



## **Background**

The New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA), Association on Aging in NY (AANYS), and AARP New York undertook a comprehensive process to gather stakeholder input to inform the 2015 White House Conference on Aging.

The impetus behind this undertaking was to collect recommendations that can speak to the need for comprehensive, cross federal agency planning that strengthens the government's response in serving older adults. The tremendous growth of the older adult, baby boomer and caregiver populations coupled with the significant changes that are occurring in reforming the health and long term care systems as well as the economic challenges faced by older adults lays the foundation for the need for better cross-systems collaborations among federal agencies that incentivizes cross-systems collaborations at the community level. Further, older adults are a tremendous resource to their communities that often goes unrecognized, providing important economic, social and intellectual capital. Finally, New Yorker's expressed the need for a comprehensive federal agenda for older adults that recognizes their strengths as well as addresses their needs, including establishing a Council of Advisors to prioritize the WHCoA national recommendations and the development of achievable timelines for implementation.

## **New York State**

Ten years from now, in 2025, New Yorkers aged 60 and older will make up more than 25% of the population in 51 of the state's 62 counties. These older adults are an important part of the state's economy, providing significant financial support to the state and communities through their taxes and spending, supporting local businesses and schools, and volunteering their time. Planning for this population is important and recognizing that the baby boomers (the next cohort of older adults) and older adults collectively in NYS generate 63% of all the personal income, valued at \$368 billion annually. Federal policy and programs have a significant impact on the health, economic security and safety of older New Yorkers and their families. Federal policies and programs should be developed/strengthened that reflect the strengths and value of these populations and should work together to promote short and long-term success within the WHCoA general themes.

## **Informing the White House Conference on Aging**

On March 4 2015, the New York State Office for the Aging with the Association on Aging in New York and AARP NY conducted a kick off webinar to launch the information gathering process to inform the White House Conference on Aging. This included a webpage that contained an open-ended, single question survey and was accompanied by background and guidance questions, which allowed respondents to provide recommendations and input based on the White House Conference on Aging themes: Retirement Security, Healthy Aging, Long Term Service and Supports and Elder Justice. This survey was open to the public for almost 6 weeks.

On March 26 – 27, 2015, Regional Forums were held in Erie, Onondaga, Albany, New York and Nassau Counties to gather input and recommendations in person. The in-person forums and web-based survey instrument yielded over 1,000 submissions from the public including representatives from the health care system, public health agencies, community-based organization, senior centers, Area Agencies on Aging, home care agencies, senior citizens, faith-based organizations and others. Their recommendations follow.

## **Retirement Security**

Historically, financial security in retirement has depended on three factors: Social Security, a pension from a company plan, and savings and investments. Retirement security also means having enough resources to pay for housing, medical bills, food, utilities, taxes and leisure.

The following is the priority list of recommendations from New Yorker's on Retirement Security:

- Protect Social Security and do not privatize.
- Increase the Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA).
- Raise or eliminate the tax cap to make it solvent into the future.
- Increase financial literacy across all ages.
- Raise the amount of Social Security benefits.
- Increase funding for and expansion of Title V employment programs.
- Expand access to affordable housing.
- Require Medicare to cover home care and other long term care expenses.
- Make changes in tax policy to end taxation on Social Security benefits.

#### **Other recommendations from New Yorkers**

- **Changes in Tax Policy:** Enact legislation to encourage savings – individual medical savings, more deferred options, retirement insurance pools; reduce taxes for seniors.
- **Counseling and Education:** Develop publicity campaign aimed at younger people to look at retirement early and work to save; teach financial literacy to high school students and to individuals of all ages.
- **Disability Support:** Shift .1% of SS trust fund payments to SSDI fund to support disability payments; Increase funding for independent living centers.
- **Employment, Part Time Employment and other Partial Retirement Options:** Develop more part-time employment and work from home opportunities; increase the ability to work that does not impact SS benefits; create retraining opportunities for retirees; increase the minimum wage.
- **Health Care Costs and Coverage:** Lower health care and prescription drug costs; protect employee health plans.
- **Housing:** Universal design legislation should be passed; increase the supply of affordable housing; focus on co-housing for seniors by setting up a data base for people who have extra room and people who need housing; newly constructed homes should meet the CAPS standards; education campaign for zoning boards and planners about affordable housing and livable communities.
- **Improve Pensions and Retirement Plans:** Government should work with companies to provide matches for retirement pension plans; create federal retirement and savings plans that have “opt out” not “opt in” rules; make all pension plans portable and incentivize paying into a plan; require that all companies offer tax free savings incentives to all employees; introduce more phased retirement plans; develop new pension plans not tied to employers.
- **Medicare, Medicaid & Health Insurance:** Cover hearing, dental and vision care under Medicare; reform hospital observational status, count toward rehab stays; give Medicare authority to negotiate drug prices; set up auto-enrollment into SMP; add a long term care benefit that covers in-home services to Medicare.
- **Kincare:** Education about Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) non-parent (child-only) grants should be added to the secretary's educational duties.

