



**The Buncombe County
LIVABLE and
AGING-FRIENDLY
COMMUNITY
Planning Task Force**

Goals, Objectives and
Recommendations
Presented to the Aging
Coordinating Consortium
of Buncombe County
December 6, 2007

Goals

In a livable and aging-friendly Buncombe County...

Goal 1: Financial Wellbeing

...resources, services and opportunities support and enhance the financial wellbeing of older adults and caregivers.

Goal 2: Health and Wellness

...the health care system maximizes wellness and health potential and meets the diverse and unique needs of older adults.

Goal 3: Social Engagement

...life enrichment opportunities engage older adults with people, places and programs.

Goal 4: Safety and Security

...home and community environments are safe and support self-sufficiency for older adults and caregivers.

Goal 5: Living Environments

...living environments (built and natural) support and enhance the functioning of older adults.

Goal 6: Service and Support Coordination

...a collaborative network of formal and informal services and supports is coordinated to meet the needs of older adults and caregivers.

Financial Wellbeing

MONEY MANAGEMENT

OBJECTIVE: Assist older adults who need help managing their daily and monthly income and expenses.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Expand services that help older adults manage their money, assets and credit.**
- 2. Provide education and resources to help older adults avoid scams.**

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS: (none identified as of 12/4/07)



FINANCIAL PLANNING

OBJECTIVE: Provide professional financial planning resources for all citizens, especially older adults and caregivers, regardless of their ability to pay.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS: (none identified as of 12/4/07)

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

Increase awareness of the importance of long-term financial planning (including for long-term care).

Ensure that older adults have access to professional financial planning resources.

Provide financial education across the life course, including age-appropriate standard course of study in public schools.

Develop affordable financial planning services.

Encourage attorneys to specialize in elder law.

Financial Wellbeing

INCOME SUPPLEMENTS

OBJECTIVE: Connect older adults and caregivers with all public and private income supplements (public/private benefits) for which they are eligible.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS: (none identified as of 12/4/07)

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

Refer to benefits as “income supplements” to remove stigma.

Educate service providers so they can make informed referrals for income supplements

Streamline the assessment and application processes for income supplements.



EMPLOYMENT & JOB TRAINING

OBJECTIVE: Provide employment and job training opportunities for all older adults who need or desire to work.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Engage the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses in an “Aging-Friendly Employers” initiative to include a systematic way of matching jobs with qualified, interested seniors, as well as providing a way to identify businesses that offer senior-discounts, provide easily accessible facilities, etc.**

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

Increase awareness of existing programs and resources for job training.

Educate employers about the benefits associated with older workers.

Offer regular job fairs specifically for older adults.

Encourage flexible employment practices that benefit older adults and caregivers (i.e., allowing employees to work from home, flexible schedules, etc).

Health and Wellness
Aging is Not a Disease

PREVENTION AND HEALTH PROMOTION

OBJECTIVE: Prioritize prevention and health promotion within the health care system to create a paradigm shift to healthy lifestyles for older adults.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. Assist older adults and caregivers to develop skills needed to achieve healthy lifestyle, e.g., in nutrition, exercise, disease management, fall prevention, and medication management.

2. Develop a comprehensive health and wellness information resource (e.g. website, information hotline, holistic elder care clinic).

3. Target education and outreach efforts in low-income and minority communities and address cultural medical mistrust.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

Provide affordable fitness opportunities for older adults, e.g., fitness clubs to offer discounts for older adults for use during off-peak times.

Health and Wellness
Aging is Not a Disease

GERIATRIC HEALTH CARE

OBJECTIVE: Provide a health care system that is designed to meet the unique needs of older adults in the following specific areas:

- Medical Care
- Mental Health Services/Substance Abuse

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Develop mobile and satellite assessment clinics that offer “one stop shopping” for older adults, including baseline comprehensive health and wellness assessments by trained geriatric professional referrals with access to community resources.**
- 2. Increase outpatient, long-term care, and assisted living facilities that can meet the needs of older adults with mental illness and/or dementia.**

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATION(S):

Provide assistance to older adults and caregivers to help them more easily navigate the medical system (e.g., elder advocates, care managers, and other transitional caregivers).

Expand continuing education opportunities for health and service providers about geriatric health care,—especially in areas of mental health, substance abuse, and dementia.

Increase availability of geriatric trained health care professionals, such as geriatricians, pharmacists, psychiatrists, dentists, and nurse practitioners.

Encourage and educate primary care providers to screen regularly for poly-pharmacy, dementia, delirium, depression, substance abuse, etc.

Reduce the stigma that prevents some older adults from seeking treatment for mental illness, substance abuse, and/or dementia.

Health and Wellness
Aging is Not a Disease

EXPANDED GERIATRIC CARE

OBJECTIVE: Expand health care for older adults to include complementary /alternative medicine (CAM), and dental care.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. Provide continuing education for health care providers about the benefits of including dental care and CAM therapies.

2. Provide training for dentists and CAM providers on the impact of aging, frailty, chronic disease, and risks associated with age (e.g., polypharmacy, delirium, depression, and dementia).

