

# Age-Friendly Progress Report 2022





## Message from the County Executive



Age-Friendly Montgomery is proud to issue this report on the work of its 10 Age-Friendly domains (*focus areas; see Table of Contents for list of domains*) over the past three years. Since our 2015 enrollment in the AARP/World Health Organization's global Age-Friendly Communities program, our Age-Friendly team of government and community leaders has consistently demonstrated commitment, flexibility, and a collaborative spirit in addressing the needs of our older population and our wider community of every age.

Never have those qualities been more evident than during the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Working together with all segments of the community, our efforts have been aimed toward keeping the public as informed, engaged, safe, and healthy as possible.

This teamwork has underscored the creativity and strength of the Age-Friendly approach. Government and community partners have worked across domains, adopting new ways for meeting challenges. They quickly transitioned to telework, took on additional roles and responsibilities, pivoted from in-person to virtual programming and provision of services, and established community hubs throughout the county to ensure access to food and other vital necessities, transportation for vaccinations, booster shots, and other medical needs. This teamwork also has resulted in at least 95% of County residents ages 65+ becoming fully vaccinated against COVID-19; we are now working to increase booster rates among that population as well.

While some previous programming was curtailed by pandemic-related health and safety concerns, other innovative programming became a lifeline for keeping our residents connected and active. With ever-improving COVID-19 vaccinations and treatments, we anticipate that residents will continue enjoying both the newer, virtual opportunities that have recently emerged, as well as more in-person programs and services they had missed during the height of the emergency. Of critical importance will be to address inequities, by tailoring culturally and linguistically appropriate services and efforts to reach the diversity of older adults living in Montgomery County.

The operational shifts in the face of a public health emergency directly affected outcomes that otherwise might have been expected. However, the County is committed to its Age-Friendly approach and will continue the important work of monitoring trends, activities, and outcomes over time for the benefit of residents of every age. In addition, we currently are planning for Montgomery County's third Summit on Aging in the fall of 2023, where we will review our progress and provide an opportunity for feedback and new ideas from our wider community of government, community partners, and the public that will guide our Age-Friendly work moving forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc Elrich". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Marc Elrich  
Montgomery County Executive

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## THANK YOU TO THE ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTNERS PARTICIPATING IN THE AGE-FRIENDLY MONTGOMERY INITIATIVE

We gratefully acknowledge all those who participated in the many Age-Friendly Montgomery successes achieved since Montgomery County's 2015 enrollment and 2017 certification as an Age-Friendly Community. We especially want to recognize:

**Dr. Raymond Crowel**, *Director of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)*, and **Robin Riley**, *Director of the Department of Recreation*, for their leadership of the Montgomery Age-Friendly Advisory Group.

**Dr. Odile Brunetto**, *Chief, Aging and Disability Services, DHHS*, for her leadership and guidance for the domain work groups.

**Marcia Pruzan**, *DHHS Age-Friendly Montgomery Program Manager*.

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**Partner organizations and members** of the *Montgomery County Age-Friendly Advisory Group* and the **ten domain work groups** for their significant contributions.

The **Montgomery County Commission on Aging**, whose members continue to help shape the County's approach to supporting its older residents and the Age-Friendly program.



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# Civic and Social Involvement

## MISSION

Encourage and support vital living and reduce social isolation for all older adults in Montgomery County by providing opportunities for physical, mental, and social engagement.

## What have we accomplished?

### STATUS OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES

To what extent has the County completed the planned activities for this domain as outlined in the Action Plan? (Please also credit “who” contributed to success –i.e., department, organization, etc.).

## PRIORITY

### VOLUNTEERING

Increase the number of volunteer opportunities for older adults to help them maintain social, physical, and mental engagement

## NARRATIVE

### MONTGOMERY COUNTY VOLUNTEER CENTER

#### 50+ Volunteer Network

In 2018, the Montgomery County Volunteer Center, working with Age-Friendly Montgomery, launched a program to facilitate adults 50 and older volunteering in the County. The 50+ Volunteer Network, a program of the Montgomery County Volunteer Center, has two goals: 1) Help County residents find meaningful community service opportunities; and 2) Improve the ability of County nonprofits and agencies to expand their resources by recruiting and engaging skilled volunteers.

Since its launch, the program successfully made over 250 connections between volunteers and nonprofits/agencies, including a broad range of activities, such as tutoring and mentoring,

administrative and intake services, outreach and advocacy, assisting with program and volunteer management, as well as providing pro bono consulting services in areas such as accounting, IT, graphic design and grant writing. Once the pandemic hit, the program had to immediately change its focus and many of those changes continue today. In-person volunteering – which nearly all of our 50+ Volunteer Network members preferred – was halted entirely, with many of those opportunities beginning to gradually return. Remote learning and Montgomery County Public School privacy policies created challenges for intergenerational tutoring and mentoring programs, and many of them stopped recruiting new volunteers during the pandemic. Virtual opportunities required a great deal of training which many nonprofits were not equipped to take on.

In FY19, with a staff that included two Senior Fellows and three part-time volunteers, the program:

- Placed volunteers into more than 170 positions, including tutors and mentors, program managers, board members, grant writers, administrative personnel, accountants, social media experts, graphic designers and many more activities that fit with a particular

volunteer’s skills and interests. Going forward the program continued working to increase our inventory of opportunities and conduct additional outreach into the community

- Interviewed 212 volunteers
- Had 120 active volunteers, with 171 placements (many volunteers took on more than one volunteer activity)
- Saw another 27 connected to various agencies
- Made email suggestions to an additional 21 volunteers
- Had 141 partner organizations with 323 unique volunteer opportunities

Montgomery County Volunteer Center’s 50+ Volunteer Network was awarded a NACo Achievement Award in June 2019.

Prior to the onset of Covid-19, the 50+ Volunteer Network was on track for a record number of volunteers connected to agencies. Where the focus of the program prior to the pandemic was on the individual volunteers’ passion, interest and experience, we had to shift to focusing on the needs of the community. For most of 2020, we engaged members of the 50+ Volunteer Network in the effort to combat food insecurity. To that end, we placed several individuals as volunteer managers at the Food and Service Consolidation Hubs, and directed others to the various distribution centers. In addition, the senior fellows were reassigned to help with the greater emergency management needs and advising nonprofits on the transition to virtual volunteering.

Beginning in 2021, we re-started the 50+ Volunteer Network, although we now interview volunteers by Zoom rather than in person. During FY21, we connected 275 skilled volunteers with meaningful opportunities at 115 different agencies.

### AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP

The Volunteer Center receives grant funding from AmeriCorps (formerly the Corporation for National and Community Service CNCS) for Montgomery County’s AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP

Program (formerly Retired and Senior Volunteer Program RSVP).

AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP Program partners with AARP Foundation to bring the AARP Tax-Aide Program to Montgomery County. AARP Tax-Aide is the nation’s largest free, volunteer-run tax assistance and preparation service. It is available to taxpayers with low- and moderate-incomes and gives special attention to people aged 60 and older.

