

# Healthy Aging Workshop: Preparing for the Future of Aging

Workshop Summary Report | 2021





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## Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP) has identified healthy aging as a national priority. Together with our co-sponsor Trust for America’s Health (TFAH), ODPHP held a series of four regional workshops to identify opportunities for collaboration on healthy aging topics – both within states and within regions. Breakouts during the workshops surfaced unique and shared priorities across states in each region and prompted discussion about how to build regional collaboration on shared priorities. The COVID-19 pandemic required ODPHP to pivot from in-person to virtual workshops and to adjust the format and length of the events. The pandemic also prompted the addition of regional calls that provided an opportunity for state public health and aging services leaders to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on older adults and states’ responses to mitigate those impacts.

## Background

One-third of the United States population will be at or above retirement age by 2030. Strengthening the national, state, and local public health systems has never been more critical to support the health and well-being of the growing population of older adults.

ODPHP leads the Healthy People initiative, which sets evidence-based national objectives to improve the nation’s health. Considered the nation’s health promotion and disease prevention road map, Healthy People identifies nationwide health improvement priorities; increases public awareness of the factors that influence health, including the social determinants of health; provides measurable national, state, and local objectives; supports multiple stakeholders to strengthen policies and improve practices; and identifies data collection and evaluation needs. Healthy People 2020, released in December of 2010, was the first iteration of Healthy People to identify older adults as a key population of interest and outline goals for improving their health, functioning, and quality of life. Healthy People 2030, launched in August 2020, continues to highlight the importance of supporting the health and well-being of older adults. [Healthy People 2030 objectives related to older adults](#) are posted on the ODPHP website. Data are available for the older adult population across many of the population-based core objectives in Healthy People 2030.

In support of its healthy aging activities, ODPHP established a co-sponsorship agreement with TFAH, which leads the Age-Friendly Public Health Systems (AFPHS) national initiative. The goal of the AFPHS initiative is to elevate healthy aging as a core function within every state and local public health department. TFAH partners with state and local health departments to support the adoption of a public health framework intended to expand the roles of public health in healthy aging. This [Framework for Creating Age-Friendly Public Health Systems](#) outlines these roles, including collecting data on older adult health, coordinating existing services, and connecting and convening multiple sectors to support healthy aging. TFAH has also developed an [AFPHS Recognition Program](#) to incentivize every state and local health department to address older adult health with the completion of [10 key action steps](#).

To further address the health needs of older Americans, ODPHP organized Healthy Aging Summits in 2015 and 2018. The 2015 Summit was the first national meeting to examine healthy aging policies and practices in the United States. One major goal of the 2015 Summit was to learn more about the social, environmental, and emotional factors that impact the health of older populations. The 2018 Summit



also emphasized social determinants of health, and participants learned about interventions, services, supports, and strategies that optimize older adults' health.

One-day, state-level workshops took place in conjunction with both the 2015 and 2018 Healthy Aging Summits. As a result of the 2015 workshop, 45 states and the District of Columbia developed state-level priorities and action plans to promote healthy aging. The 2018 workshop assembled more than 100 state and local public health leaders to explore issues that affect older adults. Throughout the workshop, various stakeholders collaboratively built action plans to promote healthy aging in their communities. One major takeaway from the 2018 workshop was the need for continued engagement and support for state and local public health leaders. Workshop participants also recognized that cross-sector involvement is key to promoting healthy aging.

To continue the momentum from the 2018 workshop, ODPHP planned a series of Regional Healthy Aging Workshops. ODPHP released a Federal Register Notice soliciting co-sponsors and ultimately partnered with TFAH. The regional workshops were intended to convene stakeholders from across federal, state, and local agencies and national stakeholder organizations to discuss topics germane to the region and develop action plans to address the challenges brought forth by participants during the workshop. The first workshop was held in Boston in September 2019 for Regions 1 and 2. Due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, ODPHP pivoted to holding the remaining Regional Workshops virtually, beginning with Regions 8 and 10 in October 2020, Regions 3, 5, and 7 in February 2021, and Regions 4, 6, and 9 in April 2021. In the midst of COVID-19, with state health departments working the front lines of the pandemic, ODPHP felt it was critical to continue the healthy aging workshop series given the pandemic's implications for the most vulnerable populations. And the wisdom of this decision has been borne out; despite the heavy burden of COVID-19-related demands, states made time to participate in both COVID-19 calls that led up to and informed the workshops and the workshops themselves.

## Age-Friendly Health Systems

[Age-Friendly Health Systems](#) (AFHS) is an initiative of The John A. Hartford Foundation and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, in partnership with the American Hospital Association and the Catholic Health Association of the United States. Its goal is to spread across the country adoption of the Age-Friendly Health System (AFHS) 4Ms framework (Medication, Mentation, Mobility, what Matters) that guides hospitals and hospital systems to align their practices with what matters to older adults and their families. AFHS is a response to the growth in the older population and the complexity of their health care needs, which can increase their vulnerability to further illness and injury. An "Age-Friendly Ecosystem" includes all the age-friendly initiatives and movements, and its leaders are now working to ensure commonality in language, measures, and policies.

