

Senior Centers



**2023 Home and Community-Based
Services Conference**

Senior Centers

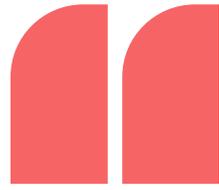
*Aging & Disability 101
2023 HCBS Conference*

Dianne Stone

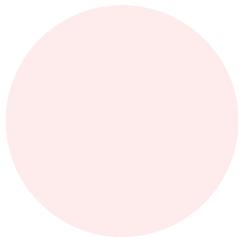
Associate Director, NCOA

August 28, 2023





*Aging with dignity shouldn't
be a stroke of luck.*



Fiscal Year 2022 Highlights

5.9 Million Lives Improved

Empowering Older Adults

\$592M

in public assistance applications

500,000

individuals educated about Medicare

30,000

participated in chronic disease and falls prevention workshops

67,000

learned about products and services to age well

4,500

trained for jobs



Strengthening Communities

\$39M

awarded to community-based organizations

18,233

hours of technical assistance provided to local nonprofits

34,000

professionals participated in e-learning

1,500

senior centers enrolled as affiliates



Advocating for Change

\$3.5M

investment in falls prevention

\$2.1M

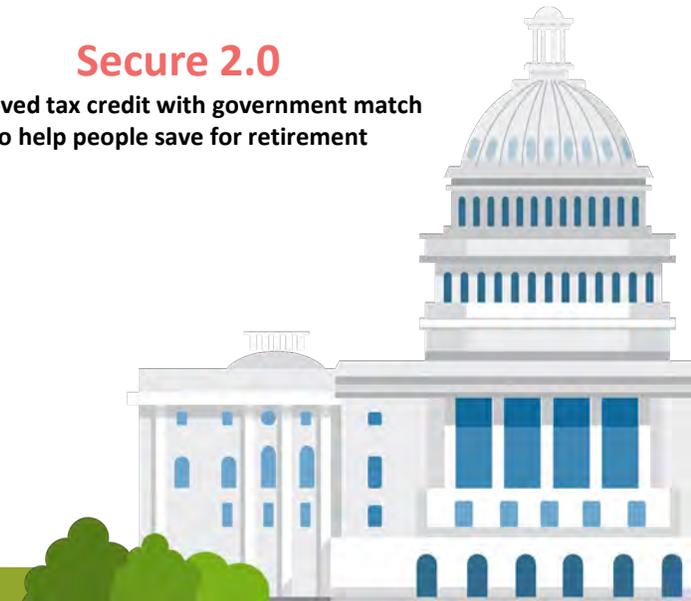
investment in Medicare counseling

\$2,000

cap on Medicare out-of-pocket drug costs

Secure 2.0

Improved tax credit with government match to help people save for retirement



NCOA's Role With Senior Centers

Leadership



NCOA is the voice of senior centers, trusted by the aging network as the authority on senior centers.

NISC – Building the Network



NISC is the largest (and only) national organization dedicated to senior centers.

Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center



Building capacity through training, technical assistance, and a clearinghouse of resources, funded by ACL

Piloting Innovation



NCOA connects to older adults through the senior center network, delivering innovative programs and connecting to business.

NISC Affiliate Membership

The National Institute of Senior Centers

The National Institute of Senior Centers (NISC) is the largest national membership organization dedicated to serving senior center professionals. Free to join, NISC supports senior centers with best practices and innovations in programming, as well as networking and training opportunities.

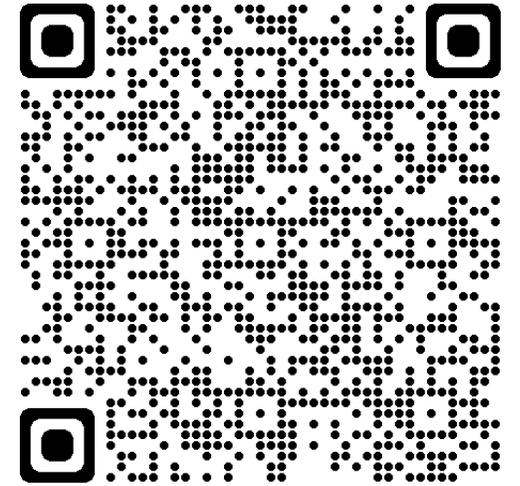


NISC Affiliate Membership

Become a NISC Affiliate Today

Join the nation's only membership organization dedicated to supporting senior center professionals.