**Table 1. AARP Tax-Aide Program**

RSVP/AARP Tax-Aide	FY19	FY20*	FY21**
Number of Tax Returns	4,780	2,998	1,115
Amount in Refunds	\$4,438,373	\$3,200,152	\$1,324,757
Number of RSVP Volunteers	73	103	82

*\*FY20: Season ended abruptly on March 13, 2020; all remaining appointments were canceled.*

*\*\*FY21: Free tax preparation was redesigned to meet the standards of AARP Foundation, CDC, the State of Maryland, and the County, with returns prepared virtually by tax counselors. It was a low-contact model in that clients would come to a site to have all their paperwork scanned and return to sign their return, with a limit of 15 minutes maximum for each visit. This situation significantly decreased the number of clients served as well as the number of volunteers willing to participate during COVID.*

### Recognition of Older Adult Volunteers

The Neal Potter Path of Achievement Awards are presented annually as part of Montgomery Serves Awards. Normally a large and inspirational in-person event, it was virtual in FY20 and FY21 due to the pandemic. Nominations are submitted, from which two older adults (age 60+) are selected by judges from the Commission on Aging for their lifetime of volunteer service. The Beacon newspapers are a longtime partner in promoting these awards.

## PRIORITY

### DIVERSE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Include more members of culturally diverse populations and communities in area activities and programs and increase the number of older residents from culturally diverse communities who can take part and volunteer in county programming, volunteer opportunities, and in villages, and help reduce social isolation among these populations and their families

## NARRATIVE

In addition to the Age-Friendly Montgomery group's efforts at the Nancy Dacek North Potomac Community Recreation Center, other community partners worked to promote diverse community involvement, drawing from and contributing to the County's emerging best practices. Partners include the African American Health Initiative and the American Muslim Senior Society (AMSS). Some AMSS accomplishments include graduating 37 Health and Long-Term Care Outreach Ambassadors; hosting four Countywide Healthy Aging Community Dialogues with 235 participants; and distributing more than 2,000 pamphlets on County resources. They also opened an office in Rockville in June 2019

### AMSS is Starting an Exciting Journey

AMSS is entering an exciting chapter of program development, growth and new partnerships.

Together with our sponsors, Stakeholders, Ambassadors and community members, we are moving forward to expand our existing signature programs and developing new exciting model projects.

- **Our Halal Meals on Wheels (HMOV) Wrap Around Services:** Thanks to our 55 dedicated, multi-cultural Ambassadors and the support of our generous sponsors, we are expanding our outreach to provide HMOV to 500 older isolated, underserved county members and persons with disabilities. During the holy

month of Ramadan, we were able to deliver to our members daily gift baskets that included hot meals, fresh produce, boxes of dried good and traditional sweets

- **Special Thanks to Our invaluable HMOV Sponsoring Partners:** We are most grateful to our generous sponsors who have made it possible for us to have much needed; Food Pantry; a van to help us respond to the growing needs of our members; our special Ramadan Gift Baskets, Halal hot meals; and the monthly boxes of dried goods.
- **AMSS HMOV Program Sponsors:** Health and Human Services, Aging and Disability Services; The Islamic Center of Maryland; The Greater Washington Community Foundation; The Healthcare Initiative Foundation; Manna Food; Montgomery County Food Council; United Methodist Church; and the generous contributions of our community members.
- **Culturally Sensitive Work Force Development:** The AMSS Certified Nursing Assistant and Employment Program is flourishing. We have graduated since our inception a total of 86 CNAs. AMSS is planning to expand on its CNA scholarship program by including additional health care specializations. We have signed an MOU with the Primary Care Coalition to help us expand the program.
- **Health and Wellness Collaborative Outreach Campaign and Health and Wellness Summit:** Following on our 2020 and 2021 ongoing Health and Wellness related Community Dialogues, we are moving forward with two key program activities in partnership with our Stakeholders. They include:
  - **A countywide health and wellness campaign** that combines the coordinated resources of our partnering Stakeholders and the faith community; and
  - **A countywide mental health summit** to bring together the county's top experts, community leaders, policy makers, our partnering Stakeholders and Ambassadors in brainstorming sessions. The Summit will produce recommendations impacting policy, research and practice.



## PRIORITY

### ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

Improve understanding of and access to newer technologies that older adults can use for daily living, to live independently longer, to earn income, to be healthier and happier, and to reduce social isolation

## NARRATIVE

Montgomery County and its robust nonprofit partners continue to expand and enhance technology training for older adults.

Several County government entities now provide training in and access to technology for older adults, including the Department of Technology Services, Public Libraries (MCPL), the Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center, offering computer classes in English and Spanish and the Department of Recreation. The primary addition is the Senior Planet Montgomery initiative launched by the Department of Technology Services in partnership with Older Adults Technology Service (OATS), which offers multi-week trainings and single day Tech Explore workshops and lectures, including in partnership with MCPL and Recreation. Offerings include basic and intermediate courses to use the Internet and digital economy applications, privacy and safety using the Internet, enhancing digital skills for employment, money management, and entrepreneurship. Training from Senior Planet Montgomery and other government and community partners are offered at JCA Career Gateway, Washington Metro OASIS, Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Centers, Rockville Senior Center, and more than 10 County libraries and Senior Centers. A number of Senior Planet Montgomery sites target low-income residents, and some classes are offered in Spanish. In addition, the Department of Technology Services continues to implement and improve Wi-Fi connectivity at Recreation and Senior Centers. Lastly, the Workgroup worked with CountyStat to develop a more comprehensive understanding

and catalog of what organizations in the County offer related to technology training for older adults.

Older Adults Technology Services (OATS powered by AARP) provides technology training for older adults in partnership with the Departments of Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions (TEBS) and Environmental Protection (DEP), Public Libraries (MCPL), the Recreation Department's Senior Centers, the Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center, and the Chinese Culture and Community Service Center (CCACC). Multi-week trainings and single day workshops and lectures are offered online and in person and include basic and immediate courses to use the Internet and digital economy applications, privacy and safely using the Internet, money management and saving money through online services, health and fitness, energy conservation and savings, senior empowerment and social engagement, and entrepreneurship. Senior Planet Montgomery trainings moved from in person to online in March 2020 and a hybrid of online and person courses have been available in 2021 and 2022. Online courses have enabled Senior Planet Montgomery to expand from 800 in person participants to 10,000 online, but there is concern that older adults without computers or home internet access or adequate ability to use Zoom, are not participating in free online lectures, workshops, and courses. Courses are offered in English, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese. TEBS has implemented and improved Wi-Fi connectivity at Recreation and Senior Centers, and worked with MCPL to use federal grants provide computers to low-income seniors. More financial support is being sought to expand efforts to enroll low-income seniors in federal and state programs that offer free home broadband service after application of program discounts.

## OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITHIN DOMAIN

What else has the County accomplished in this domain beyond the planned activities?

### ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

## TECHNOLOGY TRAINING AND ACCESS

### NARRATIVE

The County continues to see interest in technology training offerings, including by a number of community partners that include: the Jewish Council for the Aging (JCA) at library branches through their Career Gateway employment program; the Rockville Senior Center; Montgomery College's Information Technology Institute, Bender JCC of Greater Washington, with a focus on intergenerational technology classes; and classes and training provided by Live and Learn Bethesda, Ethoxies, Washington Metro OASIS, the Chinese American Senior Services Association, AARP TEK Academy, and other learning providers.

In FY 2019 Oasis offered 53 technology classes with 874 enrollments; in FY 20, there were 27 classes with 419 enrollments, and in FY 2021, Oasis offered 18 classes with 229 enrollments.

MCPL offered programs to enhance computer and technology skills, including computer help, computer classes, computer repair and writing computer programs. During the FY2018, FY2019, FY2020 and FY2021 approximately 16,000 people participated in these programs, of which around 4,000 were older adults. During 2019-2020 – approximately 100 Senior Planet programs were offered at MCPL. MCPL offered LinkedIn Boot Camps for 45+ Job Seekers at a monthly basis.

In addition, to improve access to technology, Public Libraries offered "Internet to Go" – a collection of 250 Verizon Mifi Mobile hotspots available at all MCPL locations currently providing public service. Customers may place a hold on a hotspot.