## Regional Workshop Series

The original vision for the regional workshop series was to create opportunities for professionals in public health and aging services networks to share innovative practices and build collaborations within states and regions. As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, the goal expanded to include activities specifically addressing the challenges of the public health emergency among the older adult population. The goals ultimately included the following:



- To continue important conversations with new and existing partners to enhance and expand healthy aging activities
- To strengthen regional, cross-state collaboration to improve the health of older adults
- To share resources from federal and national stakeholder organizations to support healthy aging planning at the state and local levels
- To discuss the value of cross-sector partnerships and how to strengthen collaboration among states and local communities
- To surface and support collaborative responses to the COVID-19 pandemic
- To share best practices and encourage regional-level agreements to pursue healthy aging efforts

Each regional workshop included opportunities to hear from individual states on innovative practices to promote and expand AFPHS through collaboration both within the states and among states within regions. The workshops also included opportunities to brainstorm new ways to collaborate on shared priorities.

### Evolution of the Workshop Series

The first workshop convened State Health Officers and State Aging Directors from Regions 1 & 2 in Boston, Massachusetts. The agenda for this in-person meeting allowed for brainstorming, active priority setting, peer learning, and networking. Since public health practitioners and State Aging Directors often wear many hats, this day allowed them to focus singularly on healthy aging. While the workshop format was robust and outcomes were positive, it could not be sustained as COVID-19 changed what was feasible for the subsequent workshops (e.g., the other workshops had to be virtual rather than in-person). Therefore, the observations and data available from the Region 1 & 2 workshop are not the same as those available for the other three. This report identifies where the Region 1 & 2 information has been incorporated, where it was unavailable, and where information that is only available from that workshop is referenced.

### Regional Conference Calls on COVID-19 Response

The COVID-19 public health emergency emerged after the first cross-regional workshop in this series (Regions 1 & 2). The impact of the pandemic on older adults – from their increased vulnerability to adverse outcomes from infection and the collateral effects of social isolation – naturally took center stage in discussions about current and future supports for older adults. TFAH and ODPHP recognized the need to raise awareness and promote strategies to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on older adults. Thus, they convened eight conference calls, one for each of the public health regions slated to participate in upcoming Healthy Aging Workshops. The conference calls focused on the acute challenges posed by COVID-19 and the state and local solutions that were emerging. Each call included state-level public health and aging network professionals, Regional Health Administrators and Administration for Community Living Regional Administrators, as well as staff from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health and ODPHP. During each call, state representatives shared their local experiences and responses to COVID-19, and highlighted challenges, innovations, and lessons learned. The information shared during the calls set the stage for discussions at multi-region Healthy Aging Workshops in 2020 and 2021. A consistent observation across the eight conference calls was that the pandemic underscored the health challenges faced by older adults and the need for a greater focus on these challenges due to the



disproportionate impact of the virus on older adults, both those living in elder care facilities, and those living in the community.

In addition to innovative or pilot practices at the state-level, several cross-cutting challenges and solutions emerged across the eight regional calls. These included:

- Tackling Social Isolation
  - Distributing laptops and tablets and training older adults on their use
  - Creating “senior centers without walls” to provide remote bingo, craft, exercise, and discussion groups
  - Deploying robotic pets
  - Well-check phone calls and COVID safety calls
  - Shifting adult day care staff to home visit regimens
- Mitigating Food Insecurity
  - Home-delivered meals
  - Providing carryout meals at central
  - Partnering with restaurants to prepare meals for older adults
  - Partnering with farmers to deliver fresh produce to older adults
  - Grocery voucher programs
- Preventive and Mental Health Care
  - Partnering with hospitals to provide in-home wellness checks
  - Shifting adult day care staff to home visit regimens
- Vaccine Tracking, Coordination, and Administration
  - Creating call centers to schedule vaccines
  - Providing transportation to and from vaccine sites
  - Administering vaccines for those who are homebound
  - Creating outreach in communities with low vaccination rates
  - Responding to concerns about vaccine safety
- Supporting Caregivers
  - Providing education, counseling, and respite for family caregivers
  - Providing MP3 players and robotic pets to support caregiver mental health

Some longstanding challenges were more visible and exacerbated during the pandemic. These include insufficient access to broadband and Internet generally; health disparities and inequities in access to resources and services; and lack of training and support for the paid and unpaid workforce caring for older adults.

