

February 10, 2021

Age-Friendly Public Health Systems Learning and Action Network News



News:

In partnership with The John A. Hartford Foundation (JAHF), TFAH is working to identify and disseminate best practices and policy recommendations to ensure that home-bound older adults and people with disabilities are prioritized for the COVID-19 vaccine. There are over 2.2 million of these individuals in the U.S. who struggle with transportation, access to technology and who may be socially and geographically isolated. **[Please share any best practices and policy solutions that are being implemented to ensure vaccine access to this vulnerable population.](#)**

Events and Opportunities:

Age-Friendly Public Health Systems Monthly Trainings

To successfully promote health equity, it is vital to understand disparities in access and care. TFAH's next AFPHS training session will focus on addressing health disparities and the specific challenges of health equity for older adults. Some of the major challenges for public health practitioners will be highlighted along with examples of how some public health programs are working to address them. Participants will also learn about the importance of having access to robust data.

You can register now for this training session and subsequent sessions using the links below.

February 17th – [Reducing Older Adult Health Disparities](#)

March 18th – [Public Health's Role in Addressing Social Isolation](#)

April 15th – [Public Health, Housing, and Older Adults](#)

Introducing the LINC to Address Social Needs Act – February 10, 2021, 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm ET. This webinar will provide an overview of new social determinants of health legislation - Leveraging Integrated Networks in Communities (LINC) to Address Social Needs Act of 2021. If enacted, states could establish statewide or regional public-private partnerships to better coordinate health and social services. Register [here](#).

New Dietary Guidelines from USDA – February 11, 2021, 3:00 pm ET. Developed and released jointly every five years by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS), the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans has been released. This webinar will review the new guidance for each stage of life and

highlight some of the free resources available. Register [here](#).

COVID-19 Vaccine Equity: Reaching Underserved Communities – February 12, 2021, 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm ET. Hosted by the National Minority Quality Forum, panelists from the White House COVID-19 Response Team, Walgreens and the faith-based community will share their thoughts on engaging underserved communities and promoting equal access to the COVID-19 vaccine. Register [here](#).

COVID-19 Response Updates and Resources from CDC and the Ad Council – February 24, 2021, 1:00 pm ET. Hosted by the [Public Health Communications Collaborative](#), this webinar will include presentations from the Centers for Disease for Control and Prevention and the Ad Council. Resources that can be used to inform local COVID-19 response messaging will be provided. Register [here](#).

Resources:

COVID-19 Resources:

Measuring Equity to Ensure an Inclusive Pandemic Response

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted poor and racially/ethnically diverse communities. [Establishing health equity metrics](#) can help with local vaccine allocation and provide a framework for measuring equity in implementation efforts. Metrics can also identify clear targets and quantify systematic and often hard-to-describe gaps in the health care and public health response.

The Role of Social Support in Obtaining a Vaccine

[Older adults that have family members and friends helping](#) them don't face the same challenges in getting the COVID vaccine as do older adults without that support. This includes setting up the appointments online and transportation to the vaccine location. Limited access to the vaccine among older adults from racial/ethnic minority communities and poor neighborhoods could lead to an increase in the disparities that have emerged during the pandemic.

Front-line Experiences Caring for the Seriously Ill during COVID-19

The [Roundtable on Quality Care for People with Serious Illness hosted a webinar](#) where members of the interdisciplinary team shared their experiences caring for seriously ill people during the COVID-19 pandemic. The session focused on several issues including long-term strategies to mitigate suffering for marginalized populations, the role of clinical training in addressing health disparities, and models to help ensure access to care and equity for all people facing serious illness.

New Guidance for Older Americans Act Nutrition Programs Funding

The Administration for Community Living has released a new Fiscal FAQ for [FY2021 Older Americans Act-Supplemental Nutrition Funding](#). This resource answers questions regarding how Older Americans Act Title III funds can be used, including COVID-19 flexibility for nutrition and administrative costs.

