



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Scott Walker, Governor
Linda Seemeyer, Secretary

July 26, 2017

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Ryan D. Jayne, Esq.
Freedom From Religion Foundation
P.O. Box 750
Madison, WI 53701

Dear Mr. Jayne,

Thank you for your letter regarding the involvement of the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of Southwest Wisconsin in a dementia workshop co-hosted by a church. Your letter requests that future ADRC events not include religious rituals and that all ADRC-sponsored events be open to all community leaders. Your request is consistent with current Department of Health Services (DHS) guidance to ADRCs.

ADRCs must be objective to serve as an unbiased source of information in the community. This direction is included in the DHS contract with the ADRCs and has been reiterated in DHS led meetings with ADRC leaders throughout the year. Specifically the contract states: "The ADRC shall be independent, objective, and unbiased and must ensure that its reputation in the community is of an objective and unbiased organization". (Section IV.I.1.)

In the situation you address in your letter, it was not the intent of the ADRC to appear to be hosting a religious event, although it is understandable upon review of the event flyer how a community member would come to that conclusion. Pastor Carolyn Kennedy contacted the Dementia Care Specialist (DCS) about providing information to faith community leaders in her network regarding dementia. The Dementia Friendly Community initiative charges DCSs with educating all sectors of the community about dementia, including but not limited to: banks, pharmacies, libraries, grocery stores, service organizations and faith-based organizations. Therefore, this type of organization-specific education is in the scope of the ADRC.

ADRCs should not prohibit any interested community leader from attending any informational event. An ADRC must maintain objectivity and, according to the event flyer, the ADRC did not maintain objectivity in regards to co-hosting the event with the Barneveld United Church of Christ. The ADRC has been notified of this oversight and instructed to be mindful in the future to maintain objectivity. In addition, ADRC leadership will receive a reminder of their obligations at the next scheduled Directors' meeting on August 2nd.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linda Seemeyer".

Linda Seemeyer
Secretary