Explore More



<https://www.ncoa.org/page/nisc-membership-application>



Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center

NCOA Resource Center



Helping senior centers thrive

Visit NCOA's Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center, a place where senior centers can get help to meet the ever-changing needs of older adults.

[Learn More](#)

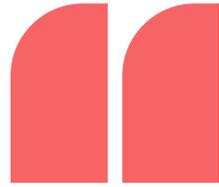
Ensure senior centers have the capacity, tools, and resources necessary to develop and implement programs that meet the current and future needs of diverse older adults across the U.S.

Leadership

Training, Consultation
and Technical
Assistance

Best Practices and
Resources

This project is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$250,000 with 75 percentage funded by ACL/HHS and \$83,000 and 25 percentage funded by non-government source(s). The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.



*If you've seen one senior center,
you've seen one senior center.*



Senior Centers – Modernizing for 80 Years



Townsend Clubs



Recreation Centers



Traditional Senior Center



Multipurpose Senior Centers

Today's Senior Center



Continued Evolution of Senior Centers

Today there are more than 11,000* Senior Centers across the country. They come in all shapes and sizes – no two look alike – and reflect the community they serve.



Senior Centers continue to evolve. Drivers of change include:

- *Shifting Generations*
- *Longevity*
- *Aging in Place*
- *Establishment of evidence-based interventions*
- *COVID*

Shifting Generations

Greatest Generation

Born between 1901-1924

- Youngest are now 98
- Valued collective organization, patriotism, neighborliness
- Experiences include WWI, Great Depression, America's first Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts,, worked easily in groups
- No television

- Translation
 - Potlucks
 - Sing-alongs
 - Games
 - Pitching in

Silent Generation

Born between 1925-1945

- They are 77-97 now
- Value more individual focus, rules and policies, price conscious
- Experiences include post WWII, Cold War, Korean Conflict, Civil Rights
- Television

- Translation
 - Congregate meals
 - Organized clubs
 - Free classes

Boomers

Born between 1946-1964

- They are 58-76 now
- The largest cohort in the U.S. Ever. Best Educated. Most affluent. Healthiest
- Value choice, quality, making a difference.
- Experiences include Vietnam War, Beatniks/Woodstock, Civil Rights
- Television, video, dawn of personal computers

- Translation
 - High quality programming
 - Short-term/focused commitments
 - Demonstrated impact
 - Choices in everything



The COVID-19 Effect

Senior centers are serving older adults. . .

In every community

There are 11,000 senior centers across the country in neighborhoods and communities. American society is undergoing a significant demographic shift. There are more senior centers than Walmart stores in the US today.

As critical lifelines for the hard-to-reach

Services designed to address health related social needs such as meals, housing supports, transportation access, benefits enrollment, health screenings, peer supports, and personal care.

With vibrant spaces for connections to services

Adults who attend senior centers are more likely to have better quality of life than those who don't. Most participants attend senior centers three times each week. They are inspired by a sense of community and purpose.

