

PROJECT 2015: The Future of Aging in New York State

A Tool Kit for Community Action

Introduction

The 21st century brings one of the greatest challenges and opportunities facing all of society, including New York State: the aging and increasing diversity of our population. The aging of America has been predicted and discussed for several years and media attention has made us all aware of the “graying” of society. Yet as a country, we have been slow to take the next steps and examine what our aging population will mean to society and what planning must occur to prepare for the changes we are facing. For New York, as the ranks of the Baby Boom generation burst into their mature, senior years, it is critical for our state and for each county to step back, to examine our changing demographic profile, to note where we have been, and to set forth policy directions to address the impact of our aging and increasingly diverse society.

Project 2015: The Future of Aging in New York State—A Tool Kit for Community Action is an unprecedented statewide effort to mobilize and provide counties with information and tools needed to prepare for the ‘changing face’ of our older population. For New York, this includes both the aging and the increasing diversity of our communities that is reflected in our rapidly changing demographic profile. Through the leadership of local Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and partnering agencies, the intent of the initiative is to alert key stakeholders locally to the challenges and opportunities of aging and diversity in our counties and communities, to include multiple stakeholders in planning and preparing for demographic change at the local level, and to implement needed changes in local policies, programs and infrastructure to maximize the best fit between needs of local citizens and the services available to them in our communities.

Background for Project 2015

Beginning in 1998, Dr. Patricia Pine, then Director of the New York State Office for the Aging, in partnership with the State Society on Aging of New York (SSA) initiated an extensive project to look at the impacts of New York’s aging population. That early work resulted in two publications: the first is *Project 2015: The Future of Aging in New York State, Articles and Briefs for Discussion (2000)*, which included articles and briefs on 24 subjects associated with an aging population for the year 2015, together with recommendations on how to prepare for our older population into the future; and the second is *Demographic Projections to 2025 (1999)*, which provided population projections through 2025 based on 1990 U.S. Census data. Both publications continue to be valuable reference documents for discussion and action.

In February 2002, former Governor George E. Pataki had charged 36 cabinet-level New York state government agencies to review their major policies, programs, and structure in light of the State’s increasingly older and more diverse population, particularly the aging of the Baby Boomer generation into the elder cohort. The Governor titled this initiative “Project 2015: State Agencies Prepare for the Impact of an Aging New York.”

Under the leadership of the State Office for the Aging, the 36 state government agencies reviewed their missions, major programs, policies, products, and practices. Each developed a policy Brief

that highlighted priority issue areas that would be affected by the State's shifting demographic profile, identified action steps, and forecasted expected results from their actions.

The Briefs were organized into a unified policy document (White Paper) titled *Project 2015: State Agencies Prepare for the Impact of an Aging New York – White Paper for Discussion* (2002). In addition to the Briefs, it includes an overview of the most significant demographic and sociological changes expected in the State, an analysis and synopsis of the Briefs.

The research, process and findings of New York State's planning initiative provide the basis for the development of a package of materials to use in replicating Project 2015 at the local level and continue work to make our communities quality places for all residents to live, work, play, and grow old.

Project 2015: A Tool Kit for Community Action

The information and tools provided in the *Project 2015: A Tool Kit for Community Action (2015 Tool Kit)* are being made available to local Area Agencies on Aging and others who wish to lead their counties through a thoughtful process of review, planning and action to prepare for the impact of major demographic change. This resource, in recognition of the unique character of each local community, provides a framework that allows for flexibility in the type and scope of action to prepare for demographic change that may be taken locally, as well as for local determination about who may be involved locally in the implementation of the planning process and action steps. The *2015 Tool Kit* includes:

- A descriptive “*Project 2015: Community Handbook*,” which provides the context and components for designing and implementing local efforts.
- Self-evaluation tools to track progress locally and to share information statewide.
- Two PowerPoint presentations for adaptation and use locally in educating key individuals and audiences.
- A copy of the publication, *Project 2015: Guide to New York State Government's Planning Initiative*, which is a how-to guide reflecting New York's state government's experience in conducting its *Project 2015* strategic planning initiative across state government agencies, and may be used or adapted by counties in local planning efforts to address the changing demographic profile.
- Contact information for technical assistance at the New York State Office for the Aging.
- Sample letters, timelines, and other templates.
- Resource listing, including Web site and data resources.
- A Media Tool Kit.

It is anticipated that Area Agencies on Aging and other local leaders will be able to use the information and tools provided in this *2015 Tool Kit* in a variety of ways as localities consider how best to engage in and prepare for the dynamic demographic changes taking place in communities across New York, and across the country.