



ALPA
Advocacy Leadership for Positive Aging
Empowering Self and Others

The ALPA Story 2016 – How We Are Promoting Positive Aging

The Seeds of Change, 2010 - 2013

At the 2010 Positive Aging Conference (PAC) in Los Angeles, a group of [Life Planning Network](#) (LPN) members started talking about their concern that too many older adults lack access to the inspiration, education and life planning advice that most professionals attending PAC provide. This came on the heels of the 2008 Recession that increased anxiety about economic insecurity among older adults who could benefit from life planning.

After several months of conference calls with two dozen interested participants around the country, Jan Hively and Mary Radu decided that the most efficient and effective strategy would be a “train the trainer” approach. They would develop a training program to expand the knowledge and leadership abilities of experienced service providers – both paid staff and volunteers. The providers would experience the self-advocacy model during their training, and would then facilitate use of the new learning with their clients, encouraging use of the client’s natural strengths and abilities.

The program that emerged empowers the providers as well as their older adult clients to understand and build on their strengths and identify community resources to meet their economic and social needs. Jan and Mary looked for how they could bring other professionals to collaborate with them on building a powerful life planning toolbox for Positive Aging. They worked by email and phone, Jan in Cape Cod and Mary in California, reaching out to 2010 PAC participants for input and to the LPN board for oversight. At the next PAC conference in 2011, over 50 people attended their workshop, commented on the draft approach, and generated ideas for promoting and recruiting community agencies to test the program.

In 2012, Hively and Radu recruited a college intern to assist in building an online platform for the curriculum. This Sociology student’s eyes were opened to the concepts of Positive Aging and the mentorship available from the two life planning professionals. Three speakers from prior PAC conferences; Peter Whitehouse from Case Western Reserve U, Helen Kivnick from the University of MN, and Ramsey Alwin, VP for Economic Security at the National Council on Aging, volunteered their expertise and recorded video presentations.

From Pilots to Paid Implementation, 2013 - 15

By mid-2013, the Advocacy Leadership for Positive Aging (ALPA) Training Program was ready for piloting. The LPN Professional Affairs Committee, headed by Joyce Cohen, reviewed the materials and endorsed ALPA as an LPN program. The first pilot program was launched in December 2013, thanks to a Minnesota LPN member, Kate Schaefer, who connected the dots and identified an ideal partner organization, [LifeSprk](#). LifeSprk’s approach to developing a life plan for and with each client served by their private-pay home health care program was a perfect match for the ALPA advocacy model. Sharon Roe Anderson, a leadership guru retired

from the Hubert Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs, added discussion materials to the curriculum in her role as co-facilitator with the LifeSprk VP, Pam Hursh. LifeSprk's management team participated in the ALPA pilot.

For the second pilot, in 2014, two LPN members in northern Virginia – Coach Eileen Caroscio and retired Senior Center manager Dorothy Keenan -- introduced the ALPA program to the Long Term Care Coordinating Committee for the Washington DC area. Quantum, a company that manages 15 public housing sites for low-income seniors in the Virginia, Maryland and Washington DC area, chose to host the program for its site managers. The two LPN members agreed to facilitate the Quantum pilot on a pro-bono basis. Other LPN members offered to act as coaches for individualized fieldwork projects.

In 2015, the ALPA program was offered as a paid implementation by the Town of Yarmouth, Massachusetts, for representatives from public, private, and non-profit organizations providing services for older adult residents. The ALPA Yarmouth program was offered in conjunction with the town's process for becoming an Age Friendly Community within the World Health Organization's network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities. Hosted by Kathleen Bailey, Yarmouth's Director of Aging Services, the program was coordinated by a Yarmouth Aging Services associate, Karen LeBlanc, and co-facilitated by Jan Hively (who is also the co-developer of the ALPA curriculum) and Janice Matheson – both from Yarmouth's Age Friendly Communities management team. The program was funded by the Tufts Health Foundation.

Harnessing the Power of Evaluation

The evaluation plan developed with ALPA's Evaluation Specialist, Sheila Tarbet, emphasized collecting formative data that could be used to make course corrections and strengthen the program. Feedback forms were collected from the participants and coordinators and reviewed with the curriculum developers after each session and at the end of the series. An intern from Sonoma State University helped with the process of collecting and analyzing feedback.

Substantial changes were made along the way, including: a) expanding discussion time by moving video presentations from classroom to homework assignments; b) preparing new powerpoint agendas to introduce each session; c) localizing information about resources for each pilot; and d) adding material to strengthen commitment to individual professional development and agency development. Evaluation results were shared with each host organization for use in assessing the impact of the ALPA training on the participants. Most important, the ALPA developers totally revised the free online curriculum and coordinator's guide based on the feedback reports, and incorporated ongoing evaluation in plans for the future.

The ALPA Pilots Evaluation Summary is shown on the ALPA website. The power of ALPA's process for learning and working together is clear. Gaining new knowledge, applying it through individualized fieldwork projects, and discussing results with peers has had a profound impact on how the service providers view themselves and their work, and on how they carry out their work with clients. Participants reported that ALPA helped them feel a greater sense of meaning and purpose, identify and use new resources to work with clients, use coaching skills with clients, and help clients advocate for themselves. Those who experienced ALPA felt inspired to work in ways that honor and strengthen the capabilities of their senior clients.

What's Next?

It's time for ALPA to evolve into a national action-learning program that empowers positive aging for senior service providers and their low and moderate income clients. Now a 501c-3 non-profit organization, the Life

Planning Network is promoting the ALPA training program on a partnership-fee basis to prospective host organizations across the country and internationally. The innovative web-based curriculum will be provided free as a community service by LPN. The costs for place-based implementation will continue to be covered by each host partner organization. Supported by a new advisory group, ALPA will seek funding for ongoing network coordination, web-based curriculum maintenance, and marketing expenses. Hosts will be responsible for program coordination/facilitation and related class training expenses. The responsibilities of both LPN and Host Partners are spelled out in a Memorandum of Agreement (shown in the “Host Partners” section of the ALPA website).

Host Partner Opportunities

An ALPA’s host partner may be any non-profit, public, or for-profit organization currently serving older adults. The organization wants to support leadership development training for staff/volunteers and to foster client self-help. ALPA will also seek out educational partners interested in providing ALPA training as continuing education that links research-based theory to work in the field. ALPA also wishes to partner with researchers interested in documenting the impacts of this innovative approach to serving older adults. LPN is well on its way to becoming an evangelist for Positive Aging by preparing senior service providers around the country to empower proactive life planning and self-advocacy. Check out the website and help us identify host partners who can benefit from participation. www.alpa.lifeplanningnetwork.org