increase the pool of trained advocates.

County residents, age 60 or over, are qualified to be a candidate. The proposed candidate must obtain a Silver Haired Legislative Session Petition form and collect at least 25 signatures of older residents in his/her county. Candidates should submit completed petitions to their respective AAAs. All candidates should be given details of the county election meeting(s) as soon as possible after their completed Petition is properly received.

Extensive efforts by each AAA to publicize the petitions and the Silver Haired Legislative Session should be made. Potential candidates willing to circulate a petition have the commitment to become enthusiastic advocates. This is an important way to find new advocates and give them a chance to become knowledgeable about AAA programs and the legislative process.

DAABHS will write a press release that will be sent to several Arkansas media outlets. Area Agencies on Aging are encouraged to submit the press release to their local media outlets using their office contact information.

It is recommended the AAAs also locally publish requirements to be a candidate, date, time, and location of the county election meetings, as well as when the announcement of the delegate and alternate will be made.

## **ELECTION OF DELEGATES**

The AAA is responsible for conducting a meeting in each county of their area of responsibility with the express purpose of electing a delegate and an alternate.

The prescribed method of voting shall be on written ballots prepared by the AAA, listing the names of all county candidates. If possible, volunteers, such as former Silver Haired delegates or aging network personnel, should be on hand to conduct the meetings and oversee the balloting. Assistance should be available for those who have difficulty reading or writing. Transportation for senior participants should be a priority with providers to ensure attendance by Senior Center participants who want to vote.

The time and location of the meetings are at the discretion of the AAA. The AAA should set the date of each county election meeting as early as possible so potential candidates will know if they are available on the day of the election.

At the election meeting, each SHLS candidate should be given the opportunity to make a short 3-5 minute speech. You may choose to invite elected officials or candidates for state and local offices to address those in attendance. The names and addresses of those in attendance should be recorded.

## **DELEGATE/ALTERNATE INFORMATION SHEETS AND LISTS**

Each AAA should send DAABHS a list of the delegates and alternates with names, addresses, and phone numbers as soon as the elections and selections are complete. The attached delegate information sheet should be filled out by each delegate and alternate. This is also important information for the instructor(s) to tailor the training to specific groups.

## **TRAINING FOR DELEGATES AND ALTERNATES**

A one to two day training session will be held for all the delegates and alternates in each region. The curriculum will be similar to the one used for past sessions, with segments on familiarization with the Aging Network, the mechanics of the legislative process, writing bills and resolutions, communicating with elected officials, and orientation on House procedures. DAABHS will provide the training materials that may be utilized in whole or in part. The expenses for the training session should be covered by the AAA (meals, lodging, and mileage for delegates and alternates).

Since one of the main reasons for the SHLS is to train senior Arkansans to be effective advocates, the alternates will be expected to attend the training. Any alternate that may be substituting for a delegate who becomes unable to attend the SHLS must have attended the training. The delegates and alternates may attend training in another Region if they are unable to attend in their own. If it becomes necessary, an AAA may use an alternate from another Region to represent an absentee delegate at the SHLS session.

Each AAA will need to arrange for a legislator to talk to the delegates about his/her experiences with the legislative process. Please request the legislator to speak on the realities of serving in the General Assembly and be willing to answer questions from the trainees on how to communicate with their elected officials.

## **BILL WRITING SESSIONS**

Each region will have a bill writing session for its delegates unless the bill writing has taken place during the two day training session. Only three pieces of legislation will be accepted from each AAA and each must contain a need or problem as well as a solution. These must be submitted to DAAS, in the correct format.

## **THE SESSION**

The SHLS will be in August 2024. AAAs should coordinate the delegate's transportation to Little Rock. The Wyndham Hotel will bill each AAA for the delegates, alternates, and staff from its Region. Alternates and observers are encouraged to attend. They will sit in the gallery seats during the general session and in observer seats while the committees are meeting.

On the first day of the SHLS Session delegates should attend a 11:00 luncheon at the Wyndham Hotel. They will then be transported to the State Capitol to adjourn to committee rooms where the bills are introduced, debated, and fine-tuned to pieces of legislation that will be voted on the following day. Four committee rooms have been reserved. SHLS delegates will chair the committees and, if requested by bill sponsors, experts may be invited to address the committee meetings. DAABHS staff will assist the committee chairman. DAABHS staff will be available in each committee room to make update changes as needed to the legislation.

On the second day of the SHLS Session, the delegates will convene in the House Chamber for the general session and opening remarks by legislative officials. The Governor will be invited to address the Session.

During the general session, bill sponsors will speak for the bills. There will be a recess for the delegates and alternates to attend a luncheon in the committee rooms. Upon reconvening in the House Chambers, the delegates will debate and vote on each piece of legislation. DAABHS staff will work very closely with the Parliamentarian to ensure rules are followed as closely as possible during the session.

## **SHLS REPORTS**

A final report on the SHLS containing the bills and the proceedings of the session will be distributed to all SHLS delegates, AAA's, constitutional officers, state legislators, and other interested persons. The report will be placed on the DAAS Web site.

Questions about this information as well as all SHLS activities should be directed to the Division of Aging Adult and Behavioral Health Services, Gary Hinkle, at 501.320.6586 or [OAA@dhs.arkansas.gov](mailto:OAA@dhs.arkansas.gov).