

State Strategies for Promoting Healthy Aging for All

Executive Summary

The U.S. population of older adults is growing at a rapid pace. By 2050, the number of Americans aged 65 and older is projected to be more than double the population in 2010, with an estimated increase from 40.2 million to 88.5 million in that 40-year span.¹ The population will also be increasingly diverse racially and ethnically, leading to more older adults who are non-white.² Consequently, it is important to provide services and resources that are culturally competent and promote healthy lifestyles so Americans can live longer, healthier lives.

This issue brief provides background information on healthy aging and an overview of strategies for creating age-friendly environments based on the Healthy People 2020 (HP2020) and National Prevention Strategy (NPS). It also provides examples from states that have successfully implemented programs and strategies to promote healthy lifestyles for older adults. Finally, it describes how state and territorial health agencies can support and promote the health of older adults by collaborating across sectors.

Background

CDC's Healthy Aging Research Network defines healthy aging as the development and maintenance of optimal physical, mental, and social well-being and function in older adults.³ Healthy aging is most likely to be achieved when physical environments and communities are safe, individuals adopt and maintain attitudes and behaviors known to promote health and well-being, and health services and community programs are effectively used to prevent or minimize the impact of acute and chronic disease on function.⁴ To continue to build an environment that enhances the quality of life of older adults, their caregivers, and their loved ones, it is essential for stakeholders at all levels and across various sectors to collaborate.

For more than four decades, Healthy People has provided a comprehensive set of objectives for achieving the nation's health promotion and disease prevention goals.⁵ Healthy People is a road map for state and local health departments, nonprofits, and businesses to plan health improvement locally with diverse partners. The overarching goals of HP2020 are to:

- Attain high-quality, longer lives free of preventable disease, disability, injury, and premature death.
- Achieve health equity, eliminate disparities, and improve the health of all groups.

Approaches for State and Territorial Health Agencies to Promote Healthy Aging

- Strengthen existing partnerships.
- Incorporate healthy aging into state/territorial health improvement plans or strategic plans.
- Conduct needs assessments to see where gaps may exist.
- Increase awareness about older adult health challenges in your state/territory.
- Emphasize training and education.
- Monitor and evaluate your work.
- Promote evidence-based programs.
- Develop a comprehensive network of health and community-based organizations and partners.
- Strive to reduce health disparities within older populations in your state/territory.

- Create social and physical environments that promote good health for all.
- Promote quality of life, healthy development, and healthy behaviors across all life stages.

HP2020's social determinants of health (SDOH) model can help state and territorial health and aging officials, their partners, public health teams, and other aging experts as they strive to implement evidence-based strategies for increasing the number of older adults who are living well in their communities.⁶ The HP2020 strategies and goals are relevant to healthy aging and are meant to be shared among partners. As the U.S. older adult population continues to increase in size and diversity, it is important to assess the unique needs of this population. This assessment, coupled with constructing supportive environments, will allow all individuals and communities to thrive.

In addition, there are many federal and national initiatives, such as NPS and ASTHO's 2015 President's Challenge on Healthy Aging, that provide examples of strategies for creating a system or infrastructure where adults can live and age well.^{7,8}

Themes from State Healthy Aging Workshop

In July 2015, ASTHO and the National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities, with support from HHS' Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, hosted a state healthy aging workshop. During the workshop, teams from 45 states and the District of Columbia developed key priorities for their jurisdiction's joint healthy aging agenda and action steps for their identified strategies. Their most common top priorities included:

- Falls prevention/injury and violence prevention.
- Mental health and cognition (including Alzheimer's, dementia).
- Tobacco cessation.
- Physical activity, nutrition, and weight status.
- Caregiver support.

Some of their emerging priorities included:

- Volunteerism.
- Occupational safety.
- Food insecurity.
- Medication assistance.
- Domestic abuse.

Crosswalk of HP2020 and NPS Strategies

The HP2020 and NPS frameworks share many overlapping strategies, with each individual strategy falling under one of five larger strategic directions. These strategic directions include: cross-cutting themes, social and community context, quality of life in aging, health and healthcare, and neighborhood and built environment. Subcategories for each direction are outlined in the table below.

Issue Brief



HP2020 Topic Areas	NPS Strategies
Cross-cutting Themes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elimination of health disparities. • Health communication and health IT. • Geographic considerations. • Public health infrastructure. • Using data to understand your older adult population and drive action. 	
Social and Community Context	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability and health. • Health-related quality of life and well-being. • Older adults. • Occupational safety and health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowered people.
Quality of Life in Aging	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injury and violence prevention. • Nutrition and weight status. • Physical activity. • Substance abuse. • Tobacco use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active living. • Healthy eating. • Injury- and violence-free living. • Preventing drug abuse and excessive alcohol use. • Tobacco-free living.
Health and Healthcare	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to health services. • Dementias, including Alzheimer’s disease. • Immunizations and infectious diseases • Mental health and mental disorders. • Oral health. • Sexually transmitted disease and HIV. • Vision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical and community preventive services. • Mental and emotional well-being, including Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. • Reproductive and sexual health.
Neighborhood and Built Environment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental health. • Injury and violence prevention. • Preparedness. • Social determinants of health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building safe and resilient communities. • Communities that promote mobility. • Community-based living/livable communities/aging in place.

