

HOUSING



The department is researching and advocating for best practices in elder housing planning, design and construction to meet the needs of elders and youth alike.

Florida is recognized as one of the top retirement states in the nation. Every day, elders relocate here with hopes of spending their golden years enjoying the mild climate, beautiful natural resources and abundant recreational opportunities. The need for affordable housing for low-income and frail elders has reached critical levels.

Through the *Communities for a Lifetime* initiative, the Florida Department of Elder Affairs helps to form innovative and effective partnerships in each community to help residents and leaders identify, assess and implement plans to fit their elder housing needs. The department is researching and advocating for best practices in elder housing planning, design and construction to meet the needs of elders and youth alike.

Housing trends emphasize the need to design communities where quality-of-life issues and supportive services are provided throughout the life of an individual. It is the initiative's goal to revive key elements of the communities of yesteryear for our citizens and serve as a model retirement state.

Since its inception, the department's Elderly Housing Unit has established formal partnerships with the Florida Housing Finance Corporation and the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration, and collaborated with organizations such as the Florida Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials. It has also facilitated the establishment of several affordable assisted living pilot projects across Florida to address the assisted living needs of frail elders in rural, public housing and other underserved areas.

The goal of the Elder Housing Unit is to provide outreach, information and referral, and stakeholder development and technical assistance for elders in the state of Florida. This is accomplished through the following:

- Maintaining and enhancing statewide outreach efforts to ensure the public and target populations are aware of affordable assisted living and affordable supportive housing that supports Medicaid and other public assistance programs and services, including how to access them via the Florida Affordable Assisted Living Web site, www.floridaaffordableassistedliving.org;
- Increasing and enhancing housing options that accommodate Medicaid waiver programs by educating communities, housing financiers and developers on the importance of supportive housing and related resources that facilitate aging in place, living at an optimal level of functioning and diverting clients from more intensive and expensive levels of care;
- Facilitating access to assisted living and other housing options that provide Medicaid and other public assistance programs and services by processing requests for information and assistance regarding long-term care resources for low-income frail elders and disabled adults;
- Developing and maintaining stakeholder collaboration with elder housing and service developers, providers, government agencies, consumer groups, communities and financiers to address related issues, challenges and opportunities; and
- Facilitating affordable assisted living and supportive housing in underserved areas, supporting best practices in the industry, piloting projects and demonstrations, and evaluating related efforts.

Suggested Team Members

- City and Regional Planners
- Growth Management
- Public Works
- Planning Department
- Adult Family Care Homes
- Apartment Complex Representative
- Assisted Living Facilities
- Board of Realtors Representative
- Builders Association
- City and County Housing
- Housing Agency and/or Foundation
- Major Development Representative

Questions

1. To what extent are architects and developers aware of the benefits of universal design?
2. What organizations provide home modification services?
3. What elder friendly housing options are available within your community? Be sure to include all naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs), apartment complexes, independent living communities, assisted living facilities, adult family care homes, continuing care retirement communities and nursing homes.
4. What means are available for securing appropriate living arrangements after a person can no longer access needed goods and services, prepare meals, or do household chores?
5. In what ways do tax structures and zoning laws accommodate the needs of senior homeowners and caregivers of frail elders?

Discussion Notes

TRANSPORTATION



Increased mobility allows seniors, Florida's most valuable resource, to continue making valuable financial and social contributions to the state, and to remain in their community for a lifetime.

Mobility and accessibility are essential for independent living, and transportation is the link that allows access to needed services and activities. Transportation plays a vital role in the lives of elder Floridians, and no single solution can meet all the mobility needs of Florida's senior population – rather, a variety of services and systems are necessary to do so effectively.

Community design profoundly influences consumer mobility decisions. Participating *Communities for a Lifetime* are realizing through their visioning efforts that other mobility options such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and safe crosswalks are not just “extras,” but essential investments in the health and safety of their residents of all ages.

These communities are providing opportunities for residents to be active and safe, which not only enriches their quality of life, but also improves health and increases longevity. In addition, steps to improve the environment for older adults are beneficial to others as well. For example, making sidewalks and crosswalks safe and accessible helps not only older residents, but also people using wheelchairs, parents pushing strollers and young children walking to school.

The Florida Department of Elder Affairs' multi-solution transportation policy recommends that local communities consider the development of **Independent Transportation Networks (ITNs)**. ITNs work with local transportation providers to develop and expand elder friendly transportation, and encourage the development of alternative providers. The policy also supports the recommendations of the Alzheimer's Disease Advisory Committee's recommendations on dementia and driving.

The department's efforts also include continued partnerships and ongoing collaboration with other state agencies including the Department of Transportation (Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged and the Elder Road User Program) and the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (Florida-At-Risk Driver Council and GrandDriver Program).

Many opportunities exist for adults to assess and refresh their driving skills. The department supports driver assessment centers and organizations that help older persons maintain their safe driving ability for as long as possible.

