

August 25, 2021

Age-Friendly Public Health Systems Learning and Action Network News



News:

An Interview with the Surgeon General

Dr. J. Nadine Gracia, President and CEO of Trust for America's Health (TFAH), conducted a [**one-on-one interview with U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek H. Murthy**](#). During this interview, Dr. Murthy discussed insights, best practices, and reflections about effective COVID-19 public health communications. The conversation also included strategies for reaching unvaccinated people and overcoming misinformation.

New Brief – Aligning Public Health Interventions with Older Adult Housing Needs and Challenges

Accessible and affordable housing for older adults is crucial to their health and well-being. Among this population, one in five people in the U.S. will be 65 or older by 2030. As the population of older adults in the United States grows, alongside an increasing recognition of the salience of social determinants of health, the value of a public health approach to supporting the well-being of older adults is clear.

[**This brief**](#) outlines current housing challenges faced by older adults and potential areas for public health intervention. It summarizes existing programs that offer housing support for older adults and offers recommendations in each of the five key roles for public health.

Events and Opportunities:

Age-Friendly Public Health Systems Monthly Trainings

Collaboration between the public health and aging services network is crucial for addressing older adult health and well-being. TFAH's September AFPHS training will feature Carrie Molke, Director of the Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources in the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, who will share the importance of advocating and instigating age-friendly transformation in a public health or aging services organization.

This session will occur on **Thursday, September 16, 2021 at 3:00 pm ET**. Register [**here**](#).

You can also view a recording of our August training – [**Preparing for Public Health Emergencies**](#)

Vaccinating Strategies Survey

TFAH is working to learn and disseminate information about the programs and strategies that state and local public health departments, as well as aging services and home care providers, have adopted and implemented to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to older adults who are homebound.

To accomplish this goal, we are asking departments of public health and organizations that support and serve older adults to complete the respective survey below. The survey is brief and will not take long to complete.

We appreciate your commitment to improving access to the COVID-19 vaccine for the homebound population. This information will also be analyzed to identify best practices for future emergencies.

[Survey for Departments of Public Health](#)

[Survey for Aging Services and Home Care Providers](#)

The Legacy Interviews – *Wednesdays, June 23 – September 8, 2021, 1:00 pm ET.* The American Society on Aging’s 12-week webcast series will feature interviews from leaders with decades of experience in the fields of aging, health and social services. The interviews will be conducted by Dr. Ken Dychtwald. Register [here](#).

Caring for Those Who Care: Meeting the Needs of Hispanic Caregivers – *Thursday, August 26, 2021, 2:00 pm ET.* Presented by the Diverse Elders Coalition, this training will help providers understand the experiences of Hispanic caregivers and provide strategies to help meet the needs of these caregivers. This webinar is part of the Diverse Elders Coalitions’ cultural competency training curriculum. Register [here](#).

Older Adult Learning and Technology: Best Practices and Resources – *Friday, August 27, 2021, 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm ET.* Hosted by engAGED: The National Resource Center for Engaging Older Adults, this webinar will highlight strategies and opportunities for older adults to use technology to support social engagement. Presenters include Older Adults Technology Services, the National Resource Center for Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes, and the Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging. Register [here](#).

2021 Healthy Aging Symposium – *September 8 & 9, 2021.* Co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion and Trust for America’s Health, this symposium will focus on sharing the latest research and successful approaches to healthy aging; connecting insights and ideas across sectors; addressing barriers and reducing health disparities among older Americans; and building on lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. Register [here](#).

Request for Proposals – TFAH’s Age-Friendly Public Health Systems Initiative Evaluation

TFAH is pleased to provide an opportunity to evaluate the AFPHS project. The project start date is October 1, 2021 and the evaluation should be completed by January 31, 2023. For more information about this opportunity, please access the RFP [here](#).

Funding Opportunity – 2021 Equity and Accessibility: Transportation Planning Grant

The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (co-administered by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging and Easterseals) has announced its 2021 Equity and Accessibility: Transportation Planning Grant. This grant opportunity has two areas of focus: 1) transportation equity and inclusion and 2) COVID-19 recovery. Grants will be awarded to as many as 10 communities for five months, up to \$20,000 for each award. Applications are due August 27, 2021 at 11:59pm ET. More information can be found [here](#).

Resources:

Creating an Equitable and Healthier Future with Funding from the American Rescue Plan Act

The American Rescue Plan Act funds have been used by states and locales to address needs related to housing, education, food insecurity, health workforce, and public health and preparedness. While these one-time investments have been supportive to all communities, a recent blog post by the Milbank Memorial Fund notes that [**using the funds to increase access to community health, behavioral health, and social services can lead to a positive impact on population health**](#). Investing in education and early childhood care can boost life expectancy and educational outcomes.

Possible Link between COVID-19 and Dementia

Trial results presented at the 2021 Alzheimer's Association International Conference note that [**changes in brain biology can occur after being hospitalized with COVID-19**](#). In addition, researchers noted a link between smell loss and mental sharpness. There are concerns about the lingering brain symptoms leading to dementia in later years.