## Key Takeaways from Regional Workshops on Healthy Aging Collaborations

The information summarized below was drawn from the activities and insights that surfaced across four regional workshops between Fall 2019 and Spring 2021. Overall, there was a change in the tone of each workshop and an increased sense of urgency. Earlier workshops focused on shifting congregate meal programs and alternative methods of addressing social isolation. The conversations provided strategies that many states implemented, some in partnership with local small businesses and/or industries to



bring workers together to support older adult health and overall well-being. Over time, the discussions shifted such that the final virtual workshop was all vaccine focused. States were able to share their first-hand experiences with the pandemic response at the state level, a much-needed connection for state public health and state aging officials.

### State-level Collaboration

Each jurisdiction (primarily states) brainstormed three topic areas to prioritize in its future healthy aging collaboration efforts. The number of jurisdictions prioritizing each healthy aging topic is shown in Table 1. There was clear overlap in the priorities that jurisdictions identified, with the greatest emphasis placed on Social Isolation and Social Determinants of Health/Health in All Policies.

*Table 1: Healthy Aging Topics Prioritized by Jurisdictions*

HEALTH AGING TOPICS	NO. PRIORITIZING
Social Isolation	17
Social Determinants of Health and Health in All Policies in Aging	13
Age-Friendly and Livable Communities	9
Mental/Behavioral Health	9
Emerging Public Health Issue: COVID-19	9
Underserved populations (e.g., Racial/Ethnic Minorities, Rural Communities)	8
Family Caregivers	6
Caregiving and Workforce	3
Eliminating Health Disparities	3
Alzheimer’s and Dementia	3
Age-Friendly Health Systems	1
Emergency Preparedness	1
Substance Use in Aging Populations	0
Healthy Aging in Long-term Care Facilities	0
Emerging Public Health Issue: Opioids	0

Each jurisdiction brainstormed activities it could pursue to make progress on its top priority. The most common theme was Social Isolation. Specific activities identified included:

- Create a new coalitions or formal working group partnerships (e.g., livable homes coalition, awareness campaigns, vaccine equity)
- Create/expand programs focused on returning to the community from nursing care or hospitalization
- Support family caregivers (e.g., develop and implement training, develop and leverage data to assess needs and inform next steps, develop outreach materials, develop respite support options)
- Draft legislation to support AFPHS
- Expand outreach to underserved and disenfranchised communities
- Expand the number of AAAs
- Leverage natural spaces for older adults to congregate



- Leverage non-traditional partners as liaisons to the community (e.g., HBCUs, churches)
- Partner with healthcare providers to identify needs
- Partner with family caregivers on developing solutions for the aging population
- Pilot alternative payment models
- Provide access to healthy food and physical activity
- Pursue economic and community development with AFPHS in mind
- Pursue grant funding to address chronic disease and brain health

Each jurisdiction also brainstormed potential multisectoral partners with which to collaborate in addressing priorities. The number of jurisdictions identifying each category of multisectoral partners is shown in Table 2. Community-based Organizations and Aging Services Agencies were the potential partners most often identified.

*Table 2: Potential Multisectoral Partners Jurisdictions Identified*

MULTISECTORAL PARTNERS	NO. SELECTING
Community-based Organizations	13
Aging Services Agencies	12
Public Health Agencies	9
Health Systems	9
Transportation	8
Mental/Behavioral Health	6
Employers/Industry	6
University Systems	6
Housing	5
Emergency Operations	4
Education/Libraries	3
Planning	3
Faith-based Organizations	2
Community Health Workers	2
Policymakers/Lawmakers/Elected Officials	2
Parks and Recreation	1
Public Safety	1
Insurers/Payers	1
Financial Leaders	1
Veterans Services	1
AmeriCorps	1

While the workshop with Regions 1 and 2 was slightly different, it's important to note that they had specific sessions around addressing social isolation, mental health, and substance use in aging populations; healthy living in long-term care facilities; age-friendly and livable communities; and caregiving and workforce solutions. During each of these discussions, states provided their perspective and identified barriers, partnerships, and potential solutions.





## Regional Collaboration

Workshop attendees from each region met to review healthy aging priorities and to brainstorm one shared priority to explore for future region-wide collaboration. Table 3 shows the number of regions selecting specific topics. The regions coalesced around a subset of healthy aging topics. Most also identified COVID-19 as an overarching issue impacting other health priorities, and as a driving factor in how they will approach all the other potential collaborations.

*Table 3: Areas Regions Selected for Future Collaboration Exploration*

HEALTH AGING TOPICS	NO. SELECTING
Social Isolation	2
Social Determinants of Health and Health in All Policies in Aging	2
Emerging Public Health Issue: COVID-19	2
Age-Friendly and Livable Communities	1
Mental/Behavioral Health	1*
Caregiving and Workforce	1

*\*One region selected two topics for potential exploration*

## Impact of the Regional Workshops and Recommendations for the Future

The biggest success of these workshops was the ability to bring states, jurisdictions, and regions together to collaborate, share resources, and strengthen partnerships. Most states mentioned that there was a lack of partnership ahead of the meeting and left the workshops committed to reconvening regionally again. This workshop series allowed states to hear best practices, especially during COVID-19, and allows states to begin to form cross-sector, cross-state relationships to continue to improve the health and care for older adults.