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Suggested Team Members

- AARP-55 Alive Program
- Airport Manager
- Local Transportation Providers
- Neighborhood Associations
- Public Mass Transit Providers
- Safety Resource Center

Questions

1. What alternative transportation options are available? Provide contact information, hours of operation, routes, service areas, eligibility requirements and costs.
2. What public transportation is available?
3. What routes, service areas and costs are available? How much time is needed for travel?
4. What are the senior friendly features of private transportation providers?
5. What programs are available to assist older adults with assessing their own driving abilities?

Discussion Notes

HEALTH AND WELLNESS



*There is no medicine that can compete with physical activity to prevent problems of aging and promote vitality and zest for life.
–Active Living Coalition for Older Adults*

Improvements in medicine, public health, science and technology have enabled today's older adults to live longer and healthier lives than previous generations. Older adults want to remain healthy and independent at home in their communities. Health promotion, disease prevention, and injury prevention activities and programs are a priority for older adults, their families and the health care system.

The Department of Elder Affairs offers health promotion programs that help older adults understand how their lifestyles and family health histories impact their physical and mental health, and help them develop personal practices that enhance their total well being. The state contracts with area agencies on aging throughout Florida and works with other partners to provide health and wellness programs around the state.

The Older Americans Act requires area agencies on aging to provide evidence-based programs, including fitness, nutrition, disease prevention and self-management programs. The goal of these programs is to change attitudes and behavior that promote health and well being for older adults. Statewide use of these programs will improve seniors' quality of life, reduce health care costs and complement the increasing focus on prevention in our health care system.

Promoting the healthy lifestyles of older people is vital in helping them to maintain health and functional independence and lead healthy and independent lives. *Communities for a Lifetime* is a tool that promotes active living through policy, programs and physical infrastructure.

Suggested Team Members

- AARP
- Accessibility Services
- Adult Day Cares
- Caregiver Services
- Congregate Meal Sites
- Financial Counseling
- Insurance Counseling
- Legal Services
- Low-income Services
- Mental Health Providers
- Area Health Education Centers
- Non-medical Services
- Social Security
- Health Planning Councils
- Alzheimer's Program/Centers
- County Health Department
- Hospice
- Hospitals
- Medical Equipment Businesses
- Nursing Homes
- Private Home Health Businesses
- Disease-specific Foundations

Questions

1. What opportunities are available to older adults to maintain physical and mental health, such as flu shots, support groups, and neighborhood gardens?
2. What health care services are available for low-income individuals?
3. Are there adequate mental health and substance abuse services?
4. Are there an adequate number of grocery stores that offer nutritious foods, or are residents forced to shop at near-by convenience stores?
5. Is the public water fluoridated?

Discussion Notes

EMPLOYMENT



The truth is that older adults remain actively involved in their communities through volunteerism, and many are still employed.

As the nation's baby boomers are beginning to reach "adulthood," many older adults are challenging the myth that growing older means the end of productivity. The truth is that older adults remain actively involved in their communities through volunteerism, and many are still employed. Furthermore, boomers will be even more likely to look for ways to have meaningful engagement in a secondary career, while also having the flexibility in the workplace that they were unable to have during their primary careers.

The workforce of the near future will include young retirees who want second careers, people who want to work beyond age 65, and people seeking an income, but not necessarily a full-time job. By 2008, 40 percent of the labor force will be age 45 and older, and workers age 55 and older are expected to increase to more than 20 percent of the labor force by 2014.

With the aging of baby boomers and the re-vamping of the workforce, a significant pool of expertise will leave the workforce. Half of our current nursing staff is expected to leave over the next seven years, and one in eight government workers is between the ages of 55 and 64. For the first time in history, the number of younger workers entering the labor market will not replace those who are leaving.

Human resource managers find older workers are assets because they are loyal, dedicated, produce quality work, have lower turnover rates, are crisis oriented, and have experience in a wide variety of situations. They also work well with co-workers and have solid reading, writing and math skills.

With these qualities being the trend among older workers, businesses benefit from evaluating how well they attract and retain older workers. By adopting a few strategies to attract older workers, employers can tap into their wealth of loyalty, experience and maturity and also help make their communities a better place for people of all ages.

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) has two important purposes: first, to increase participants' economic self-sufficiency; and second, to increase the number of persons who may benefit from unsubsidized employment. Through SCSEP, older workers have access to services such as an annual physical examination, supportive services, job search assistance, community service assignments and job training. Further, participants have opportunities to receive assistance through one-stop career centers. This program is an important component of the *Communities for a Lifetime* initiative because it affords participants the opportunity to remain independent in their communities.

SCSEP participants work an average of 20 hours per week and are paid the highest of federal, state or local minimum wage, or the prevailing wage. They are placed in a wide variety of community service jobs at non-profit and public facilities, including day-care centers, senior centers, schools and hospitals. It is intended that these community service experiences will serve as a bridge to other employment opportunities.