State Efforts to Combat Isolation During the Pandemic

The University of Michigan's Center for Health and Research Transformation recently published a [health policy brief](#) on state responses to the social isolation and loneliness faced by adults with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Supporting Family Caregivers During COVID-19

A new AARP [Public Policy Institute report](#) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, more states have added programs to compensate family caregivers. "Paying family caregivers is a solution that saves states money and meets the growing need for long-term care," said Susan Reinhard, Public Policy Institute senior vice president.

Substance Use Disorder among Older Adults:

Importance of Recognizing Substance Use Among Older Adults

Recent data has highlighted a [11.9% increase in substance use among older adults](#).

Opioid prescriptions for chronic pain are highest among adults age 65 and older at 26.8%. Providing patient education about the risks of opioid analgesics and excessive alcohol consumption, and screening in primary care can lead to a reduction in vulnerability among older adults with chronic conditions.

Overview of Substance Use Disorder

While the prevalence of substance use disorder (SUD) is lower among older adults compared to younger adults, treatment rates are also unfortunately lower. [Diagnosing and treating SUD in older adults](#) can be difficult due to the presence of psychiatric and other medical disorders. To support older adults, more attention should be given to integrating SUD into general medical treatment, and more research is needed that examines the impact of social determinants of health.

Using Technology to Treat Opioid Use

Research has found that there was an increase in opioid overdoses in adults age 55 and older prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Overdoses and relapses are predicted to increase due to the lack of access to regular medical care and consequences of quarantine. Telehealth can help older adults that use substances by providing them accessible and affordable care with anonymity to decrease perceived stigma. [Age-appropriate program designs](#) have provided technology that include screening, education, and interventions to support these older adults.

Importance of Data to Improve Substance Use Disorder Prevention and Treatment

In order to design successful SUD interventions, states and communities need access to reliable data that covers health and behavioral health care, workforce, criminal justice, social services and other related systems. [This report](#) provides guidance on data collection and best practices that states can use to support local community efforts.

Additional Resources:

Fewer Cars for More Housing

While there are no mandates on housing for people, there are zoning requirements that most buildings have a significant amount of parking spaces. The costs associated with this are high and recent studies have noted that there are three to six street parking spaces per motor vehicle. [Reforming vehicle parking policies](#) would not adversely affect the parking supply and would significantly reduce housing development costs.

Transforming the Nursing Home to a “Green House”

Prior to the COVID-19, families began exploring alternatives to nursing homes due to factors such as low staffing ratios and safety issues. This AARP Public Policy Institute Report describes the [Green House model](#), that is usually composed of a small cluster of homes that can be licensed as a nursing facility. Because they house a smaller number of residents, there is a greater focus on person-centered and higher quality of care.

AARP Age-Friendly Network Training Videos

To help local leaders learn about the Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, AARP created a [six-video series](#) to explain the network, why it was created, and the membership requirements.

Stopping Tobacco Use in Later in Life

From 2000 to 2017, the proportion of smokers age 65 and older increased from 6.8 to 11.8 percent. Older adults that smoke can improve their quality of life by quitting tobacco use--subsequent health benefits can begin within the first hour. Tobacco cessation can decrease the risk of cognitive decline and brain atrophy. One of the major supportive factors in [helping older adults quit](#) is working with their health care providers.

Impact of Obesity on Alzheimer’s Disease

[A study recently published in The Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease Reports](#) notes a possible connection between obesity and cognitive functioning. The study also notes that maintaining a healthy weight among people with mild Alzheimer’s disease could help preserve brain structure. It is important to note that the study does not show that obesity causes Alzheimer’s disease. Researchers stress prevention and thinking about brain health earlier in life.

Preventive Steps to Promote Successful Aging

Usual aging and successful aging are two different things, and people should focus on successful aging sooner rather than later, [according to Shoba Sreenivasan and Linda Weinberger](#), psychology professors at the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California. People can take steps to promote successful aging, according to Sreenivasan and Weinberger, such as engaging in activities that reduce the risk of disease or disability, avoiding negative stereotypes related to aging, and finding a goal to achieve.

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