



“Working Harder To Make Aging Easier”

Make Older Adults A Priority in 2019

Federal Level

Reauthorize the Older Americans Act in 2019

Since its inception in 1965, The Older Americans Act (OAA) has been the cornerstone of the nation’s home and community-based service system which supports older Americans ability to live at home and in the community with dignity and independence for as long as possible. The Act provides a wide range of cost-effective services including transportation, home-delivered meals, caregiver support and respite, and protection against elder abuse. By supporting home and community-based services, the OAA helps many older adults avoid the more costly care of institutional settings paid for by Medicare and Medicaid. It is crucial that Congress authorize the OAA because by 2030, all baby boomers will be over the age of 65. Demographics demand and must drive federal focus on policies that support older adults and their caregivers. Congress must act on the Older Americans Act before October 1, 2019.

ACTION: Reauthorize the Older Americans Act and include increased support for communities to prepare for substantial growth in the older adult population.

State Level

Maintain a Cabinet Level Illinois Department on Aging

The 65 plus population is the fastest growing age group and the aged population is currently at its highest level in human history. This demographic shift impacts the economy, healthcare, housing, the workforce etc. To address the full implication of aging in Illinois there must continue to be a Governor’s cabinet level; Department on Aging.

The State of Illinois, and this region, reflect the national demographic pressures of an expanding aging society whose needs must be met by thoughtful planning, sound fiscal management and responsible use of our State’s resources.

- Nearly 25% of Illinois’ older adult (60+) population (654,647) reside in our eight-county service area.
- Since 2000, the 60+ population in our eight counties has increased by an astounding 82.3%.
- In fact, by 2030 1 in 4 Illinoisans will be 60 or older.
- Within the eight counties, 18.7% of older adults live alone and 5.5% of older adults live at or below the poverty level of \$12,140.

ACTION: Maintain a Cabinet Level Illinois Department on Aging that will promote cost-effective policies that meet the growing needs of the older adults of Illinois.

Reduce Social Isolation

Social isolation is the lack of connection with other people, one's community, resources and supports. AARP estimates nearly 1 in 5 adults over 65 are socially isolated. Although social isolation is not a new phenomenon, research continues to underscore the negative impacts on the health and well-being of older adults. One study found social isolation to be as bad for health as smoking 15 cigarettes per day! To combat this growing health issue, Area Agencies on Aging across Illinois are banding together to expand resources and implement innovative strategies that will engage isolated older adults and enhance Illinois' network of aging services.

ACTION: Support the Illinois Aging Network in its efforts to reduce social isolation among older adults by creating and enacting policy solutions.

Older Americans Act services play a vital role in reducing social isolation among older adults and those who care for them.

Home Delivered Meals Program

Home delivered meals are a community effort bringing meal providers, volunteers, and other community organizations together to improve the quality of life for older adults and their caregivers. According to Meals on Wheels America (2017), 92% of participants say home delivered meals enable them to remain living at home and 90% of participants state it makes them feel more safe and secure and reduces feelings of isolation and loneliness.

- Home Delivered Meals Statistics Fiscal Year 2018:
 - Illinois – 7,052,311 Home Delivered Meals served
 - Northeastern Illinois -- 859,274 Home Delivered Meals served

Community Dining

These are meals provided in community settings, which help keep older adults healthy in addition to offering opportunities for social engagement, information on healthy aging, and meaningful volunteer roles, all of which contribute to an older individual's overall health and well-being.

- Community Dining Statistics Fiscal Year 2018:
 - Illinois – 2,146,613 Meals served
 - Northeastern Illinois – 133,293 Meals served

Transportation

Access to transportation is essential in supporting older adults' ability to age in place, live independently and remain socially engaged. Transportation programs offered by community-based agencies, such as dial-a-ride and paratransit services and volunteer transportation programs, help fill the gap of public transportation by providing older adults access to medical appointments, shopping, community dining locations and senior centers.

- Transportation Program Statistics Fiscal Year 2018:
 - Illinois – 445,992 of Rides provided
 - Northeastern Illinois -- 33,077 Rides provided

Family Caregiver Support Services

Family Caregiver Support Services such as caregiver respite and caregiver counseling services provide support to *a person who is caring for an older adult* – and may include a family member or friend. Recent statistics show that **approximately 44 million Americans provide essential unpaid “informal” caregiving** for older adults and adults with disabilities each year. The number of grandparents and other relatives responsible for children under their care is also growing. Over 100,000 grandparents are caring for their grandchildren on a long-term basis. Ensuring that caregivers have access to the supports they need is vitally important to their own health and well-being, as well as the health and well-being of the person under their care.

- Caregiver Respite Statistics Fiscal Year 2018:
 - Illinois – 108,207 Respite Hours served
 - Northeastern Illinois – 21,171 Respite Hours served
- Caregiver Counseling Center Services Statistics Fiscal Year 2018:
 - Illinois -- 7,623 Caregivers served
 - Northeastern Illinois - 3,842 Caregivers served

ACTION: Support Older Americans Act services that reduce social isolation and promote a positive quality of life for older adults and those that care for them.

Adult Protective Services (APS)

APS responds to reports of alleged abuse, neglect and exploitation for adults age 60+ and persons with disabilities ages 18-59. On July 1, 2018, Self-Neglect rolled out as a new allegation under APS. Self-neglect occurs when an adult, who may be experiencing physical and/or mental health concerns, lacks the capacity to care for themselves and may suffer health and other consequences. It is well known that socially isolated older adults and persons with disabilities are much more susceptible to abuse, neglect and exploitation because they do not have the social supports in place to get help.

- The APS Program in Illinois responded to 17,085 reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation in Fiscal Year (FY)18 and the number of reports is expected to exceed 19,000 in FY19.
- In FY18, APS responded to 2,616 reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation in Northeastern Illinois.

ACTION: Assure that Adults Protective Services agencies have the financial support they need to appropriately and effectively address the needs of those experiencing the devastating effects of abuse, neglect, self-neglect and financial exploitation.

Local Level

Dementia Friendly Communities

Approximately 220,000 people aged 65 and older with Alzheimer’s disease live in Illinois. In 2017, 590,000 caregivers in Illinois provided 672 million hours of unpaid care to those with Alzheimer’s and other dementias, a contribution to the state valued at \$8,482 million dollars. The Agency on Aging’s goal is to raise awareness and reduce stigma of

Alzheimer's disease and related dementias by leading the charge in the creation of Dementia Friendly communities throughout our region.

ACTION: Support the creation of Dementia Friendly Communities throughout our 8-county region and the State of Illinois.

Sources:

AARP Foundation Connect2Affect, <https://connect2affect.org/about-isolation>

AARP and National Alliance for Caregiving, Caregiving in the U.S. 2015, <https://www.caregiving.org/caregiving2015/>

Alzheimer's Association 2018 Facts and Figures, <https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/facts-figures>