3. Develop a system of communication and sharing of information among all providers with attention to safety when combining both modalities.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATION(S):

Develop a database of CAM providers and their certifications.

Provide education to all health care practitioners and older adults about the importance of prevention in geriatric dental care.

Provide caregivers and older adults with oral/dental hygiene instructions.

Provide mobile dental care for frail or homebound older adults.

Health and Wellness
Aging is Not a Disease

ADEQUATE PAYMENT SYSTEM

OBJECTIVE: Advocate for a payment system that adequately pays for the health and wellness care for all older adults.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. Advocate for Medicare/Medicaid to expand coverage for health and wellness needs of older adults, including coverage of dental care, wellness programs, routine hearing tests (and hearing devices), eye exams, etc.**
- 2. Develop/expand Project Access for older adults.**

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATION(S):

Advocate for lower costs of supplemental health care insurance.

Encourage more dentists to accept Medicaid.

Social Engagement

ENGAGEMENT

OBJECTIVE: Promote participation and leadership in civic and volunteer roles that draw upon the diverse skills, wisdom, and life experiences of older adults.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. Expand community transportation to include service for older adults to participate in volunteer and civic opportunities.**
- 2. Train and encourage non-profits and community leaders in the recruitment and retention of older volunteers, in utilizing older adults as volunteers in professional roles, and in outreach to diverse populations of older adults.**

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATION(S):

Engage homebound older adults in volunteer and civic opportunities, for example through a “buddy system.”

Encourage service providers and volunteer coordinators to refer older adults to volunteer opportunities.

Promote awareness of civic engagement and volunteer opportunities for older adults through comprehensive and up-to-date listings (i.e., local media outlets, “Welcome Wagon,” Hand-On Asheville, on-line listings, etc.).

Expand civic engagement training for low-income and minority older adults.

Promote the benefits of civic and volunteer engagement by older adults for community and individual wellness.

Provide support and appreciation for older adults engaged in volunteer and civic activities (e.g., stipends).

Social Engagement

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

OBJECTIVE: Provide a wide range of lifelong learning, cultural, and recreational opportunities to meet the needs of older adults with diverse interests and abilities.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. Encourage collaboration among existing programs to eliminate competition for audience and resources.**
- 2. Promote awareness of lifelong learning, cultural and recreational opportunities for older adults**

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATION(S)

Develop programs to promote awareness of diversity and cultural differences among older adults.

Expand availability of daytime cultural programs and opportunities for older adults with special needs, including compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Provide lifelong learning, cultural and recreational opportunities for older adults at a sliding fee scale and in locations throughout the county.

Encourage all Senior Centers in Buncombe County to achieve “Center of Excellence” status.

Utilize animals in social opportunities, especially for homebound and institutionalized older adults.

Encourage computer access, computer-literacy, and on-line learning opportunities for older adults and caregivers.

Safety and Security

CITIZEN SAFETY

OBJECTIVE: Promote and provide for the safety and protection of older adults, especially those most vulnerable.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. Expand education that addresses elder abuse, fraud, domestic violence and safe sex practices for older adults.**
- 2. Promote awareness of Senior Reassurance and Elder Crime Prevention programs offered.**
- 3. Build and strengthen collaboration among community stakeholders to help keep older adult safe from fraud and scams (e.g., banks, Better Business Bureau, Department of Social Services, Buncombe County Sheriff's Department, etc.).**
- 4. Advocate for passage of the Adult Protective Services Clearinghouse Model by the North Carolina State Legislature.**
- 5. Continue to increase the number of adult care homes that are participating in Quality Initiative for Improvement.**

OTHER RECOMMENDATION(S):

Collaborate with Department of Motor Vehicles to promote older adult driver safety.

Fund Project Lifesaver

Safety and Security

DISASTER PLANNING

OBJECTIVE: Promote planning and preparedness for disasters and emergencies with special attention to older adults at greatest risk.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. Create a centralized database that includes older adults with medical needs and other vulnerabilities.**
- 2. Assist older adults and caregivers with developing emergency preparedness plans.**
- 3. Participate in the North Carolina Disability and Elderly Emergency Management (DEEM) Initiative and utilize in local planning.**

OTHER RECOMMENDATION(S):

Encourage older adults and caregivers to plan and prepare for emergencies.

Living Environments

HOUSING

OBJECTIVE: Provide a broad range of options that promote physical safety and independence for older adults, in a setting of their choice.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. Educate the community about the safety needs and resources related to housing location, design and construction, as well as the impact that individual housing decisions have on the desire to “age in place.”**
- 2. Encourage older adults to use community resources to identify potential risks and hazards in and around their homes.**
- 3. Expand and strengthen working relationships among organizations offering home modification and repair services.**
- 4. Incorporate Healthy Built Home & energy efficient features in future developments.**
- 5. Advocate that publicly funded development meet Universal Design criteria to benefit all ages and abilities.**

OTHER RECOMMENDATION(S):

Increase use of monitoring and filtering systems for air, water, and environmental quality.

Provide a range of housing options (both existing and new construction) at various levels of affordability including more public housing.