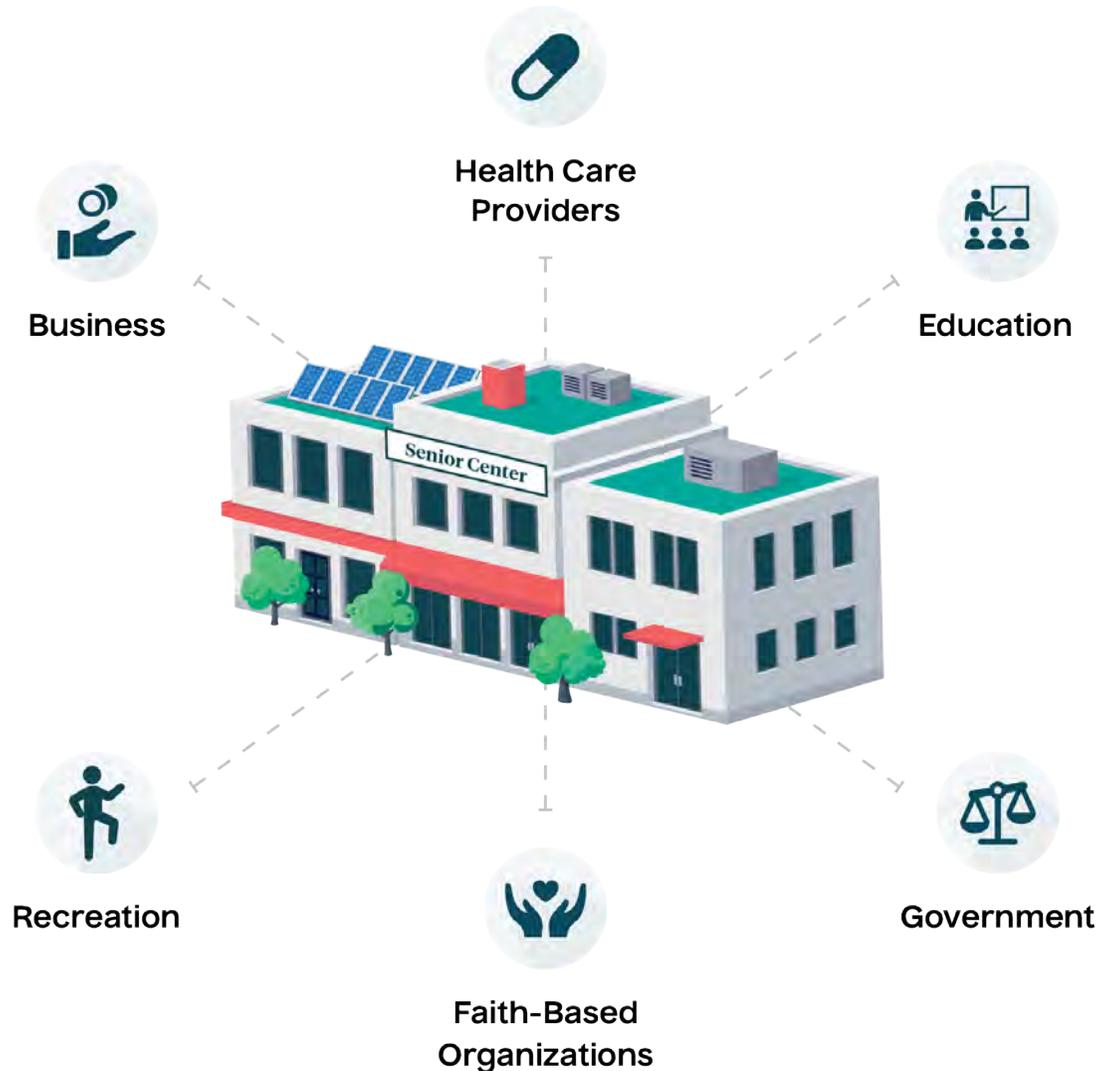
Senior centers improve quality of life and act as community hubs for services, activities and supports for older adults and people with disabilities

