



2023 CHANGE AGEnt Summit

Breakout Sessions – Key Takeaways

Thank you for joining us for the Maine Council on Aging's Annual Summit! There were thought-provoking and inspiring conversations happening throughout the day that fostered actionable ideas. We are sharing the key takeaways from each of the breakout sessions to help us all become CHANGE AGEnts and promote age-friendly communities where everyone can live into their 70s, 80s, 90s and beyond!

Morning Sessions

Flipping the Script to Age Positive

1. When we “see” ageism, in words and actions, call it out and disrupt it to raise awareness.
2. Attract older workers. Offer part-time and flexible hours.
3. Encourage older adults to run for public office.

Celebrating Adaptation

1. Use it or lose it. Encourage healthy aging through exercise and social engagement provided by community programs that welcome all ages and abilities.
2. Encourage people to embrace technology as a tool for aging in place and adapting to changes in their health. This can include using hearing aids, using transcription services like the app Live Transcribe, using virtual personal assistants like Alexa and the Echo Dot to help with prompts and reminders or making hands-free phone calls. Local groups can educate people about the options available and help with setting up devices.
3. Utilize Smart Plugs and Smart Switches which can be programmed to automatically turn on/off lights, play music, etc. Again, set-up assistance could be provided through local groups.

Aging BIPOC

1. Trust is critical! Facilitate relationship building between BIPOC and other community groups.
2. Start young. Facilitate interaction between older adults (who tend to be segregated) and young BIPOC children who will be more likely to respect older adults if they are living in multi-generational families or have regular engagement with older adults.
3. Acknowledge Indigenous land to build awareness, respect, and trust.

Healthy Aging Through Community Engagement

1. Provide programs that encourage social interaction through local Parks and Recreation. This can include games, trips, exercise, lunch 'n learn sessions, etc.
2. Coordinate with other local groups to identify and reach home-bound adults.
3. Offer programs that foster independence – fall prevention, strength training, Tai Chi, nutrition and, if possible, have older adults facilitate them.

No, this isn't "normal aging!"

1. Advocate for Patient Care Advisory Committees within healthcare settings that would connect directly with the Board of Directors.
2. Expand geriatric training for all healthcare professionals and offer a "Certificate of Added Qualification" option for physicians to support upselling to treat older patients.
3. Shift medical education to be holistically focused on the entire person.
4. Advocate for insurance payment changes that support longer visits and require these for older patients.
5. Educate patients about how to have a successful visit with their provider (i.e., prioritizing your most important needs).
6. Create a "Healthy Aging Passport" that patients can share with providers about how they wish to be treated.
7. Give patients an opportunity to provide positive feedback to providers about what went well during their appointment.
8. Make medical scribes available during appointments so the provider can interact with the patient rather than having to sit behind the computer to document the visit.

Community Nursing – An Old Idea with New Potential

1. Connect older adults with local resources – start small within your own neighborhood.
2. Talk with local town leaders about this approach and how it could reduce EMT visits and thus reduce costs.
3. Identify retired nurses who might be willing to volunteer to provide services, especially in rural communities.

Dementia-Friendly Communities

1. Provide services that help adults with dementia to feel engaged, find joy, purpose and meaning, and help them remain at home if possible.
2. Libraries and the Lifelong Maine Dementia Collection can provide Dementia Inclusion Kits as well as games and puzzles geared toward adults with dementia.
3. Information resources for families experiencing dementia can be found at www.sullivanmaine.org/dementiainclusion, the Facebook page for Dementia Inclusion Downeast, and KeepingBusy.com.

Making Maine Age Friendly for Solo Agers

1. Raise awareness of what it does and does not mean to be a solo ager.
2. Get solo aging recognized and part of the State Plan on Aging.
3. Include solo aging as a subgroup within Leadership Exchange on Ageism courses and diversity.
4. Create a network of solo agers to learn from each other and develop strategies for successfully aging solo.
5. Create “systemic change” to support solo aging and change the thinking that this is a problem to be fixed. The state of Minnesota provides a great model for solo aging.

Transition Planning

1. Develop collaborative/cohesive resources focused on the needs/psychology of older adults – people want to be seen for who they are, not their age.
2. Develop a statewide approach to helping older adults transition fluidly between work and volunteerism/civic engagement.
3. Create a civic matching program to help people find opportunities to engage. This could include SCORE (USM mentorship program), cross-generational opportunities (especially with trans kids) and much more.
4. Engage with employers on how to work with older adults that aren’t ready to fully retire but want more flexible hours, mentorship opportunities to train younger workers etc.
5. Offer workshops for businesses and individuals on ways to transition.
6. Develop messaging/marketing targeting transitioning older adults – retirement isn’t the end, it’s the beginning. Use age-positive messaging and images.

Building an Age-Friendly Public Health System in Maine

1. Expand public health programs to provide prevention programs across the lifespan, not just geared toward youth and young adults.
2. Desegregate community health programs to include all ages and encourage “community connectedness.”
3. Increase funding for intersectional public health programming and intentionally create programs that include all ages.

What’s Next in Housing

1. Integrate services, such as broadband access, into housing.
2. Improve the quality of housing available.
3. Improve the affordability of housing available.
4. Promote home sharing through a matching service.
5. Ensure that housing is inclusive.

