

Age-Friendly Public Health Systems

Equitable Healthy Aging

The American older adult population is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of race, sexuality, and ability. Public health professionals must work to advance equitable aging and ensure that everyone has a fair opportunity to optimize health and well-being across the life course.



The U.S. longevity success story must also include acknowledgment of the growing diversity in the older adult population, and the need to ensure robust systems are in place to enable all Americans to age healthfully and productively. The cumulative impact of health disparities over the life course means people living in poverty may experience worsening health as they grow older, but with fewer resources to rely upon.

Health equity is foundational to the public health goal of improving population health and is at the center of the AFPHS framework, as well as the 10 Essential Public Health Services. It can be defined by a shift from individual health behaviors and risk factors to examining social and structural contexts that impact entire populations and lead to a more equitable distribution of assets and resources across a jurisdiction.

Because social determinants of health are key drivers of everyone's health and well-being, public health must consider and seek to overcome the historic and structural forms of discrimination that have contributed to the development of health disparities in marginalized populations, including communities of color, LGBT people, and people with disabilities, among others.

Trust for America's Health's 6Cs Framework for Creating Age-Friendly Public Health Systems (AFPHS) organizes public health roles in aging services. Public health can enhance equitable healthy aging by:

- ✓ Creating and lead policy, systems, and environmental changes to ensure equity is centered in the work of improving older adult health and well-being
- ✓ Connecting multi-sector stakeholders to address the health and social needs of older adults, with a particular focus on including older adults from marginalized communities in community health assessment and planning processes
- ✓ Collecting data on health inequities, particularly focused on the impact of the social determinants of health, among older adults and caregivers
- ✓ Coordinating existing services to best support diverse older adult populations, especially those that have been historically underserved by the public health system
- ✓ Communicating important public health information to promote older adult health and well-being, including disseminating research findings and emerging best practices
- ✓ Complementing existing health promoting programs to ensure they are adequately meeting the healthcare needs of all older adults, especially those from diverse backgrounds



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