Hotspots are lent for 2 weeks with no renewals. This service is not limited to older adults. MCPL has expanded the inhouse laptop collections. Several laptops are available at many branches to be used within the library premises. The laptops can be borrowed for up to three hours for use in the branch. Customers can print from these laptops. In addition, outdoor public wi-fi is available at several branches (Aspen Hill, Davis, Gaithersburg, Long Branch, Marilyn J. Praisner, Rockville Memorial and White Oak.)

In response to the global pandemic, the Senior Planet Montgomery program pivoted from providing in person classes, lectures, and workshops, to providing these services online. In 2021, we were named the Best Information Technology program in America by the National Association of Counties. We grew from 846 total participants (496 unique participants) through three quarters of FY20 to 4,776 participants in the fourth quarter of FY20 to 11,482 participants in FY21, to 10,000 in FY22 (unique participants are difficult to track without requiring preregistration for online courses.) Our newsletter subscribers grew from 1,052 in Fy19 to 2,882 in FY21, and to 3,419 in FY22. Increases in Covid transmissions continue to challenge return to in person learning. Senior Planet Montgomery will partner with the Department of Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions (TEBS)'s Montgomery Connects program to engage with low-income and immigrant seniors who are less likely to have computers and home broadband to enable all older adults in Montgomery County to participate in the Senior Planet Montgomery program.

## LIFELONG LEARNING

### NARRATIVE

The County also continues to see wide interest in general lifelong learning opportunities, including from such providers as Public Libraries, Recreation, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Johns Hopkins, Live and Learn Bethesda, Oasis, and Montgomery College's Lifelong Learning Institute.

#### Montgomery County Public Libraries

MCPL offered programs to adults and older adults that provided learning opportunities, creativity, education, healthy living and social interaction. Some of these programs included arts and crafts, cartooning, animation, lectures and discussions, authors' presentations, workforce development and more. During FY2018, FY2019, FY2020 and FY2021, there were around 18,000 programs focused on adults and older adults with a total of almost 250,000 participants; of which almost 2,000 events were dedicated to older adults with almost 40,000 participants.

When the COVID-19 pandemic reached Montgomery County in March 2020, MCPL physical branches closed to the public and were not able to open until July 2021. Customers were able to access MCPL resources & services online 24/7, but a new method of delivering and providing services was also needed. Quickly, the process reserving materials for customers while the library buildings were closed was implemented. A new "Holds to Go" process offered customers with a library card the possibility to picking-up materials from the customer's branch of choice in a contactless fashion. During FY2021 more than 350,000 holds were successfully processed. Regarding programming - since the in-person programs had to be cancelled due to the closing of the MCPL buildings, MCPL promptly moved the in-person programs to a virtual platform. Virtual programs required to quickly train staff to be able to manage programs for all ages virtually.

After MCPL reopened the branches to the public in July 2021, virtual programs continued being offered. During FY2020 and FY2021, more than 3,700 virtual programs were offered for all ages; of which around 2,200 focused on adults and older adults; and 130 just on older adults. Approximately 13,000 older adults attended the virtual programs during this time. All community members can attend MCPL programs; no library card is required to attend virtual (or in-person) programs. In order to expand access to MCPL online services and resources, during the months that MCPL buildings were closed to the public, MCPL encouraged residents to obtain a digital library card, that provided access to most online services and could be used to place holds on desired titles. During FY2020 and FY2021 40,000 MCPL digital cards were issued. Library cards are free.

#### Oasis

In 2020, Oasis offered more than 500 classes and served a community of 2,400 lifelong learners, who collectively filled more than 19,000 class seats. Starting in April 2020, Oasis transitioned to all online programming. We trained a cadre of volunteer Zoom moderators to host our online programs. We also provided assistance to many Oasis members on how to use Zoom and how to register online for our programs.

In 2021, Oasis offered more than 500 classes and served a community of 1,500 lifelong learners, who collectively filled more than 14,000 class seats. We re-opened our Center in September 2021, and have been offering a combination of online-only and in-person/livestream classes since that time. Online participation continues to far outpace in-person participation.

Since April 2020, our discussion groups have continued to meet regularly online. Enrollment and participation remain robust.

## Lifelong Learning Institute at Montgomery College

The Lifelong Learning Institute at Montgomery College offered over 130 courses in the Spring Semester. These courses were offered in person and via Zoom. Over 1200 students were served with offerings in diverse disciplines that included History and Current Events, Literature, Music, Personal Finance, Brain Fitness, World Cultures and Archaeology, Physical Fitness and Wellness, and Horticulture, and Culinary Arts. Most of these courses were offered in four to six sessions. Students enjoyed learning memory enhancement and retention strategies in the Memory Academy class offered in partnership with Holy Cross Hospital, and they practiced meditation and stress reduction techniques in our wellness courses. Cooking and baking enthusiasts learned to bake breads, international dishes, and desserts from the Lifelong Learning Institute online classes and in-person classes taking place at the Montgomery College's Marriott Hospitality Kitchen.

Some students challenged themselves with full semester courses offered by the Lifelong Learning Institute in partnership with the College's credit History and Literature Departments. These courses included US and European History, Political Ideologies, African-American History, Film and Literature and many more. The mix of students taking credit and non-credit classes together created a truly rich and diverse experience in classrooms.

Students responded positively to returning to campus for classes in Computer Technology, Arts, Fitness, Baking, and Bridge. Montgomery College takes the safety of students seriously -- all facilities passed rigid inspections, and students and faculty had to upload their proof of vaccination before coming on campus. While the Lifelong Learning Institute focuses on service to students 50+, there are other programs at the College that serve these individuals, such as the Information Technology Institute, Community Arts, and World Languages.

Montgomery College offers individuals 60+ tuition waivers, which means that these students pay discounted fees. There are also free events that are offered to students, including Monday Movie Night consisting of foreign films. Other free events include Athenium Lecture Series with distinguished speakers, pop-up lectures, and more. In the coming semesters, classes will combine in-person and Zoom teaching to accommodate different groups of students. So much to do and learn at Montgomery College for seniors!

### ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

## INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS

### NARRATIVE

There has been added emphasis on the benefits of intergenerational programs both for older adults and youth. Two leaders in this area are JCA Heyman Interages Center and the Washington Metro OASIS Intergenerational Program.

### JCA Heyman Interages Center

In FY 19, JCA Heyman Interages Center engaged 293 active older adult volunteers (age 50+) with diverse backgrounds for 27 innovative and diverse programs at 118 intergenerational locations. These volunteers impacted the lives of 4,141 youth from toddlers to high school. And through programs engaging 596 youth volunteers with diverse backgrounds, 1238 frail older adult lives were touched.

For the FY ending 6/30/20, the Heyman Interages Center connected 339 youth volunteers with 486 men and women in senior facilities and adult day centers. Our 267 older volunteers mentored and tutored 2,131 low-income students. Overall, Interages' volunteers donated 9,451 volunteer hours of care.

In FY 2021, the pandemic truly rearranged everything at the JCA's Heyman Interages Center. With Montgomery County Public Schools closed to in-person classes, our staff and volunteers retooled and conducted 10 virtual school projects



that served 475 students and 328 seniors. Interages continued its pen pal program with 100 students sending art cards and letters to isolated seniors. JCA showed up in virtual Montgomery County Public School classrooms to tutor, lead online book discussion groups and participate in dialogues with high school students about current events. Youth volunteers also created a fascinating series of interviews by students of accomplished older adults in our area. In November of 2020, Interages launched a pilot program. Seniors provided one-on-one tutoring through Thriving Germantown; a community-based organization designed to reduce the impact of poverty on families. Seventeen volunteers interacted with 21 students for a total of 1,154 hours. Interages created a monthly newsletter filled with volunteer profiles, school updates and plenty of jokes that strove to keep volunteers engaged.