Ensure that the definition of “affordable” housing takes into account all utilities, taxes, and association dues, in addition to, home and property maintenance.

Explore and consider possibilities (e.g. land use planning) that allow for accessory dwelling units (granny flats) and co-housing communities.

Concentrate new housing options near employment, shopping, healthcare, transportation, and other community services.

Provide and protect public commons, parks, community gardens, and other gathering spaces, especially those near where older adults live.

Living Environments

TRANSPORTATION

OBJECTIVE: Improve safe travel options for older adults to and from their destinations.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. Conduct walk-ability audits to identify and remedy pedestrian safety concerns, particularly near bus stops (including lack of or broken sidewalks, barriers presented by round-a-bouts, crosswalk areas and the timing of signal changes).**
- 2. Include transportation services for older adults in updated services directory (include cost and personal assistance provided, if any).**
- 3. Develop a system to identify the transportation provider of those older adults who are “dropped off” and “picked up” at appointments and who require assistance in arranging their return transportation.**
- 4. Provide shelters and sitting areas at all bus stops.**

OTHER RECOMMENDATION(S):

Select appropriate residential and commercial street lighting and focus it more effectively on walking and driving surfaces to improve pedestrian and driver safety.

Consider best practices for road sign placement and size, as well as street numbers, for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers.

Provide incentives for older adults to participate in driver safety programs and refresher courses, such as providing programs at locations serving older adults and advocating for NC insurance companies to recognize and reward participation in such programs.

Encourage Department of Motor Vehicles to adhere to policy for license renewal (license restrictions or physician-certified eye exams where indicated).

Explore ride-share and volunteer driver programs as models to implement in Buncombe County.

Expand community transportation to include service for social engagement and other non-medical needs of older adults.

Lower age limit to 60 for free bus pass.

Provide transportation vouchers that allow low-income older adults to afford and utilize taxi services.

Provide ongoing training for all transportation providers on the special needs of older and disabled adults.

Minimize risk of transfer of viruses or diseases in public transportation.



NATURAL RESOURCES

OBJECTIVE: Improve air, water, and soil quality to enhance the health and wellbeing of older adults.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. Provide incentives and education that would encourage energy and water conservation measures.

2. Advocate that air, water and soil quality standards meet the needs of the most vulnerable older adults.

OTHER RECOMMENDATION(S):

Support advocacy and education efforts for smoke-free environments for older adults.

Advocate for reduced concentrations of exhaust fumes associated with industry, development, and transportation systems, especially where older adults congregate.

Ensure public boards and commissions engage older adults in land-use planning.

Service and Support Coordination

AWARENESS

OBJECTIVE: Promote public awareness about the needs of, and resources available for, older adults and caregivers.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. Offer effective and ongoing public awareness campaigns that address ageism, the needs of older adults, the needs of caregivers, and the resources available in the community (utilizing local media outlets, “Welcome Wagon,” 2-1-1, on-line listings, etc.).**
- 2. Coordinate training opportunities for staff of aging services providers about the needs of, and resources for, older adults and caregivers.**
- 3. Develop and maintain comprehensive, senior resource directory in print and on-line.**

OTHER RECOMMENDATION(S):

Assess and plan for changing needs as boomers age and evaluate resources according to these changing needs.

Service and Support Coordination

ACCESSIBILITY

OBJECTIVE: Ensure that all services for older adults and caregivers are accessible to those who need them.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. Expand community transportation to allow greater access to services and resources.

OTHER RECOMMENDATION(S):

Advocate for increased Home and Community Care Block Grant funding to adequately meet the needs of older adults and caregivers (i.e., address long wait-lists).

Create user-friendly automated phone systems for services and programs accessed by older adults.

Expand availability of affordable caregiver respite services.

Ensure affordability and/or payment options for all services.

Increase availability of one-on-one professional case assistance services.

Recruit and train care navigators and personal advocates.

Service and Support Coordination

COORDINATION

OBJECTIVE: Create a coordinated network of services and providers that is designed to meet the needs of older adults and caregivers

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. Promote a culture of client/consumer-centered service delivery among formal and informal providers.**
- 2. Ensure funding processes are objective, accountable, and outcomes-driven**
- 3. Define and develop best practice models to utilize as standards that inform funding processes.**
- 4. Coordinate planning efforts (re: health care and other service needs) among local community (city/county) and regional (Region B/Western North Carolina) entities to promote streamlined survey/data collection efforts and compatibility between data sets.**

OTHER RECOMMENDATION(S):

Prioritize funding for programs and services that demonstrate effective collaboration and/or coordination.

Prioritize funding to minimize unnecessary overlap and gaps in service.

Built greater flexibility into current funding streams to allow programs and services to develop new strategies for meeting the needs of older adults and caregivers.

Establish shared positions between agencies (e.g., Care Partners and DSS Medicaid worker position).

Establish system of regular case conferencing for aging services providers.

Explore possibility of a centralized physical location for accessing multiple services, resources, and opportunities.

Require agency applications for Home and Community Care Block Grant funds to provide monitoring results from the Area Agency on Aging with their applications.