Treating the Long-Term Effects of COVID-19 among Older Adults

Older adults are also more likely to suffer from long COVID, where the COVID-19 virus has longer lasting effects. [**Adults aged 50 and older are more likely to report lingering issues months after contracting the virus**](#). Anxiety, depression, confusion and loss of appetite are some of the conditions older adults with long COVID experience. Some of the specialized programs to help these older adults include physical therapy to help patients improve their breathing and energy levels and cognitive therapies to bolster concentration and mental acuity.

Potential Increased Falls Risk due to Pandemic

Results from the University of Michigan's National Poll on Healthy Aging indicate that [**older adults may be at an increased risk for falling due to the pandemic**](#). Over one third of adults ages 50 to 80 reported that their physical activity levels declined during the first 10 months of the pandemic, and over 25% report that they are in worse physical condition. In addition, many of these older adults reported that they had an increased fear of falling. Researchers note that reduced physical conditioning and fear of falling increases fall risk. Experts note that efforts should focus on increasing physical activity and mobility, improving conditioning, and breaking the "vicious cycle" of falls and fear of falling.

New Data Brief Highlights Ways Community Partners Address Social Isolation during the Pandemic

Results from a survey conducted by engAGED: The National Resource Center for Engaging Older Adults of the Aging Network organizations and community partners highlight [**how programs and services were adjusted during the pandemic to operate virtually to promote social engagement**](#). Art and creative expression activities were offered virtually. Health and wellness included activities included virtual peer support/counseling health management, virtual telephone reassurance, and virtual meditation/mindfulness. This data brief also highlights the 10 organization types that aging service providers partnered with to offer social engagement opportunities. These organizations included senior centers, faith-based organizations, and housing agencies.

Additional Resources

Adapting Permanent Supportive Housing for Older Adults

Homeless older adults have complex needs including the early onset of aging-related conditions. Research has noted that housing alone is not enough to help homeless older adults age in place. Incorporating care into housing can lead to better health outcomes. In [**reviewing four permanent supportive housing \(PSH\) models**](#), additional supportive services, training for staff and modifying the physical characteristics of the housing structure are some of the recommendations to help address PSH for older adults.

Addressing Food Insecurity through Federal Nutrition Programs

There are significant disparities related to older adults' access to food. Renters are more likely to experience food insecurity than homeowners. Black (15.1 %) and Hispanic (14.8 %) older adults are more than twice as likely to be food insecure compared to White non-Hispanic older adults (6.2%). Older adults experiencing food insecurity are 2.3 times more likely to report having fair or poor health. The [**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance**](#)

[**Program, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and the Older American Ace nutrition program**](#) have helped address food insecurity and have reduced nursing home admissions and hospitalizations. Many eligible older adults do not participate in these programs due to challenges navigating the application process.

New Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act Award Recipients

The following seven departments of health have become [**BOLD Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act Award Recipients**](#): Arkansas Department of Health, the City of Boston Public Health Department, the Connecticut Department of Health, the Idaho Department of Health, the Louisiana Department of Health, the South Carolina Department of Health and the Tennessee Department of Health. The awardees will focus on promoting a strong public health approach to Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. This approach includes changing systems, environments, and policies to promote risk reduction, to improve early diagnosis, to prevent and manage comorbidities, and to avoid hospitalizations.

New Tool Helps Older Adults Find Rental Assistance

Developed by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the [**Rental Assistance Finder**](#) is a new tool that helps renters and landlords find and apply for rental assistance in their area. In addition to this tool, the National Center on Law and Elder Rights has a training on [**Emergency Rental Assistance Programs and Other Tools to Prevent Evictions of Older Adult Tenants**](#) to help advocates learn more about how to help older adults navigate accessing rental assistance funds.

Death from Alzheimer's Disease is More Common in Southeastern Rural Areas

Researchers have noted that the [**death rates from Alzheimer's disease in rural areas in the Southeast are twice the rate of those in urban areas in the mid-Atlantic area**](#). While the specific reason for this difference is not known, people in southeastern rural areas suffer from cardiovascular diseases like heart failure which is a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

Importance of Casual Relationships

[**Casual relationships, such as those with neighbors, pharmacists, or fellow volunteers, have several benefits**](#). These connections can promote a sense of belonging, provide bursts of positive energy, motivate us to engage in activities, and expose us to new information and opportunities. The key difference between these relationships and relationships with family and friends is that there are no emotional challenges.

Addressing Social Risk Factors for Older Adults

Medicare Advantage has shifted attention to focus more addressing the social determinants of health (SDOH) that influence the health outcomes among beneficiaries. Based on an assessment of the current landscape of SDOH services conducted by National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, this [**Better Medicare Alliance's Center for Innovation in Medicare Advantage report**](#) highlights best practices within the rapidly evolving operational environment, and identifies policy recommendations to further enable health plans, providers, and their community-based organization partners to address beneficiary social needs.

Applying Principles of Trustworthiness

The Association of American Medical Colleges Center for Health Justice recently released the [**Principles of Trustworthiness**](#), 10 key standards designed to address long-standing distrust marginalized and under-resourced communities. These principles are not a checklist but are designed to help organizations demonstrate their trustworthiness to communities.



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