Gateway to community access

A welcoming place with trusted information

Meeting people where they are

Stopping people from falling through the cracks



Reflecting people and culture

Building awareness of specific service agencies

Enhancing well-being

How Senior Centers Improve Lives

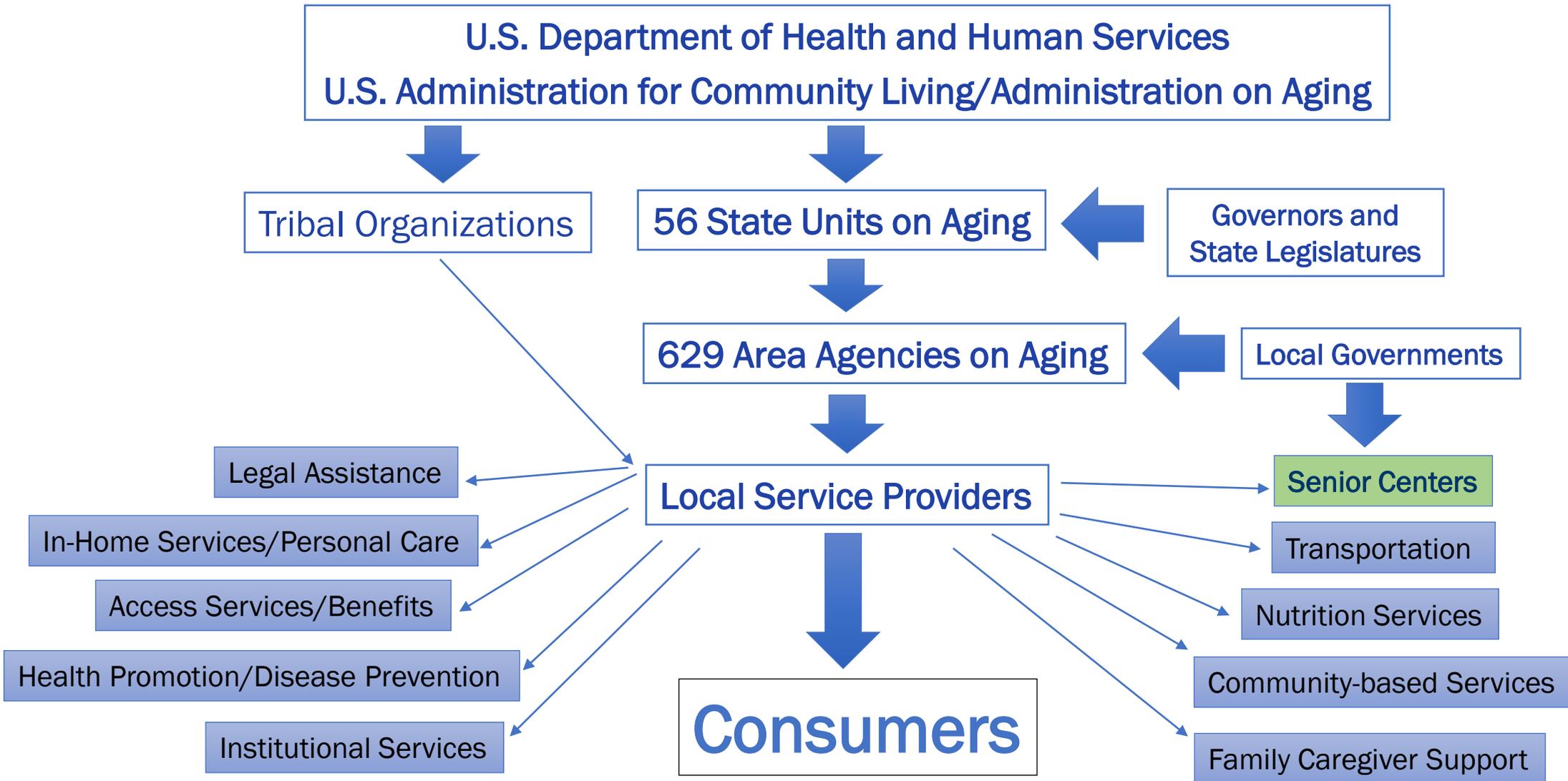


- Meal and nutrition programs
- Health Promotion - fitness, and wellness programs, including evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention programs
- Transportation services
- Social Services – I&R, Benefits Counseling, Housing

- Emergency Response
- Employment support
- Community events
- Volunteer and civic engagement opportunities
- Connecting older adults to community and innovation

- Social Engagement
- Lifelong learning - educational and arts programs
- Intergenerational engagement
- Creative Self Expression