For a full list of recommendations on retirement security please go to -  
<http://www.agingny.org/RetirementSecurityDetails.aspx>

#### **Healthy Aging**

Chronic conditions are the major cause of illness, disability and death in the United States. And, by the year, 2040, the cost of chronic conditions is estimated to reach a staggering \$864 billion annually. Chronic conditions among of older adults are preventable and in many cases manageable through evidence-based programs.

The following is the priority list of recommendations from New Yorker's on Healthy Aging:

- Increase health education aimed at older adults by making them more aware of programs and the importance of adopting a healthy life style. Target younger people in terms of preparing them for a longer life and understanding the aging process.
- Increase funding for nutrition programs, including home delivered and congregate meals and access to fresh food through farmers markets.
- Continue encouraging exercise among older adults by providing tax credits for participation in exercise programs, increasing affordable exercise facilities and developing programs specifically designed for older adults in gyms and health clubs.
- Incentivize the expansion and support of "livable communities" initiatives.
- Increase coverage under original Medicare, and Parts A, B and D where appropriate, of health screenings, testing and preventive services like the shingles vaccination.
- Increase funding for research and development of evidence based programs.
- Develop a single payer health plan for the nation, aka "Medicare for all."
- Increase funding to support existing volunteer opportunities through established programs such as RSVP and Senior Corps and develop new initiatives to encourage new retirees to volunteer.
- Expand federal funding to better utilize chronic disease self-management programs.
- Amend original Medicare (Parts A, B and D where appropriate) to include coverage of dental and vision care as well as auditory examinations and hearing aids.

#### **Other recommendations from New Yorkers**

- **Care Transitions:** Require better assessments at discharge from hospitals rehab, including evaluation of living conditions.
- **Chronic Disease Self-Management:** Incentivize physician referrals to CDSME programs; require hospitals, insurers and providers to provide access to CDSMP & fall prevention; more funding needed for CDSME infrastructure; increase federal support for EBI's in community settings.
- **Disease Specific Recommendations:** More funding needed and health education that supports individuals with Alzheimer's Disease and their families.
- **Exercise:** Provide a tax credit/incentives for regularly participating in exercise and other wellness programs.
- **Health Education:** Increase health education to older adults; require gerontology courses for all medical students, regardless of their specialty; CMS should encourage and reimburse healthy education programs for physicians, pharmacists and community-based aging services providers; Aging 101 should be a core course in all high schools; educate more health care professional in aging issues.
- **Health Screening and Testing:** Continue and expand screenings now funded by ACA; Medicare should cover all preventive screenings and vaccines; Shingles vaccine should be provided free of charge.
- **Improve Health Care Coverage:** Incentives needed to encourage physicians to accept Medicare; provide coverage for health care professionals to discuss safety issues – falls, medication management, alcohol and substance abuse; improve care coordination.
- **Livable Communities:** Promote walkable communities through increased federal funding; Need more support for rural communities.

For a full list of recommendations on healthy aging please go to -

<http://www.agingny.org/HealthyAgingDetails.aspx>

**Long Term Services and Supports**

Long-term services and supports (LTSS) help older adults and individuals with disabilities accomplish everyday tasks such as bathing, dressing, fixing meals, and managing a home. As the population ages, the number of individuals who require long term services and supports in order to remain independent is projected to double. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation Report, 2003.)

The following is the priority list of recommendations from New Yorker's on Long Term Services and Supports:

- Increase funding and support for Area Agencies on Aging to carry out their core service delivery and coordination missions and to develop new initiatives.
- Improve quality of care and life for residents of skilled nursing and assisted living facilities with better oversight, expanding and increasing funding for the Ombudsman program, increasing staffing levels.
- More funding needed for home and community based services, and a Medicare funding component.
- Expand and improve access to senior transportation, increase support for public transportation serving seniors and initiate increased funding for paratransit.
- Create new initiatives to develop a better educated and trained direct care workforce by (1) increasing pay for direct care workers and (2) creating career ladders through programs and certifications offered by various organizations like community colleges.
- Provide more education, training and support for family caregivers recognizing the vital role that they play in providing care for millions of older persons and those with disabilities who would otherwise be in higher cost settings.
- Develop a system of financial support for family caregivers in the form of tax credits or through direct payment from a newly created caregivers support funding stream.
- Increase the number of medical professionals trained in geriatrics with aging related course requirements and rotation experiences in medical schools and increasing the pay for professionals who choose to enter a medical specialty with a geriatric focus.
- Increase funding and access to both medical and social adult day programs.
- Additional funding for Alzheimer's disease research and care strategies.

