Mapping Your Community’s Resources to Improve Access to Public Benefits for Seniors

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What we’re not going to talk about
Agenda

- Introduction
  - What is the National Council on Aging?
  - What do we mean by benefits access?
  - What do we mean by community mapping?
- What is the goal of benefits access work?
  - Five Phases of Benefits Access
- Where do you fit in?
- Examples and best practices for community mapping
- Q&A
NCOA is a nonprofit service and advocacy organization.

Our mission: To improve the lives of millions of older adults, especially those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged.
What do we mean by benefits access?

- A basic level of income
  - SSI
- Medical care
  - Medicaid and MSPs
- Prescription drugs
  - LIS and SPAPs
- Food
  - SNAP
- Heating and cooling
  - LIHEAP
Benefits make a big difference

Total Estimated Annual Value: $12,947

- LIS: $4,000.00
- SSI: $6,000.00
- SNAP: $1,428.00
- MSP min.: $1,200.00
- LIHEAP: $319.00

Estimated Annual Value: $12,947
What is community mapping?

- Not about an actual geographic map

- Process of thinking more broadly about benefits access:
  - Taking stock of community resources
  - “What does this community provide for seniors?” instead of “What does my organization provide for seniors?”
  - How do we help seniors fully access benefits?

- Being more strategic in your partnerships

- Coalition building
What is the goal of benefits access work?

Key Outcome:

Enrollment and Retention of Benefits
Who is your target population for benefits access?

- Different populations may have different needs or require different kinds of assistance
- You can draw a different community map for each of your target populations
- What are the distinctive needs of your target population(s)?
- How do those needs require different assistance from the community?
What needs to happen for your target population to enroll in and retain benefits?

5 Phases of Benefits Access

- Outreach and Education
- Screening
- Application Assistance
- Using the Benefit
- Retention/Recertification
Example of Benefits Access Activities: Application Assistance

- **Goal of this phase**: Helping an individual move from screening eligible for a benefit to being accepted into the benefit

- **Examples of activities in this phase**:
  - Collect necessary documentation
  - Complete applications
  - Submit application and required documentation
  - Ensure client attends required interviews
  - Troubleshoot application, providing additional information or resolve delays
  - Track clients to ensure a timely decision is reached
  - Verify information contained in the application
  - Adjudicate the application
## Community Mapping Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Agency on Aging</th>
<th>Eligibility Agency</th>
<th>Community Based Organization</th>
<th>Legal Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outreach and Education</td>
<td>Events at senior centers</td>
<td>Letters to beneficiaries</td>
<td>Outreach to Low English Proficiency clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screening</td>
<td>BenefitsCheckUp</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Application Assistance</td>
<td>Complete and submit applications</td>
<td>Verify and adjudicate applications</td>
<td>Volunteer translators for interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of Benefit</td>
<td>Follow-up to accepted clients</td>
<td></td>
<td>Posters explaining how to use the benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention and Recertification</td>
<td>Tracking clients</td>
<td>Share recertification lists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are your strengths and weaknesses?

- Looking at your list of benefits access activities, which ones are you best suited to do?
- Which activities are hardest for you to do?

➢ Where in the process is your “hand-off”?
Bridging the Gaps

- What happens after you refer a client elsewhere?

- Does the client reach the key benefits access outcome (Get and Keep the Benefits)?

- If not, where do you think the gaps are?

- Who in your community can fill those gaps?
Examples of Bridging the Gaps

- Outreach and Education
  - If someone calls in with a specific need, will anyone educate them about other benefits they might be eligible for?

- Screening
  - What happens after someone is screened for benefits and appears eligible for multiple benefits?

- Application Assistance
  - Is someone making sure clients don’t get lost in the shuffle after submitting applications?
Examples of Bridging the Gaps: Government Agencies

- Non-traditional sources of outreach:
  - DMV
  - Assessment and Taxation
  - Unemployment Office
  - Office of Faith-Based and Community Services

- Eligibility Agencies:
  - Completing perfect applications
  - Access to state databases to check on the eligibility status of clients
Building Community Coalitions

- Are your partners at the table with you? If not, what are opportunities to start conversations?

- What’s your vision for where you fit in?

- What brings your partners to the table?
  - What are their goals?
  - What incentives are there for them to work with you?
  - What constraints are your partners under?

- What are the win-win-win opportunities that exist for you and your partners and your clients?
Best Practices for Community Mapping

- Focus on intermediate goals
  - What can you accomplish in 3 months that would make it easier for your clients to access benefits?

- Not necessarily new partnerships, but more seamless ones
  - How do you clients work with your colleagues in your organization?
  - How do your clients work with your partners?
  - Are there ways to make it easier for your clients to move between people and organizations?
Adapting your community mapping

- Community mapping is not a one-time process, it’s ongoing.
- As new challenges arise, this process can be done again.
- Tracking your clients is one of the best ways to keep your community mapping dynamic.
  - Where in the benefits access process are many of your clients falling off?
Resources: Center for Benefits

- Supported by Administration on Aging and housed at NCOA
- [www.centerforbenefits.org](http://www.centerforbenefits.org)
  - Benefits 101 webinar series
  - You Gave, Now Save consumer guide to benefits
  - Promising practices
  - Fact sheets
  - Resource library for professionals
- [www.vimeo.com/channels/ncboe](http://www.vimeo.com/channels/ncboe)
Questions?
Contact Us

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Visit us on the Web at: www.centerforbenefits.org