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# 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 Deborah S. Lambert of the Office of Management and Budget at 240.777.2794 for more information regarding this Initiative's operating budget.

## FY14 RECOMMENDED ENHANCEMENTS

The FY13 Approved Budget includes approximately \$20.3 million in tax supported resources identified for seniors. The County Executive's Recommended FY14 Operating Budget invests approximately \$4.2 million additional tax supported resources to continue the implementation of the Senior Initiative in FY14.

### Department of Recreation

- Starting January 2014, initiate a Senior Transportation Project with the Jewish Council for the Aging (JCA) for senior transportation services to be provided to the Long Branch, Holiday Park, Margaret Schweinhaut, White Oak, and Damascus Senior Centers. This will be a flexible, fixed-route senior bus service in local neighborhoods with limited door-to-door pick up and drop off for most-in-need riders. Projected costs are based on six hours per day per center, Monday through Friday, 50 weeks per year beginning January 2014. The project will also provide centralized coordination of bus service that includes senior's direct telephone access to JCA during regular business hours (\$318,750).
- Beginning January 2014, implement quarterly senior mini trips to activities and events in the Metropolitan Baltimore, MD and Washington, D.C. areas from each of the five Senior Centers and at each of the 55+ Active Adult Recreation Programs (\$25,120).
- Pending community assessment, initiate a 55+ Active Adult Senior Program at the Ken Gar Recreation facility (\$5,450).

### Department of Health and Human Services

- Provide Home Delivered Meals to an additional 31 frail seniors. Of these 31 seniors, 25 are on the waiting list for this program, and six will be served in the upper Northwest corner of the County, which currently has no home delivered meal provider. HHS will identify and serve six seniors in this area and provide two meals per day three days per week to these individuals (\$82,000).
- Extend to a full year in FY14 the Escorted Transportation Project with the Jewish Council for the Aging to expand and coordinate new and existing escorted transportation services (\$55,000).
- Add funds for a contractual position to develop a countywide Mobility Management System that can leverage other resources and coordinate them to meet the transportation needs of low and middle-income older adults in Montgomery County. The funds will also result in the development of a strategic marketing communications plan to publicize transportation programs to seniors (\$60,000).
- Reduce cost by transferring select Senior Program Transportation routes to the Recreation Department's Senior Transportation Project with the Jewish Council for the Aging (-\$142,500).

### Department of Transportation – Transit Services

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- Ridership on Metro Bus in the Seniors Ride Free program has been adjusted by Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to reflect a more accurate count of 160,255 in FY12, increasing the cost of the program (\$49,020).

#### **Department of Housing and Community Affairs**

- Invest \$4,500,000 from the Housing Initiative Fund and add to previously appropriated funds of \$1,500,000 for affordable housing to develop a senior independent living facility adjoining the new Silver Spring Library. This investment will result in between 140 to 150 housing units, of which approximately 120 to 126 would be affordable to a mix of seniors with incomes ranging from 30 to 60 percent of the area median income (\$4,500,000).

#### **Department of Fire and Rescue Services**

- Funding was added to the department's budget to provide contractual services for Senior Citizen Fire/Life Safety Educators. The Safety Educator concept was formed out of the recommendations of the Senior Citizen Fire Safety Task Force, whose mission was to examine and search for ways to reduce the inordinately high number of seniors who fall victim to fire. The Safety Educators will:
  - Provide home fire safety evaluations;
  - Provide information and training to groups who visit seniors in their homes such as HHS social workers, Meals-On-Wheels drivers, Robert's Medical Equipment staff, as well as civic and religious groups;
  - Meet with the responsible parties of the residential building to look at the current fire evacuation plan and suggest modifications dependent on building type, existing fire protection systems, and the ability of the residents to self-evacuate; and
  - Provide presentations to senior communities, senior centers, retirement associations, and the like to provide safety information on kitchen hazards, heating hazards, safe smoking practices, fire escape planning, as well as information on trip and fall hazards around the home (\$50,000).