JCA Intergenerational Center program at adult day care centers, in partnerships with Arts for the Aging, has matched students with musical therapeutic activities; this program will be replicated at other facilities.

### Oasis Intergenerational Tutoring Program

During the 2020-2021 School Year the Oasis Intergenerational Tutoring Program was significantly impacted by the pandemic. The closing of schools led us to change our tutoring model from in-person to virtual. Given this model change, our tutoring pool dropped from over 150 volunteers to approximately 25 serving 30-35 students in six Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), grades K-3.

At the start of the 2021-2022 school year these 25 active virtual tutors pivoted back to in-person tutoring serving 30-35 students at six schools. Looking forward to the 2022-2023 School year we have renewed interest from approximately 30 former and new volunteers. We are hopeful to at least double our current numbers of in-person tutoring and recruit an additional 5 MCPS schools.

During the pandemic, the Oasis Intergenerational Tutoring Program went on hiatus.

A small contingent of tutors provided virtual tutoring during the spring of 2021. The program resumed in-school tutoring in the fall of 2021, on a small scale. We have a new tutor coordinator as of February 2022, Kathleen McDaniel.

## ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

### VILLAGES

#### NARRATIVE

#### Movement in Montgomery County Villages

Villages are powered by volunteers, who are mostly older adults. They are an exciting way for older adults to socially engage in their local communities as well as an important piece of the aging in community continuum.

In 2019, villages reported close to **700 volunteers**, who logged more than **32,000 volunteer hours!** (\*these numbers relate to 15 villages that participate in the report. A new collective impact report for 2020-21 is forthcoming)

There are currently **30 active villages** in the county and **6 developing villages**. Information about them can be found at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/village](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/village).

#### COVID Response

In the past three years, villages have had to find creative ways to stay connected during the COVID-19 pandemic. They met weekly for the first year and a half to share information and discuss potential solution to problems. Villages completed the following activities:

- Successfully switched to online meetings
- Increased shared programming
- Volunteered in-person activities reduced in some villages, increased in others
- Served as conduit for reliable information at times when anxiety was driving people to rely on social media and rumors.
- Provided input on community member's needs in real time that helped shape

- Provided PPE, food deliveries, vaccine clinics, rapid tests and more
- Increased friendly calling and buddy systems to keep people connected

Additionally, 10 villages are in the HHS base budget with contracts totaling \$175,000 in FY2023 funding.

### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In the summer of 2020, IMPACT Silver Spring provided a workshop on anti-racism work for village leaders. As a follow up the Village Coordinator established a monthly peer-group for village leaders to discuss matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Participants share ideas on ways to make villages more inclusive and welcoming. The group developed a resource guide for villages that wish to develop programs that inform members about racism in an engaging way. The group is also hosting guest speakers that provided unique perspectives on topics such as: Working with the Khmer community, working with LGBTQ older adults, Working with black communities etc.

The group continues to meet monthly. Once each quarter the meeting is open to all villages in the nation in collaboration with the National Village to Village Network.

### Leadership Sustainability

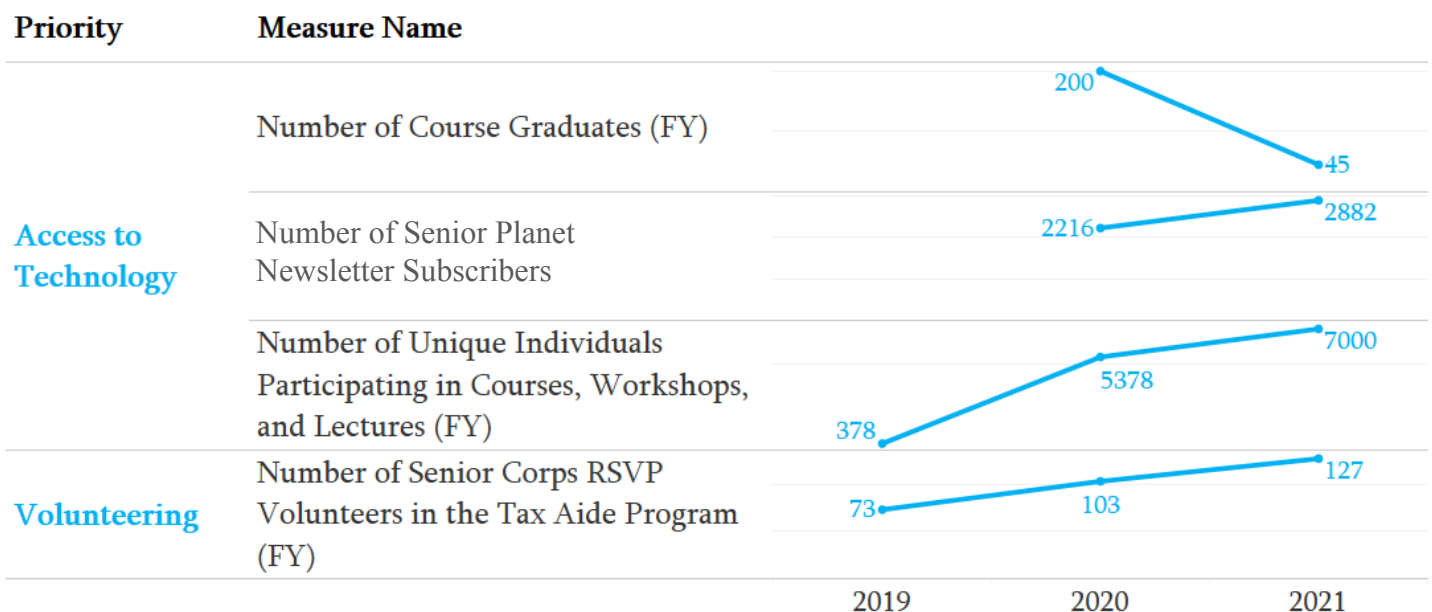
One key challenge many villages have been facing is leadership sustainability. To address this challenge the village coordinator partnered with Suburban Hospital and Rockville Area Villages Exchange to provide comprehensive support on board development and strategic planning. We contracted Capacity Partners to offer workshops and individual board consults. This project is ongoing.

### Hub And Spoke

A hub and spoke model for villages can be a cost-effective solution for villages that wish to become more efficient and sustainable. The Village Coordinator is working in collaboration with village leaders to develop a potential hub and spoke solution for the villages that are interested. This project is on-going.

## METRICS

Are we able to report on the metrics proposed in the Action Plan – or are there other quantitative insights/evidence that can be included to support the narratives?



# What have we learned?

## LESSONS LEARNED: BUILDING FROM WHAT WORKS AND CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

What have we learned over the past three years that should inform future activities?

### NARRATIVE

#### Volunteering

- Based upon feedback thus far, many older adults who are looking for on-going, meaningful volunteer opportunities have little idea of where to begin. Guiding them through the process is key to bridging this gap and highly appreciated.
- The existing Montgomery County Senior Fellow Program has been an effective resource for developing and implementing a new Volunteer Center program that has increased volunteerism by older adults in nonprofit and government agencies.
- In partnership with MCPL, “50+: Vital Living Through Volunteering” workshops have increased the number of older adults exploring volunteer opportunities and have also increased awareness of the Montgomery County Volunteer Center. During the pandemic, the workshop was offered once virtually.

