

WHO'S WHO IN THE AGING NETWORK?

The "**Aging Network**" is the system of public and private, nonprofit agencies and organizations responsible for implementing the Older Americans Act (OAA). Enacted in 1965, the OAA sets forth objectives for improving and maintaining the quality of life for older Americans.

The **Administration on Aging** (AoA) is located within the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. It serves as a:

- clearinghouse for information
- source for technical assistance, and
- a catalyst for more effective use of resources for the aged.

Area Agencies on Aging and local agency contact information can be obtained from:

State Units on Aging (SUAs) are the designated state agencies serving older adults. They coordinate related state activities and administer federal funds at the state level.

Eldercare Locator

Area Agencies on Aging: Each state has established planning and service areas known as "area agencies on aging," "AAAs," or "Triple A's." AAAs coordinate the delivery of a variety of services, including: information and referral, outreach, transportation, in-home care, legal and protective services, counseling, socialization, recreation and education -- to meet the needs of the older population.

At: www.eldercare.gov or

Federal funds support the provision of services in local communities via the aging network as follows:

A. Federal funds from the Older Americans Act are transmitted to State Units on Aging (SUAs), which channel them to the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs).

B. Most AAAs are not in the direct service business, they contract- out this work to local agencies that provide such services to the older population. The local agencies may be a county Department of Aging, or a nonprofit Council on Aging, or may have other names.

Three areas benefit most broadly from federal funding:

- **Information and Referral** (I&R, also called Information and Assistance or I&A): These programs exist to help older adults and their caregivers find specific information on the programs that are available to older adults.
Many I &R programs also publish a directory of resources or maintain a website with information about community resources for older adults. These services may or may not be located in an AAA office, but the AAA office will know where to find them. The I &R number can often be found under Senior Citizens in the blue (government) pages of the telephone book.
- **Senior Centers:** Sometimes the I &R office is located in a senior center. These sites are the focal points for most federally-funded community-based services for older adults. Many senior centers offer a variety of exercise programs, health screenings, socialization and recreation opportunities, counseling services, hot meals, and other activities.

- **Nutrition Services:** A significant portion of Older Americans Act funds is targeted to provide hot noontime meals in senior centers, churches and other convenient locations. Home-delivered meals may also be available.

C. At the community level, a wide variety of additional services and programs may be offered by local public agencies or nonprofit groups. Some of the most common are:

- Home repair and adaptation services: These programs provide subsidized minor home repairs, build wheelchair ramps, and help make homes safe for older adults.
- In-home care, homemaker, and chore services: Many communities have some public assistance available for those who need help with tasks like housekeeping, grocery shopping, or personal care.
- Adult day care: These group care programs can be an alternative to expensive one-on-one home care for adults who need constant supervision because of memory loss or other illness.
- Transportation assistance: Cities and counties where public transit is available may offer special transportation options for seniors and disabled adults under their ADA programs. Volunteer groups also often provide transportation services.
- Volunteer coordination programs:
Volunteers may be available to help older adults with yard work, house painting, roof repairs, grocery shopping, transportation, social contact, and other needs.

D. In addition, many alternative agencies and organizations provide resources and support to the senior population. For example:

- Corporations
Many corporations know that many of their employees not only care for children but also care for their aging parents. Corporate eldercare programs may provide information and referral for their employees, and may also provide more tangible support such as using a corporate van to deliver meals, or organizing teams of employees to build wheelchair ramps.
- Hospitals
Many hospitals sponsor wellness events or health fairs that provide free blood pressure checks and materials on nutrition and fitness.
- Churches
Churches have long supported older members of their congregations; among the most popular church programs involve "friendly visiting" of older people who are homebound by another member of the church.
- Civic Groups
Civic groups focus many charitable events to serve older adults; some offer lending libraries of durable medical equipment (canes, walkers, wheelchairs, etc.) for those of limited means.