State Examples

States are leading the way in implementing these strategies. To create the most effective services and resources possible, many states have collaborated with partners such as the Alzheimer’s Association, AARP, area agencies on aging, aging and disability research centers, clinical and community care providers, dental associations, state legislatures, Medicaid, bar associations, public library systems, state home care associations, alliances of state YMCAs, state departments of parks and recreation, academia, and others. Below is list of state examples by strategy.

Cross-Cutting Themes

The cross-cutting themes strategic direction focuses on overarching issues, such as public health infrastructure, information technology, geography, and health disparities that affect the way that older adults experience health.

- By analyzing data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, vital records, and hospital billing records, the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) discovered that moving sidewalks were a consistent factor that led to falls in the state. NJDOH is using this information to increase awareness through presentations with caregivers and key stakeholders, such as the Home Care Association of New Jersey, and drive the creation of new programs and initiatives.
- Oregon included healthy aging as a priority in its [2015-2019 strategic plan](#) and is currently developing the Oregon Index for Healthy Aging. The index will focus on identifying data sources and metrics to track progress on improving quality of life as well as promoting healthy aging to increase the number of years of healthy life.

Social and Community Context

The social and community context strategic direction focuses on how social support and engagement affect quality of life and health outcomes for older adults.

- Hawaii will be initiating a gap analysis to empower caregivers through its caregiver's work group. The state plans to use stakeholder funding opportunities to help develop [Hawaii's Aging and Disability Resource Center](#) to its full capacity by strengthening existing partnerships and collaborating with community resources.
- The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) is working on the [Alzheimer's Disease Caregiver Support Initiative](#). It's developing a comprehensive network of health and community-based organizations focused on serving caregivers through evidence-based strategies. These strategies include: early identification/diagnosis, professional education, outreach to primary care and specialty care providers, medical management of co-occurring conditions, care planning and consultation, caregiver education, support groups, a 24-hour helpline, community awareness activities, and increased training for important constituencies. NYSDOH, consultants, and the University of Albany School of Public Health will evaluate the program at all levels.

Quality of Life in Aging

The quality of life in aging strategic direction focuses on how injury prevention, physical activity, health literacy, cultural practices, and cognitive and mental health impact quality of life for older adults.

- Based on research conducted through the National Institute on Aging, the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) launched the Peer Exercise Program Promotes Independence, an exercise program for older adults.⁹ To do so, ADH partnered with the UAMS Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging, the area agencies on aging, the Arkansas Healthy Aging Coalition, and local community partners statewide. The program's goal was to reduce the impact of heart disease and stroke on older Arkansans by helping them lose weight and feel better about themselves. ADH and its partners trained older adult leaders in the community to lead the exercises.

- The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control partnered with the Richland Library and other community partners from various sectors to collaborate on methods of ensuring that active living programs become more accessible to older adults. It aims to embed and sustain evidence-based physical activity programs for older adults suffering from arthritis, as well as formulate methodologies to apply to other counties in the future.
- The [New Hampshire Falls Risk Reduction Taskforce](#), led by the Injury Prevention Program in the state Division of Public Health Services, ran the Best Practice: Falls Risk Reduction Project for two years.¹⁰ The program leveraged a partnership with Dartmouth College, trained organizations statewide on effective tools and strategies to prevent falls, collected data from these organizations on falls treated in their settings, and collaborated with health systems to decrease the risk of falling. National fall prevention experts provided educational and scientific updates to teams at quarterly meetings and annual conferences, while state team coaches provided ongoing support. The program resulted in improved falls services for more than 100,000 seniors, reduced falls-related costs for the state, and increased safety at hospitals and senior living spaces due to improved signage and environmental changes.
- After receiving a grant to reduce injury, the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) is partnering with area agencies on aging and EMTs to implement a falls prevention program.¹¹ VDH and agencies on aging in at least two districts will present ideas to regional or town planners for aging-friendly town planning initiatives. In addition, VDH testified at the state legislature in February 2015 on the menu of strategies for healthy aging. The legislators expressed interest in learning more about how to assess the state's healthy aging readiness.

Health and Healthcare

The health and healthcare strategic direction focuses on patient-centered care models, the healthcare continuum, multiple chronic health conditions, caregiver health, and clinical preventive services.