#### Diversity

Emerging best practices for successfully promoting more culturally diverse participation include:

- Ensure the commitment and engagement of the Site Director—whose active support and cooperation are crucial for success
- Identify and select the densest diverse population in the surrounding community
- Identify and train 2-3 ethnic volunteer leaders to initiate the group

- Make the new group feel at ease and encourage them to put together their own programs
- Ideally, locate at new sites where it is easier to put in new programs and set tone

A key challenge is identifying community leaders and gaining the trust of older adults. Moreover, immigrants have grown increasingly distrustful of government in general and have started to disengage from government-run activity due to fears related to their immigrant status and other concerns.

#### Technology

- One of the biggest challenges in using non-County locations and facilities for training is the lack of reliable Wi-Fi and Internet connectivity with sufficient bandwidth to support a class.
- Organizing locations, coordinating with facility staff, recruiting training, managing volunteers, reserving classroom space, promoting lectures and classes, enrolling and recruiting reluctant learners, and other logistical challenges consume a significant amount of time that must be properly budgeted and planned for.
- For participants, one of the largest challenges for low-income older adults is being able to afford and maintain a Wi-Fi-enabled tablet, computer, or smart phone. The federal Emergency Connectivity Fund is providing devices to low-income residents, but seniors are participating in such programs at low rates (e.g., only 14 percent of Montgomery County ECF recipients are aged 60 or older.)

Another roadblock is establishing Internet connectivity in the home, with some residents resorting to Wi-Fi at libraries and coffee shops. However, the federal and Maryland governments offer discounts for low-income residents to make 100 Mbps or wireless internet free but seniors and low-income residents need hands on support and assistance to enroll in the program.

- Inconsistencies in how devices operate—i.e., Apple iOS vs. Microsoft Windows vs. Google Android—can pose challenges in terms of offering uniform training.
- A key success factor is the presence of a champion at the training site who can assist with planning, coordination, marketing, and recruitment.
- Use of best-in-class but proprietary curriculum limits reuse by community partners.
- Identifying, recruiting, and retaining trainers in languages other than English can be challenging, particularly when considering the importance of also having backup trainer(s) conversant in the language in case the primary teacher falls ill or is otherwise unable to continue with the course.

The post-Covid labor market is also creating challenges to hiring and retaining staff.

- Comprehensively cataloging, tracking, coordinating, and building awareness of the dozen plus organizations that offer technology and digital literacy training for older adults in the County is challenging, but should be assisted by the State of Maryland University of Maryland Digital Equity project to provide a website of digital equity training resources. Collecting comprehensive statistics on how many older residents are collectively being served by these various programs continues to be a challenge.

### **Intergenerational Programming**

Organizations offering intergenerational programming learned the capacity to quickly adapt highly successful programs to the changing challenges of the pandemic. They understood the need for flexibility and creativity, identified strategies for keeping programs running, and found ways for meeting requirements needed to retain and attract volunteers.

## **WHAT'S NEXT: EXTENDING PRIORITIES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES, AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS**

Building from what we have learned and accomplished (or not) over the past three years, what do we want to collectively aspire to within this domain moving forward?

### **NARRATIVE**

The Workgroup continues to pursue its goals and objectives and incorporate lessons learned, with a focus on the following:

#### **Volunteering**

- Continue operating ongoing efforts, investigating what is working well, and looking for ways to apply what works well to ongoing programming or ideas for new programming
- Support increased engagement of older adults and reduce social isolation through continued growth of villages and the 50+ Volunteer Network, encouraging intergenerational programs to support the County Executive's Early Childhood Initiative especially in diverse communities. For example, JCA Heyman Interages Center plans to expand early childhood opportunities for ongoing intergenerational engagement



- Support unique Senior Fellow Program by exploring ways to grow and promote the program, by capturing uniqueness, successes, and advantages of the program and share widely among departments and with other jurisdictions. Engage the Commission on Aging to make a case for restoring the cuts and expanding the Senior Fellow Program
- Establish satellite locations for 50+ Volunteer Network to meet prospective volunteers where they live
- Continue outreach efforts in partnership with MCPL to offer workshops on vital living and volunteering.
- Seek opportunities for presentations to ready-for-retirement groups, independent living facilities, etc.
- opportunities, and the development of diverse leadership
- Encourage American Muslim Senior Society's plan to increase the number of Ambassadors

Encourage AMSS plan to increase and expand community services such as transportation, friendly visits and referrals in areas that include the following communities: Aspen Hill, Burtonsville, Gaithersburg, Rockville and Silver Spring.

### Technology

- Addressing challenges to support hybrid Senior Planet Montgomery programs in person and online, coordinating program deployment with related County programs to provide laptops to older adults, and expanding training in languages beyond English, Spanish and Mandarin
- Leveraging funding under the federal Digital Equity Act of 2021 and exploring greater corporate philanthropy and partnerships to provide additional funding for device distribution programs and expanded trainings
- Promoting awareness of Wi-Fi and internet connectivity at Recreation and Senior Centers and Public Libraries
- Collecting additional statistics and insights on County and partner digital literacy and lifelong learning endeavors (ex: number of residents trained, satisfaction ratings, confidence outcomes, etc.)
- Provide programs for older adults to support access to and understanding of technology that can be used for daily living, to live independently longer, to earn income, to be healthier and happier, and to reduce social isolation
- Provide training to help older adults protect their information online and use online services more safely
- Focus scarce resources on underserved populations, including low-income residents and immigrants

### Diversity

- Continuing to expand outreach to diverse communities
- Using the Nancy Dacek Community Recreation Center program as a model for similar programs in other diverse communities, with a focus on the upcoming community recreation centers and the surrounding Latino community
- Work to expand the "Let's Share" program to engage more older adults and leaders from diverse communities throughout the County and support the continuing diversity of villages and their leadership
- Encourage Holiday Park Senior Center to expand their leadership development efforts for the Latino population, aligned with leadership development successes with Jai Ho. Increase partnership with Council President Navarro's office to address civic engagement
- Consider creating a forum of diverse community volunteers to talk about best practices and lessons learned
- Support increased engagement of older adults and reduce social isolation through intergenerational programs, new housing

## Communications/Outreach

- The Beacon Newspaper (County ad, Beacon Bits and online events)
- Increase in Montgomery County cable television opportunities, including recent initiation of short PSAs
- Montgomery County Website, especially Senior Site
- The Villages
- Senior Forums sponsored by Council Members
- 50+ events and expos
- Staff presentations at libraries and other sites
- Department Newsletters, e.g., Office of Community Partnerships
- Commission on Aging Communications Committee

- GROWS
- Community Listservs
- NextDoor (both local and county-wide)
- Presentations through MC Lifelong Learning and Washington Metro OASIS

## Intergenerational Programming

- Organizations providing intergenerational programming are solidly committed to their mission of bringing generations together for the benefit of all. They will continue working to achieve the following priorities:
- Attract new program participants
- Build on insights gained and challenges met during the pandemic
- Enhance programming to meet needs of both older and younger participants



# Communications and Outreach

## MISSION

To distribute and publicize recognizable, understandable, timely, and accessible information on County and public resources and services for older adults.

## What have we accomplished?

### STATUS OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES

To what extent has the County completed the planned activities for this domain as outlined in the Action Plan? (Please also credit “who” contributed to success –i.e., department, organization, etc.).