#### **Other recommendations from New Yorkers**

- **Area Agencies on Aging:** OAA funding needs to be increased; increase the funding to AAAs for more health/wellness programming; increase the funding for social adult day and HIICAP.
- **Alzheimer's disease and other dementias:** More research in both prevention and care planning; AD should be a higher national priority; increase funding for in-home services for people with Alzheimer's; more specialized facilities needed for AD patients.
- **Assisted Living:** Need a step between traditional assisted living and LTC for those who are alert and oriented, such as assisted living with ADL assistance; More assisted living facilities that accept Medicaid.
- **Caregiving:** Provide more caregiver education; increase funding and training for caregiver support; develop a technological buddy system to support caregivers 24/7; provide incentives to employers to support caregivers while keeping their jobs; explore expanding family leave policies.
- **Case Management/Care Coordination:** additional funding needed for AAA's to provide case management.

For a full list of recommendations under LTSS please go to - <http://www.agingny.org/HealthyAgingDetails.aspx>

#### **Elder Justice**

Elder Justice refers to formalized efforts to combat elder abuse in all its forms and to create systems that can prevent, respond and mitigate abuse of older adults. Elder abuse is a silent problem that robs older Americans of their dignity, security, and—in some cases—costs them their lives. Up to 5 million older Americans are abused every year, and the annual loss by victims of financial abuse is estimated to be at least \$2.6 billion.

The following is the priority list of recommendations from New Yorker's on Elder Justice:

- Elder Abuse prevention and reporting training should be required for anyone who works directly with older people. Institute a Federal requirement for uniform mandatory reporting of all cases of elder abuse along with the creation and maintenance of a national elder abuse registry.
- Increase enforcement of existing elder abuse laws. replicate nationwide the enhanced multi-disciplinary teams (EMDT's) intervention model.
- Fund a TV, radio and print media campaign to educate and inform both the general public, and older people in particular, about the types and prevalence of elder abuse, what to look for and what steps may be taken to prevent such abuse in the future and where to get help.
- Increase funding, training and number of personnel working in Adult Protective Services.
- Provide more support for the victims of elder abuse through the creation of a comprehensive network of support services with established shelters for older adults.
- Provide more training on financial abuse to bank officials, managers and tellers.
- Increase funding and expand the scope of the Ombudsman Program.
- Increase funding for legal services through Area Agencies on Aging, and provide training on elder justice issues for AAA staff. Incentivize stronger relationships between Area Agencies on Aging and Adult Protective Services.
- Fully fund and implement all titles of the Elder Justice Act.
- Increase AAA funding to better serve victims of elder abuse.

#### **Other recommendations from New Yorkers**

- **Adult Protective Services:** Expand and increase funding for APS to reduce current caseloads and expand scope of service/training; make it easier for APS to access financial records;
- **Area Agencies on Aging:** Embed the APS unit/funding within AAAs; increase funding for legal services; require collaboration between every AAA and APS.
- **Banks and Financial Institutions:** Assure banks/financial institutions will not be in violation for disclosing financial information related to fraud and abuse if making good faith effort; adopt thumbprint controls by banks as ID verification; offer comprehensive elder abuse training for the staff of all financial institutions; assure greater oversight of older person's credit card and banking transactions; decrease the turn-around time to freeze accounts.
- **Education and Outreach:** Launch nationwide education and training campaign, including education and outreach to non-traditional gatekeepers, clergy, postal workers, etc.; develop a K-12 curriculum for understanding older people and what constitutes abuse.
- **Education and Training:** Funding needed for comprehensive training on elder justice issues; require all banking and loan institution employees be trained in financial abuse issues and aging issues; train hospital personnel how to recognize and report abuse; develop a standard required curriculum on elder abuse with CEU's.
- **Elder Justice Act:** Fully fund the EJA.
- **Hoarding:** Develop standards/certification for people claiming to be experts in hoarding clearance.

For a full list of recommendations on Elder Justice please go to -  
<http://www.aqingny.org/ElderJusticeDetails.aspx>