- Georgia will be working with the Alzheimer's Association to promote its Roadmap for Cognitive Screening for Primary Care Doctors.¹² The health department has hosted a training and education class for physicians highlighting this toolkit. The training focuses on assisting physicians in identifying and diagnosing Alzheimer's disease and related diseases.
- New Jersey launched the [Conversation of a Lifetime program](#) to facilitate clear communication on end-of-life wishes between friends, families, caregivers, and medical personnel. The program uses local community leaders to encourage others to use the program's advanced care planning model, which allows participants to set their intentions in a legally and medically relevant document. New Jersey chose this initiative based on a data review that found a majority of its residents have no legal documents expressing their end-of-life wishes. NJDOH partnered with an end-of-life care and hospice services organization, the New Jersey Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute, New Jersey State Bar Association, New Jersey Hospital Association, and Health Care Association of New Jersey on this project.
- The Mississippi State Department of Health's (MSDH) Office of Preventive Health organized a continuing medical education conference in conjunction with the state Alzheimer's Association titled "[Alzheimer's, Diabetes, Hypertension: An Evidence-Based Approach to Chronic Disease](#)

Management.” The conference provided discussion and education on the challenges healthcare providers face when treating and caring for older adults with chronic conditions. The conference emphasized a team-based approach as a model for care, recognizing the important role that community health workers, community pharmacists, and other healthcare extenders can play in educating the chronically ill and their caregivers. Mississippi has also strengthened its partnership with the Alzheimer’s Association; an association representative has been working with MSDH’s Coordinated Chronic Disease Advisory Board.

Neighborhood and Built Environment

The neighborhood and built environment strategic direction focuses on SDOH, which are critical to healthy aging within communities.

- Virginia is incorporating older adults into its [statewide transportation improvement plan](#). The plan is aimed at improving pedestrian and bicycle safety, roadway and driving environments, driving competency, and reducing risk of injury and death for older drivers and passengers.

Approaches for State and Territorial Health Agencies

Based on the overview of strategies and state examples, the following list provides approaches that state and territorial health agencies can use to support healthy aging in their jurisdictions.

- Strengthen existing partnerships (e.g., facilitate state public health and state aging agency collaboration).
- Incorporate healthy aging into state or territorial health improvement plans or strategic plans.
- Conduct needs assessments to see where gaps may exist.
- Increase awareness about older adult health challenges.
- Emphasize training and education.
- Monitor and evaluate your work.
- Promote evidence-based programs.
- Develop a comprehensive network of health and community-based organizations and partners.
- Strive to reduce health disparities within older populations.

In addition, some overarching resources that support the list of strategies, including national and state-level data profiles and policy frameworks, can be found on ASTHO’s website at:

<http://www.astho.org/healthyaging/Overarching-Resources/>

Conclusion

As the proportion of older adults continues to grow, it is important to focus on resources and programs that will help them live longer, healthier lives. HP2020 and NPS provide two frameworks that states can leverage to create and enhance services and resources for older Americans. By turning these strategies into action, states can create healthier environments and improve quality of life so that Americans can continue to live and thrive for years to come.

Issue Brief



¹ Vincent GK, Velkoff VA. "The Next Four Decades: The Older Population in the United States: 2010 to 2050." Available at <https://www.census.gov/prod/2010pubs/p25-1138.pdf>. Accessed 1-30-2016.

² *Ibid.*

³ Health Promotion Research Center. "Healthy Aging Research Network Archives." Available at <http://depts.washington.edu/hprc/healthy-aging>. Accessed 1-30-2016.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ HHS Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. "HealthyPeople.gov." Available at <http://www.healthypeople.gov/>. Accessed 1-30-2016.

⁶ HHS Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. "Social Determinants of Health." Available at <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health>. Accessed 4-21-2016.

⁷ HHS, U.S. Surgeon General. "National Prevention Strategy." Available at <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/priorities/prevention/strategy/>. Accessed 1-30-2016.

⁸ Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. "Living Longer Better Across All Sectors." Available at <http://www.astho.org/healthyaging/>. Accessed 1-30-2016.

⁹ CDC. "Arkansas: Seniors Get Peppy with PEPPI." Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/phhsblockgrant/states/pdfs/arkansas.pdf>. Accessed 1-30-2016.

¹⁰ CDC. "New Hampshire: Preventing Falls – Step by Step." Available at http://www.cdc.gov/phhsblockgrant/states/pdfs/New_Hampshire.pdf. Accessed 1-30-2016.

¹¹ Vermont Department of Health. "Falls Prevention." Available at <http://healthvermont.gov/family/injury/falls/index.aspx>. Accessed 4-21-2016.

¹² Alzheimer's Association. "A Roadmap for Cognitive Screening for Primary Care Doctors." Available at <http://www.provaeducation.com/Downloads/GA%20Alz%20for%20Website/Power%20Point--1-27-15.pdf>. Accessed 4-21-2016.