#### PRIORITY

### RAISE AWARENESS OF COUNTY COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

#### NARRATIVE

Communications and outreach activities continued, and in some cases expanded or evolved, throughout the three-year period of this report. As in all areas of the Age-Friendly effort, the COVID-19 pandemic in some respects changed the manner of outreach, drastically curtailing in-person outreach activities and turning to virtual and other communication methods. Beginning in 2020, as most in-person activities pivoted to virtual, communication and outreach continued to:

- Promote the “311” and the 240-777-3000 Aging and Disabilities Resource Unit telephone line
- Provide information in print (in multiple languages), online, and via social networks
- Promote the Commission on Aging’s monthly cable television show, formerly called “Seniors Today” and changing its name to “50+ in Montgomery County” to attract a wider audience

- Grow the number of Senior e-newsletter recipients

#### PRIORITY

### RAISE AWARENESS OF COUNTY PROGRAMS, SERVICES & RESOURCES

#### NARRATIVE

With the Public Information Office (PIO), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and other County departments, this domain continued to provide information about County programs, services and resources to age 55+ residents via the County website, social media, the newly renamed cable TV show 50+ in Montgomery County, Montgomery al Dia, MyMC Media, Montgomery County Updates, News and Information.

In 2021, 50+ in Montgomery County began offering short PSAs between segments to promote events, programs, and announcements of interest to county residents.

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, the PIO used all possible resources in working with DHHS, other County departments, and community partners to provide information to the public



about the status of the pandemic, access to vaccination, and the continually evolving availability of essential services to meet ever-increasing critical needs of residents such as food, transportation, and medical services.

- PIO, in collaboration with County departments, began updating and strengthening content for seniors on the County website.
- This domain worked to improve its monthly age-friendly insert in the Beacon Newspaper by reconfiguring the page to allow more space for content and using a more readable, “advertorial” format.
- The County participated in the Beacon’s annual 50+ Expo, which highlights programs, services and information from around the county and the entire region; it has attracted thousands of visitors each year even as it had to transition from in-person to virtual programming.

- This domain provided county-wide information about availability of virtual programs via the County Recreation Department, Public Libraries, and Senior Planet.
- PIO, DHHS and other County departments, including the Office of Community Partnerships, made content available in multiple languages, including Spanish, French, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Amharic as capacity allowed.
- In response to requests from AARP Maryland and other area organizations, responded to numerous requests for presentations about the County’s Age-Friendly programs and services.
- The County transit services, Ride-On, and Call-n-Ride programs provided information about new services for the annual Montgomery County Seniors’ Resource Guide produced by the Beacon Newspapers in partnership with County Government.

## OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITHIN DOMAIN

What else has the County accomplished in this domain beyond the planned activities?

### ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

#### COLLABORATION WITH MONTGOMERY COUNTY’S COMMISSION ON AGING

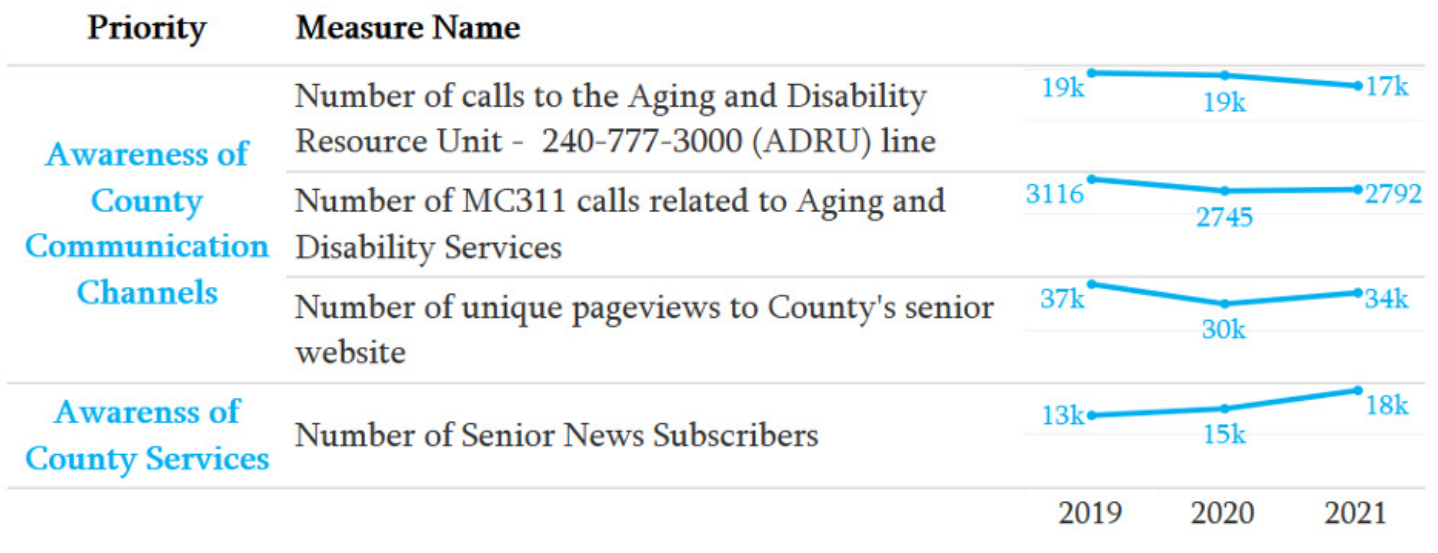
The Age-Friendly Communication and Outreach domain teamed up with the newly revitalized Commission on Aging Communications Committee to more closely share information and initiate collaborative projects. In August 2021, 50+ in Montgomery County was devoted to Age-Friendly Montgomery and two of its domains. A collaborative project was initiated to develop a fact sheet for the public on the County’s information resources with the intent of distributing it via multiple channels and in multiple languages.





## METRICS

Are we able to report on the metrics proposed in the Action Plan – or are there other quantitative insights/evidence that can be included to support the narratives?



Satisfaction measures are from the County's Resident Livability Survey conducted every 2 years. All measures are on the federal fiscal year (Oct – Sep).

## What have we learned?

### LESSONS LEARNED: BUILDING FROM WHAT WORKS AND CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

What have we learned over the past three years that should inform future activities?

#### NARRATIVE

We focused our efforts on developing and promoting general content regarding County programs, services and resources via print and online. For the last two years of this report, sharing of content occurred mainly online and via word-of-mouth – generally beyond our ability to quantify.

In the future, we should promote County programs, services and resources in a more targeted way, using communication channels appropriate to identified audiences. That strategy should include measures of success.

## WHAT'S NEXT: EXTENDING PRIORITIES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES, AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Building from what we have learned and accomplished (or not) over the past three years, what do we want to collectively aspire to within this domain moving forward?

### NARRATIVE

1. We can promote County programs, services and resources more effectively by designing and implementing a targeted communications strategy that delivers messages to targeted audiences via appropriate communication channels.
2. We will work to strategically improve and target outreach and communications strategies via collaboration with Age-Friendly partners including the Commission on Aging, the Public Information Office, the Office of Community Partnerships, and other community organizations.
3. We will continue to work with the Office of Public Information and other departments to get more information to the public via press releases and social media.
4. Working with the Commission on Aging, we will work to update and improve the Senior Website for timeliness, accuracy, and easier access to needed information.
5. We will develop and strategically promote/distribute a Fact Sheet on ways for the public to access information about County programs and services; working with the Office of community Partnerships, we will also seek opportunities for translating it into multiple languages and distributing it to targeted communities.
6. Reconsider instituting a Community Ambassador Program as part of a broader, more targeted outreach strategy.
7. Work to expand participation by nonprofits and County agencies in the resource fair area set aside for the County at the Beacon's annual 50+ Expo in the fall.