This workshop series created an infrastructure to foster new and continuing collaborations among states within each region. The discussions throughout the workshops focused on long-term resiliency and what life may be like for older adults as we begin to transition to normalcy. Despite differences in agency priorities, there are many shared concerns and issues. A larger, strategic discussion on building structural components of public health and sharing tested and successful approaches could help keep a national focus on social determinants of health and health equity. ODPHP remains committed to this work, is encouraged to see the regions share innovations developed to address difficult situations and will continue to support future conversations and collaborations.

ODPHP is holding a virtual Healthy Aging Symposium on September 8-9, 2021. The symposium will highlight the latest science, best practices, and innovative solutions to improve the lives and health of older adults. The event will build upon the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic and focus on addressing the social determinants of health to reduce health disparities and improve long-term recovery and resilience. Policy makers, researchers, and professionals from across sectors – including public health, aging services, healthcare, housing, education, transportation, justice, and recreation – will have the opportunity to connect and learn from each other. The Symposium will include a variety of



session formats including keynote speakers, panels, round tables, breakout sessions, and networking opportunities.

# Appendices

## Workshop Dates and Presenters

### Regional Conference Calls on COVID-19 Response

- Region 3: 1/14/2021
- Region 4: 2/22/2021
- Region 5: 2/8/2021
- Region 6: 3/2/2021
- Region 7: 12/15/2020
- Region 8: 7/14/2020
- Region 9: 3/23/2021
- Region 10: 9/1/2020

*Conference Calls were not held for Regions 1 and 2 since their Regional Workshop was held prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency.*

### Healthy Aging Regional Workshops

- Regions 1 & 2: 9/10/2019 (in-person, Boston, MA)
- Regions 8 & 10: 10/7/2020 (virtual)
- Regions 3, 5 & 7: 2/18/2021 (virtual)
- Regions 4, 6 & 9: 4/20/2021 (virtual)

### State Presenters at Healthy Aging Regional Workshops

#### Regions 1 & 2

- Mark Levine, Vermont Commissioner of Health
- Angela Smith-Dieng, Vermont State Unit on Aging
- Wendi Aultman, New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services
- Mark Kissinger, New York State Department of Health
- Greg Olsen, New York State Office for the Aging
- Lindsey Tucker, Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- Robin Lipson, Commonwealth of Massachusetts Office of Elder Affairs
- Amanda Bernardo, Massachusetts Family Caregiver Support Program

#### Regions 3, 5 & 7

- Charlene Adams, Delaware Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities
- Alexis Travis, Michigan Department of Health Services
- Ryan Lester, Kansas Bureau of Health Promotion

#### Regions 4, 6 & 9

- Richard Prudom, Florida Department of Elder Affairs
- Katrina Hotrium-Lopez, Officer of the Governor of Mexico
- Caroline Cadirao, Hawaii Executive Office on Aging

## Resources

Below are resources and links shared from workshop participants during the workshop.

- AARP. (2017, November). *AARP Family Caregiving Survey: Caregivers' Reflections on Changing Roles* [Slides]. Aarp.Org. [https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys\\_statistics/ltc/2017/family-caregiving-roles.pdf](https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys_statistics/ltc/2017/family-caregiving-roles.pdf)
- Anderson, L. A., File, T. F., Marshall, J. M., McElrath, K. M., & Scherer, Z. S. (2021, April 14). *New Tool Tracks Vaccination and Vaccine Hesitancy Rates Across Geographies, Population Groups*. United States Census Bureau. [https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/how-do-covid-19-vaccination-and-vaccine-hesitancy-rates-vary-over-time.html?utm\\_campaign=20210414msacos1ccstors&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/how-do-covid-19-vaccination-and-vaccine-hesitancy-rates-vary-over-time.html?utm_campaign=20210414msacos1ccstors&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)
- *Interactive Eldercare Performance Data*. (n.d.). Interactive Eldercare Performance Data. <https://eldercare.shinyapps.io/data/>
- Uniper. (2021). Uniper. <https://www.unipercare.com/>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2021, April 19). *How Do COVID-19 Vaccination and Vaccine Hesitancy Rates Vary Over Time?* The United States Census Bureau. [https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/how-do-covid-19-vaccination-and-vaccine-hesitancy-rates-vary-over-time.html?utm\\_campaign=20210414msacos1ccstors&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/how-do-covid-19-vaccination-and-vaccine-hesitancy-rates-vary-over-time.html?utm_campaign=20210414msacos1ccstors&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)