



Administration on Aging Department of Health and Human Services

The Administration on Aging (AoA), an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is one of the nation's largest providers of home- and community-based care for older persons and their caregivers. Our mission is to ensure that older Americans have the opportunity to age with dignity, have choices in managing their own lives, and remain active and productive members of their families and communities.

Created in 1965 with the passage of the Older Americans Act (OAA), AoA is part of a federal, state, tribal and local partnership called the National Network on Aging. This network, serving about 7 million older persons and their caregivers, consists of 56 State Units on Aging; 655 Area Agencies on Aging; 236 Tribal and Native organizations; two organizations that serve Native Hawaiians; 29,000 service providers; and thousands of volunteers. These organizations provide assistance and services to older individuals and their families in urban, suburban, and rural areas throughout the United States.

While all older Americans may receive services, the OAA targets those older individuals who are in greatest economic and social need: the poor, the isolated, and those elders disadvantaged by social or health disparities.

SERVICES FUNDED BY THE OAA

There are six core services funded by the OAA including:

Supportive services, which enable communities to provide rides to medical appointments, and grocery and drug stores. Supportive services provide handyman, chore and personal care services so that older persons can stay in their homes. These services extend to community services such as adult day care and information and assistance as well.

Nutrition services, which include more than a meal. Since its creation, the Older Americans Act Nutrition Program has provided nearly 6 billion meals for at-risk older persons. Each day in communities across America, senior citizens come together in senior centers or other group settings to share a meal, as well as comradery and friendship. Nutrition services also provide nutrition education, health screenings, and counseling at senior centers. Homebound seniors are able to remain in their homes largely because of the daily delivery of a hot meal, sometimes by a senior volunteer who is their only visitor. March 2002, marked the 30th anniversary of the OAA Nutrition Program, and AoA will be celebrating this successful community-based service throughout the year.

Preventive health services, which educate and enable older persons to make healthy lifestyle choices. Every year, illness and disability that result from chronic disease affects the quality of life for millions of older adults and their caregivers. Many chronic diseases can be prevented through healthy lifestyles, physical activity, appropriate diet and nutrition, smoking cessation, active and meaningful social engagement, and regular screenings. The ultimate goal of the OAA health promotion and disease prevention services is to increase the quality and years of healthy life.

The National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP), which was funded for the first time in 2000, is a significant addition to the OAA. It was created to help the millions of people who provide the primary care for spouses, parents, older relatives and friends. The program includes information to caregivers about available services; assistance to caregivers in gaining access to services; individual counseling, organization of support groups and caregiver training to assist caregivers in making decisions and solving problems relating to their caregiving roles; and supplemental services to complement care provided by caregivers.

The program also recognizes the needs of grandparents caring for grandchildren and for caregivers of those 18 and under with mental retardation or developmental difficulties and the diverse needs of Native Americans.

Services that protect the rights of vulnerable older persons, which are designed to empower older persons and their family members to detect and prevent elder abuse and consumer fraud as well as to enhance the physical, mental, emotional and financial well-being of America's elderly. These services include, for example, pension counseling programs that help older Americans access their pensions and make informed insurance and health care choices; long-term care ombudsman programs that serve to investigate and resolve complaints made by or for residents of nursing, board and care, and similar adult homes. AoA supports the training of thousands of paid and volunteer long-term care ombudsmen, insurance counselors, and other professionals who assist with reporting waste, fraud, and abuse in nursing homes and other settings; and senior Medicare patrol projects, which operate in 47 states, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. AoA awards grants to state units on aging, area agencies on aging, and community organizations to train senior volunteers how to educate older Americans to take a more active role in monitoring and understanding their health care.

Services to Native Americans, which include nutrition and supportive services designed to meet the unique cultural and social traditions of tribal and native organizations and organizations serving Native Hawaiians. Native American elders are among the most disadvantaged groups in the country.

ELDERCARE LOCATOR

Additionally, AoA supports the Eldercare Locator, a national toll-free service to help callers find services and resources in their own communities or throughout the country. That number is **1-800-677-1116**.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

AoA recognizes the importance of making information readily available to consumers, professionals, researchers, and students. Our website provides information for and about older persons, their families, and professionals involved in aging programs and services. For more information about AoA, please contact: U.S. Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 330 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., 20201; phone: (202) 401-4541; fax (202) 357-3560; Email: aoainfo@aoa.gov; or contact our website at: www.aoa.gov.