# Elder Abuse Prevention

## MISSION

To protect older adults from maltreatment, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of every type through education, intervention, and prosecution.

## What have we accomplished?

### STATUS OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES

To what extent has the County completed the planned activities for this domain as outlined in the Action Plan? (Please also credit “who” contributed to success –i.e. department, organization, etc.).

#### PRIORITY

### CONTINUE TO SHARE INFORMATION AMONG COUNTY AGENCIES

#### NARRATIVE

The Elder & Vulnerable Adult Abuse Task Force (E/VAATF) continues to be an important resource for multiple government agencies to strategically collaborate to protect Montgomery County’s older adults. We have had multiple success stories over the last three years that would not have been possible without the task force’s coordinated efforts. The task force regularly discusses difficult cases of abuse/neglect/financial exploitation involving seniors and vulnerable adults. Task force members problem-solve and share information to advance individual and public safety. Virtual platforms have made it possible for even greater participation from multiple partner agencies.

#### PRIORITY

### INCREASE STAFFING TO MEET NEEDS OF COMMUNITY

#### NARRATIVE

Adult Protective Services (APS) added another NAPSA (what is NAPSA? It needs to be spelled

out the first time it’s used before using the abbreviation) nationally certified APS professional to the team in 2021.

The States Attorney’s Office (SAO) continues to track all APS intakes and investigations and updates E/VAATF members of successful prosecutions.

#### PRIORITY

### CONTINUE TO COORDINATE COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION AMONG COUNTY AGENCIES

#### NARRATIVE

Outreach efforts remain a priority with the SAO, APS, Office of Consumer Protection and Fire Rescue Service all jointly presenting information about elder/vulnerable adult abuse to various senior groups, assisted living facilities, skilled nursing facilities, senior centers, villages, etc. in all segments of the county. The community response has been overwhelmingly positive. Due to the pandemic, we have been able to reach even more groups and populations throughout the county and beyond with the use of virtual platforms.

## OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITHIN DOMAIN

What else has the County accomplished in this domain beyond the planned activities?

### ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

#### TRAINING/EDUCATION

##### NARRATIVE

- Montgomery County Police Department and APS led a successful training on APS + Law Enforcement collaboration at the Guilford County North Carolina Family Justice Center/ Department of Social Services for 65 participants from police, APS, Ombudsman, District Attorney's Office, Adult Services staff, Family Justice Center and private, non-profit partners.
- APS members present on monthly NAPSA (what is NAPSA?) core module trainings for regional/state Department of Social Services partners that include topics on elder sex abuse investigations, initial APS Investigations, investigating a self-neglecting client, APS professional communication module, etc.
- APS presented five times during the 2021 NAPSA National Conference, with three of those proposals accepted, written and led by Montgomery County APS staff.
- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) events continue to be a huge success and a cornerstone of County collaboration. WEAAD 2021 had four webinars, one in-person presentation in both English and Spanish that were held at Holiday Park Senior Center. Approximately 250 participants attended throughout the week.
- Four WEAAD 2022 webinars are planned with viewing parties at seven County senior centers with multiple task force members participating.

### ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

#### ACCOLADES/AWARDS

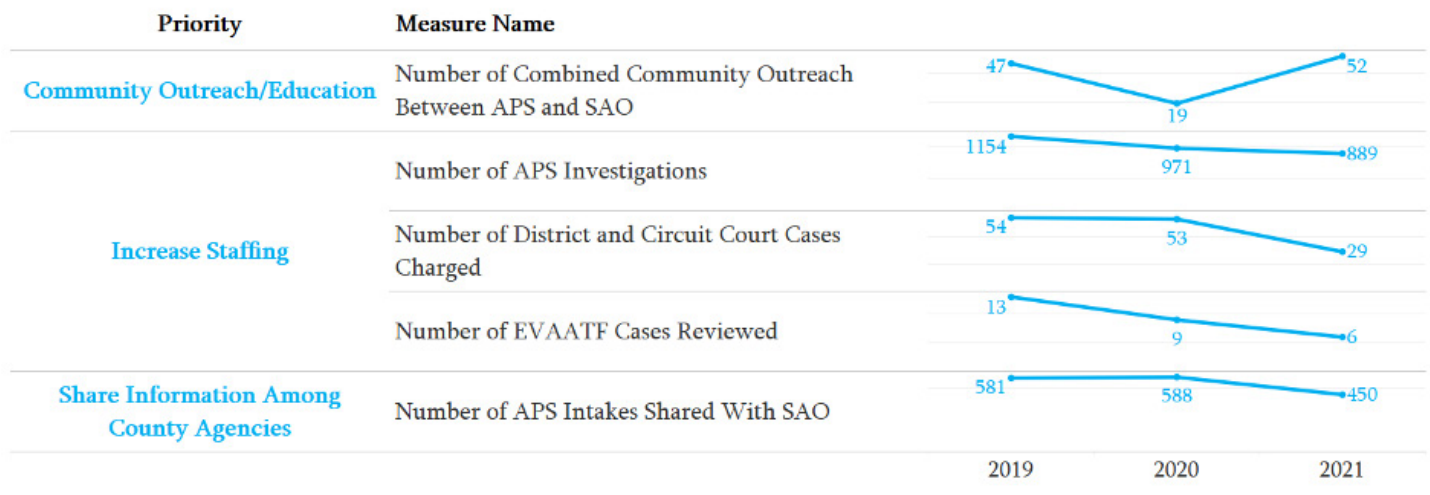
##### NARRATIVE

- APS investigators recently won an award for Geriatric Care: Maryland EMS-Geriatric (EMS-G) Award alongside our EMS/FRS Mobile Integrated team. This award is given to an individual or program that has demonstrated ongoing dedication and commitment to improving the EMS care of the elderly in Maryland.
- Julia McGlamary, Denise Bruskin-Gambrell and Mario Wawrzusin were added to the NAPSA National Registry as APS NAPSA instructors.
- APS gained membership and remains supportive of the Montgomery County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council Subcommittee on Power-Based Violence.



## METRICS

Are we able to report on the metrics proposed in the Action Plan – or are there other quantitative insights/evidence that can be included to support the narratives?



## What have we learned?

### LESSONS LEARNED: BUILDING FROM WHAT WORKS AND CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

What have we learned over the past three years that should inform future activities?

#### NARRATIVE

We learned that the strong foundation we already had established in our Elder and Vulnerable Adult Task Force members allowed us to continue to meet and discuss the safety of Montgomery County residents even during the height of the pandemic. We never faltered in our ability to meet virtually and adapt to the changing needs of Montgomery County’s older adults.

The Elder Abuse Prevention workgroup rallied around each other to troubleshoot issues we had never experienced before in an attempt to provide safety and protection to vulnerable adults. We learned to think outside of the box by offering numerous virtual webinars and training to help keep older adults engaged, battle isolation and to educate our colleagues.

## WHAT'S NEXT: EXTENDING PRIORITIES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES, AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Building from what we have learned and accomplished (or not) over the past three years, what do we want to collectively aspire to within this domain moving forward?

### NARRATIVE

- Successful advocacy for an additional APS investigation unit for 2023
- Potential Family Justice Center expansion and co-location of public and private services to better serve victims of elder/vulnerable adult abuse as well as domestic violence
- Continue to be resilient with the ever-changing landscape of COVID-19
- Maintain open communication between agencies and remain willing to adapt with each other
- Continue to build capacity to meet the increasing number of reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Hiring a certified fraud examiner as part of the SAO staff who is dedicated solely to investigating financial exploitation cases against seniors would be extremely beneficial as these types of cases continue to grow exponentially
- We hope to engage the medical community in the efforts of our task force, as medical professionals are in a good position to identify and combat elder abuse—a forensic nurse in the Mobile Integrated Healthcare team would be an example of this



# Employment

## MISSION

To promote the equitable recruitment and training of workers age 50 and older to enhance their employability and to benefit employers.

