
Senior Initiative

MISSION STATEMENT

The Senior Initiative is a multi-year, cross departmental project to (1) improve coordination, community outreach and promotion of programs designed to serve seniors, and (2) identify and plan for the short and long term needs of seniors.

LINKAGE TO COUNTY RESULTS AREAS

- ❖ ***Vital Living for All of our Residents***
- ❖ ***Healthy and Sustainable Communities***
- ❖ ***Safe Streets and Secure Neighborhoods***

PROGRAM CONTACTS

Contact Uma S. Ahluwalia of the Department of Health and Human Services at 240.777.1266 or Beryl L. Feinberg of the Office of Management and Budget at 240.777.2768 for more information regarding this Initiative's operating budget.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Senior Initiative is a comprehensive response to the various issues facing the growing number of seniors in our community. Montgomery County, much like the rest of the United States, will experience an unprecedented growth in the senior population in the coming decades. The Maryland Department of Planning projects that between 2000 and 2020 the senior population (age 60 and over) in Montgomery County will increase by 74%. During that same period the non-senior population will increase by only 10%; thus seniors as a group are growing over seven times faster than non-seniors. By 2020, seniors will comprise 24% of the County population, compared to 15% currently.

Recognizing the need to address the needs of this burgeoning population, the County executive is strategically enhancing a variety of critical senior services. At the same time, through the creation of a Senior Subcabinet, the County Executive has charged his departments with ensuring that senior serves are delivered in a coordinated and effective manner.

The leadership of this effort is provided by the Director of the Department of Health and Human Services and the Director of the Department of Recreation who serve as Co-Chairs of the County Executive's Senior Subcabinet on Vital Aging. The Senior Subcabinet has representatives from the following departments: Health and Human Services, Recreation, Fire and Rescue Services, Transportation - Transit Services, Public Libraries, Housing and Community Affairs, Police, Office of Consumer Protection, Commission for Women, Office of Public Information, and the Office of Community Partnerships (Community Engagement Cluster) as well as the Commission on Aging.

Building upon previous efforts to assess the current needs of seniors and plan for emerging needs (e.g., "A Report on the Needs of Low-Income Seniors in Montgomery County, MD," June 2002; "Strategic Planning Study of Senior Needs," December 2002; "Imagining An Aging Future for Montgomery County, MD," May 2007; "Senior Outreach Strategic Communications Plan for Montgomery County," October 2007, the "County Executive's Senior Summit", November 2008) identified eight key areas considered essential for Montgomery County seniors to "age in community" with safety, dignity and vitality:

- Communications and Outreach
- Housing and Zoning
- Transportation and Mobility
- Health and Wellness
- Civic and Social Engagement
- Home and Community Support Services
- Safety
- Employment

The FY12 Approved Budget includes approximately \$16.7 million in tax supported resources identified for seniors. The County Executive's Recommended FY13 Operating Budget invests almost \$2 million additional tax supported resources to continue the implementation of the Senior Initiative in FY13.

Services benefiting seniors are incorporated in the general department program offerings, as well as targeted services. These services respond to multiple critical needs facing the county at this time and the desired outcomes to promote "vital living for all residents". Below are some of the major County government programs currently supporting County seniors:

Department of Health and Human Services

- Prevent or reverse nursing home placement for Medicaid eligible persons 50+ by providing case management and community based services (including assisted living). The Waiver pays for all services up to the cost equivalent of a nursing home. Over 450 Montgomery County clients are enrolled in the Older Adults Waiver Program and receive an average of \$38,000 per year per person in home and community-based services.
- Transport seniors using Transit Services Ride-On buses during off-peak hours to provide transportation to County senior and community recreation centers once or more per week and to grocery stores for a limited number of senior housing complexes one time each week.
- Provide supportive contractual services to seniors including "friendly visitor" services, escorted grocery shopping, legal assistance, and Alzheimer's support services.
- Offer one-stop hands-on assistance and outreach to Montgomery County residents regarding services for seniors, persons with disabilities and their families and caregivers to clarify their needs and identify and access resources.
- Protect and advocate for the more than 7,700 County residents in 183 assisted living facilities and 34 nursing homes by maintaining a regular presence in and access to services for residents.
- Guarantee that seniors over the age of 60 have access to meals, nutrition education, the opportunity for socialization at senior centers, churches, senior apartment buildings, and food delivered directly to the homes of people who cannot get out or prepare healthful meals on their own.
- Investigate complaints of maltreatment for abuse and neglect against seniors, secure resources, and provide surrogate decision-making for adults adjudicated through the courts.
- Provide in-home support services to help vulnerable seniors remain safe and cared for in the community and to prevent premature and/or inappropriate institutionalization.
- Offer short-term respite services to caregivers who provide ongoing care to frail elders and provide relief from the demands of care-giving.

Department of Recreation

- Offer Senior Outdoor Adventures in Recreation day trip programs for active adults over 55 years of age.
- Access the four full service Senior Centers that offer ample social opportunities, health and wellness programs, life long learning and educational programs, exercise classes, dance classes, lectures, cultural programs, and more.
- Remain vital at the thirteen Community Recreation Centers where seniors gather for educational programs, friendship, entertainment, sports, and other activities.
- Celebrate fitness by participating in the Senior Sneaker Exercise Program that provides adults 55+ access to quality exercise/fitness rooms at Recreation Department Community Centers with a reduced annual membership.

Department of Transportation – Transit Services

- Subsidize taxi service for low income seniors, age 67 and older, to allow for greater mobility and quality of life.
- Provide information and linkage to transportation resources to senior citizens, maintain a database of resources, help callers fill out forms for transportation programs, and links caller with transportation providers.
- Discount rides for seniors on Ride On and Metrobus with half price fares at all times except weekday hours of 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., when seniors ride free.