SCSEP provides subsidized, part-time community service training to low-income persons age 55 and older who have poor employment prospects. The family income of applicants cannot exceed 125 percent of the federal poverty level. Enrollment priority is given to persons over age 60, veterans, and qualified spouses of veterans. Preference is given to minorities, persons who speak limited English and individuals who have the greatest economic need.

Suggested Team Members

- Experience Works
- Chamber of Commerce
- Business Leaders
- Economic Development Council
- One-Stop Career Centers
- Local Labor Agency

Questions

1. What programs and/or agencies are available to assist low-income older adults in finding employment?
2. What organizations are available to provide low or no-cost skills upgrading or computer training to older individuals?
3. Are there opportunities for older adults to take English-as-a-second-language courses to help expand employment opportunities?
4. What businesses actively recruit and retain older workers?

Discussion Notes

VOLUNTEERISM



Older and younger people, who form the cornerstones of our communities, are connecting to share time and experiences.

The *Communities for a Lifetime* initiative brings elders together with their communities to share their knowledge and experience. The department is committed to building an elder-friendly and volunteer-friendly environment in every community throughout Florida. Volunteers enhance their own lives and the lives of those they serve. With committed volunteers, communities can offer a wider variety of services that would otherwise be unavailable.

Florida's Department of Elder Affairs is the first state unit on aging in the country to have a statutorily mandated office that focuses on volunteer issues and promotes volunteer programs throughout the state. The Office of Volunteer and Community Services' certified volunteer manager works with a number of organizations that provide valuable services by and for elders and intergenerational volunteer opportunities. Volunteers offer a wide range of services, including:

- Home repair
- Information and referral
- Home delivery of meals
- In-home respite
- Task force involvement
- Council membership
- Planning committee membership
- Advisory board membership
- Fundraising
- Health promotion
- Program planning
- Bookkeeping
- Clerical duties
- Advocacy

In today's world, there is no limit to the variety and forms of voluntary services community members are able to provide, nor an age restriction for volunteering. Older and younger people, who form the cornerstones of our communities, are connecting to share time and experiences. *Communities for a Lifetime* are encouraged to promote civic engagement by capturing both the diversity of voluntary services and the spirit of volunteering that motivates people to make a difference in their communities every day.

The *Communities for a Lifetime* unit can assist with volunteer program development, volunteer management training and certification, volunteer recruitment, program promotion and volunteer recognition.

INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS



Our elders give us a mature, historical perspective of who we are, where we are, where we came from and how we got there, while our youth give us a childlike vision of the future and all that we can still be.

Communities thrive when the contributions of all generations are embraced and engaged. Our elders give us a mature, historical perspective of who we are, where we are, where we came from and how we got there, while our youth give us a childlike vision of the future and all that we can still be. Intergenerational programs give us the opportunity to bridge these vantage points, and create a strong sense of community and an appreciation for the contributions of each group. *Communities for a Lifetime* are places where these connections flourish.

Intergenerational Connections brings together different generations in ongoing and mutually beneficial activities such as mentoring and volunteerism. Youth and seniors share their talents and resources, supporting each other in relationships that benefit both the individual and the community.

Benefits of Intergenerational Connections

- **Improved relations between youth and older adults** – as individuals learn more about each other, stereotypes and barriers disappear.
- **Positive effect on problems** – family problems (as evidenced by the recent wave of offenses by juveniles) can often spill over into the community with devastating consequences, but when generations work together in a positive way, everyone wins.
- **Empowered communities** – people begin to care about each other.

Intergenerational programs and activities, by their very nature, address issues of family across the life cycle. Further, they foster a willingness to cross disciplinary and cultural boundaries to solve problems.

With the projected increase in the number of Florida retirees and the current deterioration of social interaction between elders and youth, the Department of Elder Affairs' goal of developing and expanding intergenerational partnerships will encourage elders and young people to make the connections necessary to enhance community resources and bridge the generation gap – bringing them together, each one helping the other.

The long-term benefits derived from *Intergenerational Connections* are increased services to all ages, coordinated resource sharing and improved communication between programs that currently serve elders and programs that serve youth, and the creation of an atmosphere where elders and youth working and socializing together are the norms – not the exception.

VOLUNTEERISM AND INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS

Suggested Team Members

- Faith Leaders
- Senior Companion Program
- Local Volunteer Services
- Foster Grandparent Program
- VISTA
- AmeriCorps
- Retired Senior Volunteer Program

Questions

1. What opportunities are available for meaningful volunteer contributions?
2. What transportation is available for working/volunteering seniors?
3. What programs in the community encourage the involvement of seniors and youth?
4. What programs are available through faith-based organizations?
5. What programs or opportunities are available for intergenerational connections?

Discussion Notes