



Community Priorities for New York's Master Plan for Aging

Prepared by We Stand with NY Seniors - The Coalition Supporting
New York's Master Plan for Aging

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This document is the compilation of input from leaders at more than 80 cross-sector organizations participating in ongoing discussions around the development of New York's Master Plan for Aging.

It **highlights the most pressing issues** related to healthy aging in New York, helping to ensure that the needs of older adults and caregivers are addressed effectively through the plan.

The report's contents are not exhaustive, but have been outlined to help inform more in-depth strategy development.

OUR PURPOSE AND VALUES

We believe that issues of healthy aging are important and relevant to all people. The New York State Master Plan for Aging is an opportunity to affirm that everyone deserves to live in and contribute to healthy, safe, strong communities, and to access the high-quality care and services they need, at any age. Together, we can make the Empire State the best state in the union in which to age.

KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ISSUE: STRENGTHENING LONG-TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS (LTSS)

A strong, well-resourced aging system helps keep older adults healthier and living in the community of their choice longer. Providers of long-term services and supports, including both facility- and community-based care, have faced workforce shortages for years, a problem that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Older adults across New York State are struggling to access the care they need, and many paid care providers face challenges such as low pay and burnout while family caregivers suffer from the stress of trying to meet their loved one's needs.

Recommendations:

- Launch a comprehensive approach to address workforce shortages across the LTSS industry as a top priority, with a focus on both recruitment and retention of health care workers (RNs, HCAs, CNAs, etc.) to remedy shortages.
- Invest in the LTSS workforce and set standards that ensure fair pay for care workers.
- Ensure the state Medicaid system is adequately funded to prevent harmful cuts to reimbursements and services.
- Develop career ladders by funding certification or enhanced skills training to help expand access to this line of work, prevent worker burnout, and improve the lives and enhance job satisfaction of care workers.

Other LTSS needs include:

- Enhance health and safety standards and data collection/evaluation to improve industry oversight.
- Improve access to affordable, quality long-term care services for people of all socioeconomic classes.
- Rebalance approach in long-term care toward prioritizing home- and community-based services or helping nursing home residents transition from nursing homes to HCBS.

ISSUE: STRENGTHENING AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES/ADDRESSING THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

The social determinants of health—factors such as housing, neighborhood infrastructure, transportation, food access and more—have a significant impact on the lives and health outcomes of older adults. Investing in and strengthening age-friendly communities can improve the lives of not just older people and their caregivers but all New Yorkers.

Recommendations:

- Integrate universal design in cities and towns; for example, zoning and development guidelines for urban planning that make neighborhoods more walkable, safer, and more interactive, and provide access to essential goods without traveling by car.
- Improve access to healthy, affordable food by strengthening home and community meal programs and similar efforts.
- Expand and enhance initiatives to assist family caregivers providing care for loved ones, such as Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), and increased access to adult day care.
- Improve access to transportation options that enhance mobility for people of all ages, ability levels, income levels, and backgrounds. Options should be coordinated to promote independence, facilitate employment opportunities, ensure access to medical care, and foster social engagement.
- Expand access to affordable and reliable high-speed internet service through enhanced infrastructure deployment, service and device cost support, and digital skills development opportunities.
- Invest in programs to support home modifications that help older adults remain in their homes.
- Expand affordable and middle-income housing options for older adults across the state—in urban, suburban, and rural communities--including permitting accessory dwelling units and funding affordable housing.
- Invest in technology that can help keep older adults healthier, safer and at home longer.

ISSUE: STRENGTHENING AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES/ADDRESSING THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH (CONTINUED)

- Lead with a strength-based approach to aging that mobilizes the skills, experience and interest of older people as valued resources for addressing local needs and strengthening communities.
- More efforts are needed to both address and prevent social isolation, such as friendly visitor programs and efforts that fully integrate older people within the broader community in ways that provide mutually beneficial cross-generational connection.
- Improve and expand access to mental health services for older adults.
- Ensure older New Yorkers with vision or hearing loss or other disabilities have the supports needed to continue working or otherwise engaging with their communities; all initiatives through the Master Plan should incorporate best practices in accessibility.
- Expand access to intergenerational connections that are partnerships, not just companionship, and provide resources and support for multigenerational housing opportunities.
- Leverage cultural and institutional assets to promote healthy aging in community.



ISSUE: IMPROVING ACCESS AND EQUITY IN OLDER ADULT CARE

All people deserve high-quality health care, but system-wide inequities and institutional ageism, ableism, and racism continue to have a widespread impact, resulting in disparities along racial and/or socioeconomic lines.