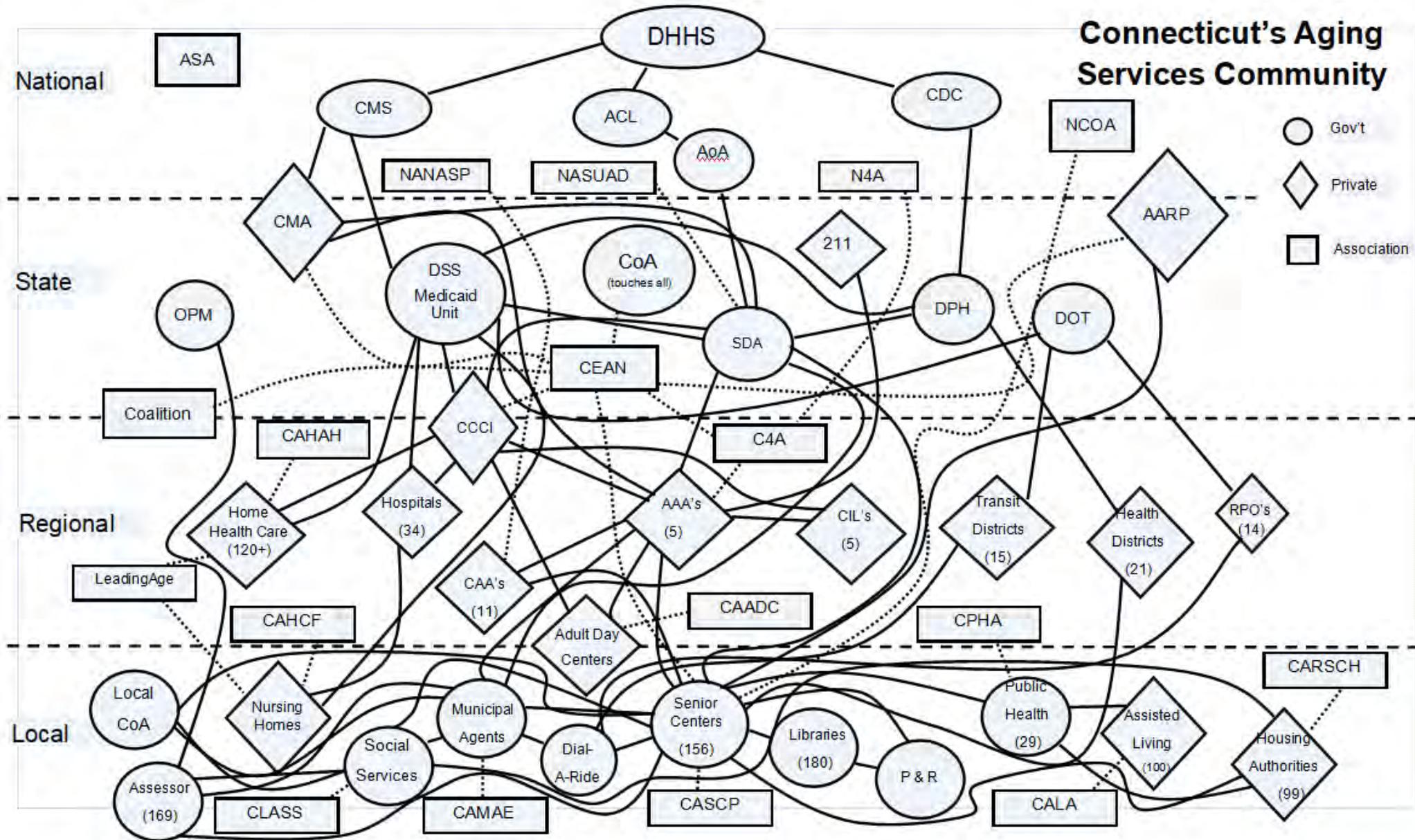
The Aging Network



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Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center
for Professionals

The State of Today's Senior Centers: Successes, Challenges, and Opportunities

<https://ncoa.org/article/the-state-of-todays-senior-centers-successes-challenges-and-opportunities>

The Scan

Purpose

- Explore perspectives and experiences about senior centers and innovative strategies
- Thoughts on modernization
- Voices of senior center professionals and other stakeholders

Methodology

- Exploratory, qualitative research
- Facilitated focus groups with:
 - 310 individuals
 - 34 states
 - 42 sessions
 - urban, suburban, and rural geographies
 - small centers serving fewer than 100 older adults to very large senior centers to over 1,000
 - Other stakeholders

Data Collection and Analysis

- 3-person research team
- Reviewed transcripts independently and identified overarching themes
- Collectively identified 8 themes
- Identified 9 areas/recommendations specific to modernizing senior centers

Themes

Who do senior centers serve?

Increased numbers and diversity, stigma and ageism about who senior centers serve. Perceptions of the public, including older adults, that senior centers are for “people in need.”

Trends in staffing and leadership

“People in my generation are retiring. COVID was tough on many of us. We need new energy and ideas.” Hope that the younger generation of leaders could help reimagine senior centers and modernize them to keep up with the changing world, need for professional development

Image and messaging

Senior centers are viewed as “old fashioned,” “stuck in the past,” “programming for our parents’ generation,” and “boring.”

Funding and resources

““We have really shown what we can do but we are not recognized. We need more funding.”

Themes

Partnerships

Generating and sustaining mutually beneficial partnerships is essential to meeting the needs and interests of all older adults.

Impact of technology

Integration of technology was lifesaving but also revealed gaps for older adults and senior centers. Technology/virtual engagement will continue bringing need for investment and support.

Impact of COVID-19

Senior center responded quickly, were more recognized, embraced new roles and innovated with technology. Also saw tremendous loss.

Role of NCOA/NISC

Enthusiasm for free Affiliate membership, identification of areas where NISC can build the network and support senior centers.

What does modernization mean to senior centers?



As part of the environmental scan, focus groups participants were asked “What does a “modern senior center” look like?” The following elements emerged from discussions about modernizing senior centers.



Senior Center Modernization needs...

National standards for programming and operations

Standards that impact quality and reflect the indicators of success for senior centers today. Benchmarks will help revitalize senior centers, raise their profile nationally, and allow them to advocate for greater funding and resources.