Keys to Creating a Successful Multi-generational Workforce

1. Continue improving hiring practices: less focus on dates on resumes, fewer assumptions about digital literacy, changes in how job descriptions and interview questions are written, offering work accommodations, such as remote work, to provide greater opportunities for older adults and adults with disabilities.
2. Increase broadband availability, relax rigid policies and requirements around certifications and credentials, promote more on-the-job training and mentoring to develop skills.
3. Offer younger workers weekly opportunities for skills training/mentoring.
4. Meet people where they are with respect and without judgement – don't make assumptions.

Afternoon Sessions

Elderspeak to Elderspark

1. Don't "over accommodate" when talking with older adults (i.e., speaking louder, or more slowly, or touching them). Approach each person without assumptions or judgement and adjust to what they need (i.e., speak louder if they indicate they can't hear you).
2. Model respectful, age-positive behavior and language, especially with children where biases about older people begin.
3. Be aware of and stop non-verbal elderspeak such as patting, eye rolling, and standing over someone when you speak with them.

Building Age-Positive Communities – Start the Conversation

1. Identify what an age-positive community means where you live.
2. Identify how to address fears of aging including declines in stability (health, housing, financial, social, personal care).
3. Build community infrastructures that promote intergenerational opportunities that are welcoming and inclusive.
4. Create opportunities to have reflective, safe conversations with people on how to create an age-positive community locally.

A New View of Work

1. Be flexible – accommodating needs of staff that are caregivers for children, partners, parents, etc., through flexible hours, hybrid work, technical support/equipment for at-home work, job sharing, meeting-free times etc.
2. Promote equity – equal pay, equal opportunities for training/mentoring/advancement, equal distribution of work, multi-generational workforce.
3. Promote work/life balance – supervisors model taking breaks/vacation time and email-free evenings/weekends, 35-hour work weeks, expand sick and vacation time, offer sabbatical opportunities, flexible Fridays, no meeting Mondays, on-site daycare.
4. Open communications – set clear expectations, schedule regular in-person meetings/team building, develop a shared value statement.

Aging LGBTQ+

1. Create a model for expanding affordable LGBTQ+ housing outside southern Maine.
2. Set up equality community centers where people feel safe being themselves.
3. Treat people with dignity and respect, especially in assisted living and healthcare settings.
4. Training for healthcare professionals in transgender competencies.

Learning Into the Future

1. Offer learning opportunities where older adults are and/or provide transportation to learning facilities.
2. Leverage new skills into employment or volunteer opportunities (i.e., getting a master gardener certification then working for a landscape gardener).
3. Target 200,000 Mainers with “stranded credentials” (people who have not completed their degree) to determine why and provide them with a pathway to completion.

Centering Older Workers in Maine’s Economic Development + Workforce Plan

1. Offer workers more flexibility (part-time hours, hybrid, or at-home work).
2. Change retirement deadlines and expand work opportunities for older workers.
3. Establish a job corps for older workers.

Healthy Aging in Community – Why Data + Values Matter

1. Data is vital to instituting change. It illustrates to decision-makers what the needs are in their communities.
2. Be flexible. Data can be interpreted in different ways and result in different solutions to address the issues.

Maine Senior College

1. Senior College provides not only lifelong learning opportunities but also promotes community building.
2. Rich and diverse network provides a wide variety of self-governed programs delivered through different structures and at different costs.
3. Offers a central resource – maineseniorcollege.org – from which to access information about all colleges statewide.
4. Maine Senior Colleges attract people that are curious and often topics that might not seem interesting turn out to be fascinating.
5. Both students and teachers learn through participation.

Ending Hunger in 2030

1. Establish a roadmap. Where do we want to go and how do we get there?
2. Don't assume that more affluent communities don't have food insecure people. Working people are food insecure too due to the rising cost of food and other living expenses.
3. Many food-insecure people don't qualify for federal assistance.
4. People dependent upon public transportation are limited to two bags on the bus, so can't purchase a week's worth of food in one trip.
5. Educate people about which foods are healthiest and how food affects health.
6. Promote nutrition information and where to access food (pantries, farm gleaning, etc.).
7. Create community gardens to stock food pantries and expand cooked food options at food pantries.

New Transit Solutions Key to Healthy Aging

1. Collaboration between various transportation providers is helping to fill gaps – partnering volunteer organizations with county or city services that already have infrastructure and resources is key.
2. Establish a toolkit on how to create and scale up volunteer networks.
3. Build on-demand networks based on local needs. Need to be flexible, equitable, and easy to use.
4. Establish guidelines for volunteer recruitment, orientation/training, background checks, forms. Volunteer engagement is critical to building a program. Some volunteers need reimbursement, but that is not the motivation for many volunteers.
5. Scheduling software systems help streamline service delivery.
6. Investment in public transit is needed (LD 1559). We MUST work together to change the culture of transit and it should be available to everyone.

Skill Building Throughout Life

1. Establish mechanisms to bring skill-building opportunities to older adults. This could be done by having career center staff routinely volunteering at local libraries.
2. Adapt scholarship opportunities to support older learners.
3. Set up a system for understanding a person's passion/purpose and then connecting them to opportunities.