Recommendations:

- Lead all Master Plan for Aging initiatives with a commitment to equity and access so that these efforts have an impact on all communities equitably, such as immigrants (including undocumented people) and refugees, people of color, people with disabilities, and rural, urban, and suburban communities.
- Invest in new efforts to confront ageism on a systemic level across the care continuum, as this is at the root of many issues concerning older adults.
- Expand efforts to address the intersection of equity issues that affect older adults—such as ageism, racism, ableism, and over-criminalization of people of color. For example, aging populations in prisons represent the culmination of several of these issues.
- Invest in improving the economic stability and security of New Yorkers of all ages. These resources enable older adults to age with dignity in the community of their choice.
- Implement a universal benefits application that can lower barriers to safety net programs—one application would give access to SNAP, Medicaid, etc.
- Invest in and expand outreach services such as navigator programs that help people access safety net programs.
- Build greater referral coordination between the state aging network and community services for older people with disabilities.
- Address the digital divide for older adults, including access to technology, adaptations, and training services to ensure older adults with vision or hearing impairment or other disabilities can access the Internet.

ISSUE: ADDRESSING ELDER MISTREATMENT



A significant number of older adults throughout the state face abuse or mistreatment, including physical, emotional, or financial abuse, neglect or abandonment. Resources and supports to detect and prevent abuse are needed.

Recommendations:

- Continue integrating best practices in elder abuse prevention into the care continuum – including hospitals, primary care providers, and caregivers.
- Address guardianship system and Adult Protective Services by enhancing services for those who need it, and expanding efforts at preventing issues that make guardianship or other interventions needed.
- Explore alternative options for addressing these issues including mediation and restorative justice.
- Build a statewide network of nonprofit providers of guardianship services to deliver care regardless of ability to pay.
- Enhance access to legal services for older adult issues.

ISSUE: INCREASING SUPPORT FOR UNPAID AND FAMILY CAREGIVERS

Family caregivers and other unpaid care providers play a critical role in the care team of many older adults, but without significant formal support. Workforce shortages for paid home care also increase challenges for unpaid caregivers who have to fill in those gaps.

Recommendations:

- Improve and expand access to resources and support for family and other unpaid caregivers and non-professional community care workers.
- Develop funding mechanisms for volunteer-based organizations (i.e. village models) that provide direct support to older adults
- Lead initiatives that provide relief for family caregivers such as family caregiver tax credits or respite programs.
- Examine how caregiver support programs are developed to address issues earlier in the care continuum.
- Explore the intersection between paid and the unpaid caregiver; how to improve transitions in care to strengthen the care spectrum.



ISSUE: IMPROVING QUALITY OF CARE BY EXPANDING AGE-FRIENDLY HEALTH SYSTEMS AND PRIMARY CARE



Age-friendly health systems center the needs of older adults, resulting in more effective, personalized care delivery and improved outcomes. Becoming an Age-Friendly Health System entails reliably providing a set of four evidence-based elements of high-quality care, known as the “4Ms,” to all older adults in your system: What Matters, Medication, Mentation, and Mobility.

Recommendations:

- Set a goal for all health systems in New York State to become age-friendly.
- Invest in workforce training for health systems and other care providers to meet the specialized needs of the growing segment of population, such as those with Alzheimer’s disease and dementia, as well as risk reduction/early detection programs including education efforts for family caregivers.
- Expand and improve end-of-life care supports and services, including advance directives.
- Invest in and improve access to medical technology, telehealth, and assistive technology to help people manage chronic conditions, especially for the needs of those with vision impairments.

PROCESS PRINCIPLES

The following guidelines will help ensure the Master Plan for Aging is effective, efficient and has the greatest possible impact on older New Yorkers.

- **A cross-sector approach is essential.** Aging issues are related to every sector: health care systems, long-term services and supports, schools, housing, transportation, private businesses, health insurers, broadband companies, community safety and policing, and more. People outside the typical aging services communities should be reached with this plan, and it should be integrated in every level and department in state government, starting with the executive branch, with cabinet-level buy-in and direction.
- **An equity focus is essential.** Who receives services and who can't due to barriers? The plan should globally address how systemic ageism has an impact on the lives and health of older adults. It should reach people across race, class, and geographic region, having an impact in rural, urban, and suburban communities, and include comprehensive input from older adults themselves.
- **A focus on transparency and accountability is essential.** Public awareness efforts and transparent, regular sharing of data and metrics can help keep the community apprised of and involved in progress.
- **Data on progress and challenges** should be shared regularly, with a more detailed progress report released at least each year.
- **Manageable stages and action items** will be helpful to communicating progress with the community and moving the plan forward.
- **Capitalize on infrastructure already in place**, including Health Across All Policies efforts.

About the Coalition

We are a coalition of more than 80 organizations across New York State that are collaborating to advocate for New York's Master Plan for Aging. The coalition includes representation from a variety of sectors, including community-based organizations, long-term services and supports providers, racial and socioeconomic justice advocates, foundations, academic institutions, paid and family caregiver organizations, county Offices for the Aging, and several national aging organizations and coalitions.

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