Accreditation re-imagined

Processes for senior centers to meaningfully engage with the standards that is manageable and cost-effective will encourage senior centers to pursue quality improvement

Upgraded facilities and programming

Inclusive and comprehensive programs offered in safe, inviting environments would be critical to their future survival.

Senior Center Modernization needs...

Defining the senior center consumer

Knowing the community, focus on a segment of the older adult cohort that they need to reach and serve. Partner with other community stakeholders in new and creative ways to reach more people and address diverse needs, ensuring that all older adults have access to opportunities to age well.

Integration of technology

The integration of technology in senior center programming and activities needs to be prioritized

Focus on health and well-being

focusing on comprehensive health and well-being of older adults, senior center programs can be upgraded and enhanced, attract new participants and tap into new sources of funding.

Senior Center Modernization needs...

Research and evaluation

Assessing impact of participation must become routine; partnerships with universities and public health departments, collecting and analyzing standardized data to demonstrate impact locally, regionally, nationally that can support marketing efforts and lead to new resources and funding.

Professional workforce

As the demands and expectations of senior centers change to meet growing and diverse needs, we must address professional workforce needs, ensure a professional workforce, providing guidance for expectations of knowledge, skills and experience, core responsibilities and pathways to professional development

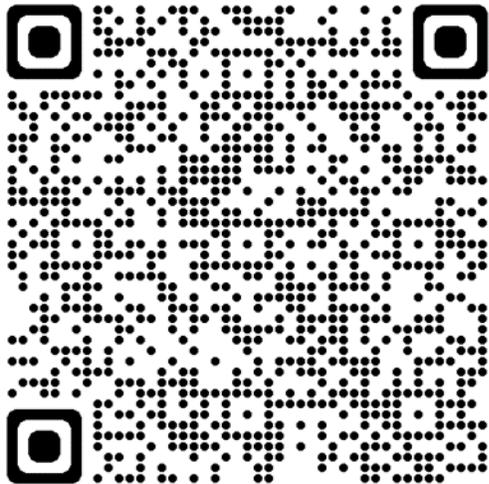
Building capacity

With additional and targeted funding, used strategically, senior centers would reach more people and have greater impact, address facility and staffing needs and have the resources to engage in professional development and quality improvement, build the case

Where do we go from here...



National Institute Of
Senior Centers



Next steps for NISC and the MSCRC

This environmental scan provides insights that will guide the work of NCOA's development of the Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center and the National Institute of Senior Centers and that they inform the efforts of other stakeholders that improve equitable access to local programs and services. In addition to confirming that the scope of work proposed in the initial MSCRC proposal is aligned with the needs of the senior center network, we are able to begin to identify future steps in our effort to support the senior center network as it improves the lives of older adults.

What's next for the MSCRC/NISC

Information gathering...

- Continue conversation to deepen understanding of the needs and potential of senior centers
- Collect more robust information about the senior center network including an accurate count, types of models, structure and data points about services, activities, engagement and impact
- Integrate research and evaluation in senior centers across the country; engage academia and set a research agenda

Where do we go from here...

Marketing and Professional Development

- Develop marketing and messaging to increase the visibility and accurate image of senior centers on a local, regional and national level.
- Develop a professional development path for senior center professionals. Establish credentials, skill and experience expectations, curate/create opportunities for professional development, formal and informal training, collaborative learning, mentorship

Where do we go from here...

Technical assistance and resources

- Providing technical assistance and support around emerging issues, especially technology for senior centers
- Collect and curate resources that are aligned to the themes identified in this report and make available in searchable clearinghouse

Where do we go from here...

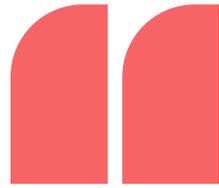
Standards and engagement strategy

Establish modern indicators of successful senior centers that can be standardized; core expectations that can provide a framework for operations and development and create pathways and support for senior centers to pursue adoption of standards.

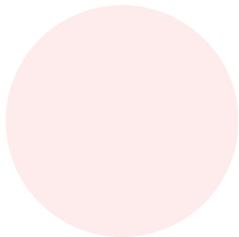
Where do we go from here...

Building the network

- Continue to build the network through a broad engagement strategy.
- Continue to build collaboration and partnership with organizations that can complement the work we are doing, particularly ACL's Technical Resource Centers



“I can’t wait to go to a senior center, they are like college campuses for aging well!”





Thank You!

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Thank you!

