



## MAINE AGING INITIATIVE REPORT

The Maine Aging Initiative, led by the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA), grew out of the 2014 Blueprint for Action on Aging, a plan inspired by the ideas of more than 500 community, business, finance, education and policy leaders who discussed these issues in depth over many months. The motivation for the Initiative is the collective understanding that our challenges related to our aging demographic are too great for any one system to meet. It will take a coordinated and collaborative community response supported by all parts of the economy and government to address these challenges.

The Maine Aging Initiative was launched in May 2014 with the formation of five working groups made up of people with different skills and perspectives on the workgroup subject areas. The groups included over 100 people from across all sectors of the state's economy. They met as a group in June 2015 to review their work and to plan for the second year of the initiative. Below is a synopsis of the outcomes of the first year and recommendations for launching year two of the Initiative.

**Aging Friendly Communities Workgroup** was charged with developing best practices related to housing, transportation and community-based initiatives that support healthy aging. This group published a white paper on accessory apartments that provides recommendations for towns to help seniors live independently. The workgroup investigated and promoted numerous best practices related to initiatives that support aging in place, including formal Age Friendly Communities, Village-to-Village models, and home sharing and home repair programs. This group inspired the creation of the Tri-State Learning Collaborative on Aging (TSLCA) which aims to increase the collective impact of aging initiatives through shared learning opportunities offered to people in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

### **Workgroup Recommendations:**

- Support the TSLCA effort to catalogue Maine aging initiatives on [www.agefriendly.community](http://www.agefriendly.community).
- TSLCA will convene a regional working group on volunteer transportation initiatives. The MCOA's transportation committee should support this work in Maine.
- Reconvene the workgroup to focus exclusively on housing issues. This group will host multiple planning sessions to identify barriers and solutions to development of new models of housing that meet the needs of older adults across the aging continuum.

**Health & Well-Being Workgroup** worked to develop and promote best practices for collaboration of health care and community-based care services. This group explored best practices related to patient engagement, training of health and direct care workers, person-centered coordinated care, and senior and caregiver isolation. In partnership with the public safety and age friendly community groups, the workgroup began designing a training curriculum to help people who are "first contacts" (people who interact with older adults on a regular basis) to identify warning signs of isolation and serious health or safety risks, share information and make referrals for help. The final report of this group can be found at <http://mainecouncilonaging.org/healthwellbeing.php>.

### **Workgroup Recommendations:**

- Reconvene workgroup to focus on two issues:
  - Finalize creation of "First Contacts" curriculum and initiate pilot of curriculum.
  - Support HealthInfoNet efforts to create a person-centered care plan that can be utilized by community based organization to support the health of older adults.

**Higher Education Workgroup** was asked to compile data about research being conducted in Maine on aging, discover best practices in educational models that support older adults with a goal of replicating these models, and determine the best way to retrain older people to re-enter the workforce. Their group used survey methods and interviews with all of Maine’s higher education and research entities. They’ve published a 27 page report outlining their findings and recommendations that can be read at <http://mainecouncilonaging.org/education.php>.

**Workgroup Recommendations:**

- Host a Research Summit, potential with the Geriatrics Conference, to promote collaboration and interdisciplinary perspectives among researchers across different institutions in Maine.
- Develop competencies for integrating aging into existing higher education curricula across a variety of academic departments at institutions throughout the state.
- Support Workforce Group recommendation that Legislative aging leaders take the lead at bringing higher education and employment leaders together to plan to retrain older workers.

**Public & Private Safety Workgroup** was charged with strengthening public communication about scams and frauds and increasing coordination between first responders, health and direct care workers and community organizations in order to support vulnerable older adults. This group was successful in getting more than 20 weekly papers throughout Maine to publish a “tip of the week” to alert older residents to ongoing frauds and scams. The workgroup also surveyed law enforcement about their training needs and successfully initiated enhanced training at the Criminal Justice Academy that will start this fall. They discovered best practices related to wellness check programs, which became the focus of a story in the Bangor Daily News, and community paramedic projects. They also supported the “First Contacts” work.

**Workgroup Recommendations:**

- Host a Summit for law enforcement officers and first responders to educate these professionals about the tools available to assist in protecting and investigating elder abuse and neglect.
- Determine the viability of TRIAD as a community model that can be implemented as part of emerging community-based aging initiatives and, if the program remains viable, promote it.
- Determine the best way to grow and promote the use of wellness check programs, particularly in partnership with emerging community-based aging initiatives.

**Workforce & Employment Workgroup** worked to identify best practices for employers related to supporting older workers and family caregivers in the workforce, including leave policies, flexible work schedules, information and training. This group completed a survey of Maine employers that gathered data on these practices. They worked with the Higher Education workgroup to explore ways to support older adults returning to work. They also investigated how to support the failing direct care worker system. They published two short summaries related to their work that were presented to the Legislative Caucus on Aging in April. These can be found at <http://mainecouncilonaging.org/workforce.php>.

**Workgroup Recommendations:**

- Reconvene group with single focus being on engaging employers on creating intergenerational workforces that support older workers and caregivers.
- Legislative aging leaders should convene a group to work on implementation of various reports that say Maine needs to put more than 10,000 older adults back to work.
- The MCOA and Legislative aging leaders should convene a facilitated, short-term working group to design a career path for direct care workers across the aging services continuum that includes incentives, training and increased wages.