#### **Non-Departmental Account Community Grants**

- Increase grants to our community partners by more than \$1.2 million for 37 proposals providing services such as intergenerational programming, health and wellness initiatives, transportation (including handicap accessible vehicles), culturally and linguistically appropriate case management and legal assistance, and safety net services such as utility support and food assistance.

## **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 83 percent. During that same period the non-senior population will increase by only 11 percent, thus seniors as a group are growing over seven times faster than non-seniors. By 2020, seniors will comprise more than 22 percent of the County population, compared to 18 percent 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 services 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 Living. The Senior Subcabinet has representatives from the following departments: Health and Human Services, Recreation, Fire and Rescue Services, Transit Services, Public Libraries, Housing and Community Affairs, Police, Office of Consumer Protection, Commission for Women, Office of Public Information, Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, CountyStat, 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:

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

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 Recreation**

- Offer Senior Outdoor Adventures in Recreation day trip programs for active adults over 55 years of age.
- Operate the five 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.
- Operate the eleven 55+ Active Adult Programs where seniors gather for educational programs, friendship, entertainment, sports, and other activities.
- Operate the Senior Sneaker Exercise Program that provides for adults over 55 years of age access to quality exercise and fitness rooms at Recreation Department Community Centers with a reduced annual membership fee.

**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 Older Adults Waiver Program pays for all services up to the cost equivalent of a nursing home. Over 550 Montgomery County clients are enrolled in the program and receive an average of \$40,000 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.
- Implement a six month, phased in Escorted Transportation Project with the Jewish Council for the Aging to expand and coordinate new and existing escorted transportation 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 have food delivered directly to the homes of people who cannot get out or prepare healthful meals on their own.
- Provide home delivered meals to 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.
- 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 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.
- Provide Heavy Chore Services to serve seniors with hoarding behaviors to prevent evictions or condemnation or to correct health and safety conditions. Services include heavy commercial cleaning and pest fumigation.
- Offer short-term respite services to caregivers who provide ongoing care to frail elders and provide relief from the demands of care-giving.

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- Provide Senior Mental Health Services for home-bound seniors and coordinate medication with medical providers.

#### **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.
- Provide fixed route service (Ride On) to many senior centers.
- Transport seniors to five senior centers and for grocery shopping trips during Ride On's off-peak period.
- Provide free bus fares on Ride On and Metrobus during off-peak periods and half price fares at all other times.
- Improve over 2,510 bus stops as part of Ride On's safety and accessibility program.
- Improve access to the Mid County Community Recreation Center by re-locating the bus stop at Layhill and Queensguard Roads and installing two bus shelters.

#### **Department of Public Libraries**

- Provide library materials and programs relevant to senior issues. Topics include book discussions, finances, retirement, taxes, health, employment, technology, consumer issues, English language learning, and others.
- Provide lifelong learning services and materials, including our seniors-focused web page, and training on how to use e-books and computers.
- Offer large print library materials and other accessibility equipment and services for seniors.
- Provide Metro Senior SmarTrip cards and reduced fare paper fare cards for purchase at all library branches.
- Provide substantial volunteer opportunities that are frequently utilized by seniors at every branch.

#### **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 or transport to a medical facility.
- Initiate a Senior Summit Safety Group representing all the public safety departments to address every aspect of senior citizen safety, including the implementation of a Senior Citizen Safety Hotline.
- Inspect smoke and carbon-monoxide alarms 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 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.
- Continue partnering with the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County to provide rental assistance to low and very-low income seniors.

#### **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.
- Prosecute cases of alleged elder physical and sexual abuse and neglect, through the State's Attorney's Family Violence Division.
- Partner with the Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse and Neglect Task Force of Montgomery County to combat elder physical and sexual abuse and neglect, and elder financial exploitation.

#### **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 60 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.
- Provide individual and couples senior counseling services.
- Offer Retired Senior Volunteer Program or RSVP.

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**Office Human Resources**

- Offer the Senior Fellows program to augment the County's workforce by tapping into the skill sets of highly talented, experienced, and seasoned professionals which includes seniors.

**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 "Seniors Today", a monthly cable television show highlighting services and programs of interest to seniors.
- Provide leadership for the Senior Subcabinet on Vital Living Committee's communications and outreach.