Department of Public Libraries

- Offer large print library materials and other accessibility equipment and services for seniors.
- Provide library materials and programs relevant to senior issues, including book discussions, financial, retirement, taxes, health, employment, technology, consumer, English language learning, and other topics.
- Purchase Metro Senior SmarTrip cards and reduced fare paper fare cards at all library branches.

Department of Fire and Rescue Services

- Protect seniors by providing emergency medical service to senior residents that call 911 for assistance, whether the response may be a routine type of incident in which fire and rescue personnel assist a senior into their bed or chair, or an emergency type of event that requires emergency medical treatment and or transport to a medical facility.
- Initiate a Senior Summit Safety Group, representing all the public safety departments, works together to address every aspect of senior citizen safety, including the implementation of a Senior Citizen Safety Hotline.
- Inspect smoke and carbon-monoxide detectors for seniors, at their residence or assisted living facilities.
- Offer a free residence injury safety inspection for seniors.
- Assist in the development of fire evacuation plans in partnership with neighborhood organizations.

Department of Housing and Community Affairs

- Continue partnering with “Rebuilding Together” by funding some administrative costs for a highly leveraged program that provides home repairs for low-income homeowners, most of which are seniors and who are unable to undertake home repairs on their own. The home repair work may include minor plumbing, painting, flooring, carpentry and electrical work; repair or replacement of gutters, doors, locks, handles, filters and handrails; installation of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, grab bars, storm windows and screens; and debris removal.

Office of the State’s Attorney

- Prosecute cases of alleged financial elder abuse, fraud, identity theft, misappropriation by a fiduciary, and embezzlement supported by the State’s Attorney Senior Financial Exploitation Prevention Initiative.

Community Engagement Cluster

- Partner with community organizations to provide free tax preparation to low-to-moderate income Montgomery County residents with special attention to seniors over sixty years old.
- Continue distribution of the "Village Blueprint", a how-to guide for establishing "Villages", to bring local community organizations together to support seniors aging-in-place and combat social isolation.

Department of Finance

- Continue the Senior Tax Credit for eligible residents at least 70 years of age that reduces the taxpayer’s tax bill.

Department of Environmental Protection

- Access an exemption for curbside refuse and recycling services available to any individual who because of physical limitations (disability or age) is unable to bring containers to the curb.

Office of Public Information

- Produce View the Seniors Today, a monthly cable television show highlighting services and programs of interest to seniors.
- Provide leadership for the Senior Subcabinet on Vital Aging communications and outreach.

FY13 RECOMMENDED ENHANCEMENTS

Department of Health and Human Services

- Pilot a six month, phased in Escorted Transportation Project to expand the Jewish Council for the Aging "Smooth Ride Program", to provide and coordinate new and existing escorted transportation services, and to provide 550 one-way escorted trips. (\$55,000).
- Provide additional home delivered meals to approximately sixteen chronically ill clients age 60 and above to address the nutritional needs of the County’s most frail and vulnerable seniors who are home-bound due to illness or disability. Services are targeted to individuals in greatest need and special consideration is given to low income individuals, minority individuals, those in rural communities, those with limited English proficiency and those at risk of institutional care. (\$35,000).
- Enhance Senior Mental Health Services in the Senior Outreach Team contract for an additional part-time therapist to serve additional 85 home-bound seniors and coordinate medication with medical providers. (\$50,000).
- Restore the Home Care Chore Services Program targeted to low income frail elderly and people with disabilities who need help with light cleaning, vacuuming, laundry, and/or meal preparation in order to remain in their own homes and in the community. This funding will purchase service for approximately 21 clients with two hours of Chore Services per week for a year. (\$50,000).

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- Add Heavy Chore Services to serve approximately 25 senior clients with hoarding behaviors to prevent evictions or condemnation or to correct health and safety conditions. Services include heavy commercial cleaning and pest fumigation. (\$20,000).
 - Increase the State Senior Care Gateway Grant to expand senior care service capacity, including personal care, chore service, medications, medical supplies, adult day care, respite care, home delivered meals, transportation, and emergency response systems for low-income seniors age 65 years or older who may be at risk of nursing home placement. (\$359,754).

Department of Recreation

- Enhance senior programming at the White Oak Community Recreation Center (scheduled to open in the spring of 2012) including exercise classes, entertainment, art classes, special events, health education, and an on site nutrition/lunch program. (\$117,120).

Department of Transportation – Transit Services

- Decrease the cost of the second Call N Ride coupon book by about \$5 (depending on annual family income) to FY11 levels. This cost reduction directly benefits seniors using this service and results in a projected Transit Services revenue decrease of -\$160,670.

Department of Housing and Community Affairs

- Invest \$1,500,000 from the Housing Initiative Fund and add to previously appropriated funds for affordable housing to develop a senior independent living facility adjoining the new Silver Spring Library, providing up to 140 housing units, of which 98 would be affordable to a mix of seniors with incomes ranging from 30 to 60 percent of the area median income.
- Facilitate completion of additional senior housing at Victory Oaks and Victory Court.

Office Human Resources

- Enhance the Senior Fellows program, adding \$50,000 to double this program and to augment the county's workforce by tapping into the skill sets of highly talented and experienced seniors.

Office of the State's Attorney

- Restore funds for one Assistant State's Attorney for Special Prosecutions, who is charged with protecting seniors and vulnerable adults from financial harm and fraud. (\$80,000).

Non-Department al Account Community Grants

- Non-profit grants totaling more than \$600,000 will incorporate programs and services to seniors.

Community Engagement Cluster

- Restore limited counseling services via a contract, estimated that \$21,000 of a \$70,000 contract would serve seniors.
- Restore Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) to the FY12 funding level. (\$18,170).