## What have we accomplished?

### STATUS OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES

To what extent has the County completed the planned activities for this domain as outlined in the Action Plan? (Please also credit “who” contributed to success –i.e., department, organization, etc.).

## PRIORITY

### ENHANCE EMPLOYEE SKILLS

## NARRATIVE

The Employment domain Work Group tackled two challenges, largely complicated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021:

- A. Keeping the resource list updated. The list, which we assembled in 2018-19, provides information about the various organizations and programs that provide training and assistance to 50+ job-seekers. When COVID-19 hit, virtually all of the organizations changed their offerings, typically moving classes to Zoom. One-on-one communication shifted to on-line or telephone. In some ways that made it harder for the job seekers, since many classes and meetings were cut. But one benefit was elimination of the need to travel to a class. The Work Group’s challenge was keeping the resource list updated, as changes were occurring continually. WorkSource Montgomery and members of this work group worked to address this challenge by periodically checking the list for accuracy.
- B. Getting information about the resource list out to job seekers to make them aware of this resource and encourage them to use it.
- C. The list was posted on a number of key websites. WorkSource Montgomery has a section for 50+ job seekers and moved the resource list to the top of that section to make it easier to find: [worksourcemontgomery.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/50-Resource-List-WSM-template-FINAL-03.11.2022.pdf](https://www.worksourcemontgomery.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/50-Resource-List-WSM-template-FINAL-03.11.2022.pdf).
- D. The Jewish Council for the Aging, also known for its focus on job-finding, continued to offer the resource list on its website.
- E. We encouraged the Commission for Women to use the resource list to help their clients and they sent the link to their members.
- F. The Montgomery County Public Libraries continue to expand their collections of job-search resources, access to online courses and outreach to mid-life and older workers. See [montgomerycountymd.libguides.com/jobhunting](https://montgomerycountymd.libguides.com/jobhunting).
- G. AARP Maryland offered online presentations on how to navigate the job-seeking process.
- H. Amazingly, key organizations adjusted to COVID-19, putting classes and resources online. The section, “metrics to provide context,” provides information about the

actual number of classes, special events, and other tools that were offered on-line by several key organizations known for helping 50+ job seekers.

I. The Montgomery County American Job Center, operated by WorkSource Montgomery, experienced a decrease in residents served between program years 2019-20 and 2020-21. Job seekers age 45+ represented 53% of all those served in 2019-20 and 50% in 2020-21. Despite fewer attendees due to COVID-19, the age percentages of job seekers remained consistent. The most popular WorkSource Montgomery workshops in 2021, with a majority participants being 45+, were the following:

- Resume Essentials
- Prepping for Job Interview
- Job Search Strategies
- Marketing You: Personal Branding & Networking
- Federal Hiring
- Social Media & Job Search
- Changing Careers
- Acing the Virtual Interview
- Surviving a Layoff

J. The Helping Individuals Reach Employment (H.I.R.E) Program was launched by WorkSource Montgomery (WSM) in 2018 to better serve job seekers in their communities. Various needs and barriers exist to obtain and sustain long-term employment and not every job seeker can access the American Job Centers in Wheaton and Germantown. Therefore, WSM in conjunction with Montgomery County Public Libraries, offer H.I.R.E. (pop-up) services in four libraries around the county and two job centers to broaden WSMs reach and raise awareness of its mission. The majority of H.I.R.E. visitors are 50+. H.I.R.E. services were suspended when the library system closed due to COVID-19 but resumed in May 2020 in a virtual capacity.

Between 2019 and 2021, approximately 600 county residents registered for H.I.R.E. services. Sixty-nine percent of total registrants are attributable to services offered in 2021. This number triples that of the preceding year. Virtual services resolve the problem of transportation which is often a barrier to those seeking services. It also allows one to remain in a caregiving role while learning new skills. Virtual offerings will continue.

Services vary depending on the employment needs of the immediate community. WSM specialists are expertly trained to work with customers of varying backgrounds, understand industry workforce trends, and know what skills are in demand so that they can tailor services offered depending on the location.

In general, H.I.R.E. services include:

- Registration on the Maryland Workforce Exchange
- Resume assistance
- Identifying skills and talents
- Advisement on interview techniques
- Connection to other job search resource

K. Montgomery College has continued to see its non-credit courses resonating with those 50+. The most well attended classes tend to be workforce related reflecting customers' desire to refresh or upskill to find employment or professional advancement. In 2021, Montgomery College students aged 50 or older completed 268 different workforce development and continuing education courses and conferences. Popular topics included Project Management, AWS, Data Analytics, PivotTables, Python, Cloud, PowerBI, SharePoint, customer service, and leadership skills. All told, there were 1,732 course completers aged 50+ in 2021 and 5,768 from 2019 through 2021.



## PRIORITY

### IMPROVE EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

#### NARRATIVE

Here too, this group's ability to reach employers was significantly hindered by the pandemic. Although we had expected to make presentations to employers about the benefits of the 50+ as employees, with COVID-19, the presentation possibilities evaporated.

We took several steps to help employers understand the value of the 50+ worker and of a multi-generational workforce.

- A. This work group collaborated with the Alliance for Workplace Excellence (AWE), to recognize employers with "Best Practices for Workers 50+." Seven companies that were the winners for the overall award also won in the age-friendly category. As part of the AWE awards celebration and luncheon in June 2019, Lori Trawinski of the AARP Policy Institute presented an educational seminar about the value of age diversity in the workplace. Unfortunately, because of COVID-19, AWE subsequently was forced to close its doors due to lack of funding.
- B. In 2020, the Commission on Aging agreed to promote employment as a priority. Its Aging in Community Committee saw the benefits of showcasing the benefits of an intergenerational workforce. It subsequently led a roundtable discussion on the County's Senior Fellows program. Efforts continue to find ways of both revamping and broadening access to the Senior Fellows program.
- C. In May 2021, Allie Williams, director of the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce, joined the work group. He is now helping the group disseminate information about the value of a multi-generational workforce to its 600 member companies.
- D. In 2021, members of our work group created a PowerPoint about Age-Friendly Montgomery and the work of the Employment Work Group

and presented it to the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rotary Club. The presentation can be easily updated to use with other employers in the future.

## PRIORITY

### COMBAT AGE DISCRIMINATION

#### NARRATIVE

The Montgomery County Office of Human Rights (OHR) has added items to its website that relate to ageism.

- A. It released an article on age discrimination in the workforce and encouraged all employers to read it: [montgomerycountymd.gov/humanrights/Resources/Files/Age\\_discriminationAug2019.pdf](https://montgomerycountymd.gov/humanrights/Resources/Files/Age_discriminationAug2019.pdf).
- B. It also released an Age Discrimination in the Workplace fact sheet. [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/humanrights/Resources/Files/Age\\_Discrimination\\_Fact%20Sheetv5.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/humanrights/Resources/Files/Age_Discrimination_Fact%20Sheetv5.pdf)
- C. The OHR launched an ad campaign with 15-second spots in Montgomery County movie theaters at Rio, Silver Spring and Germantown.



## OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITHIN DOMAIN

What else has the County accomplished in this domain beyond the planned activities?

### ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

#### ENHANCE EMPLOYEE SKILLS

### NARRATIVE

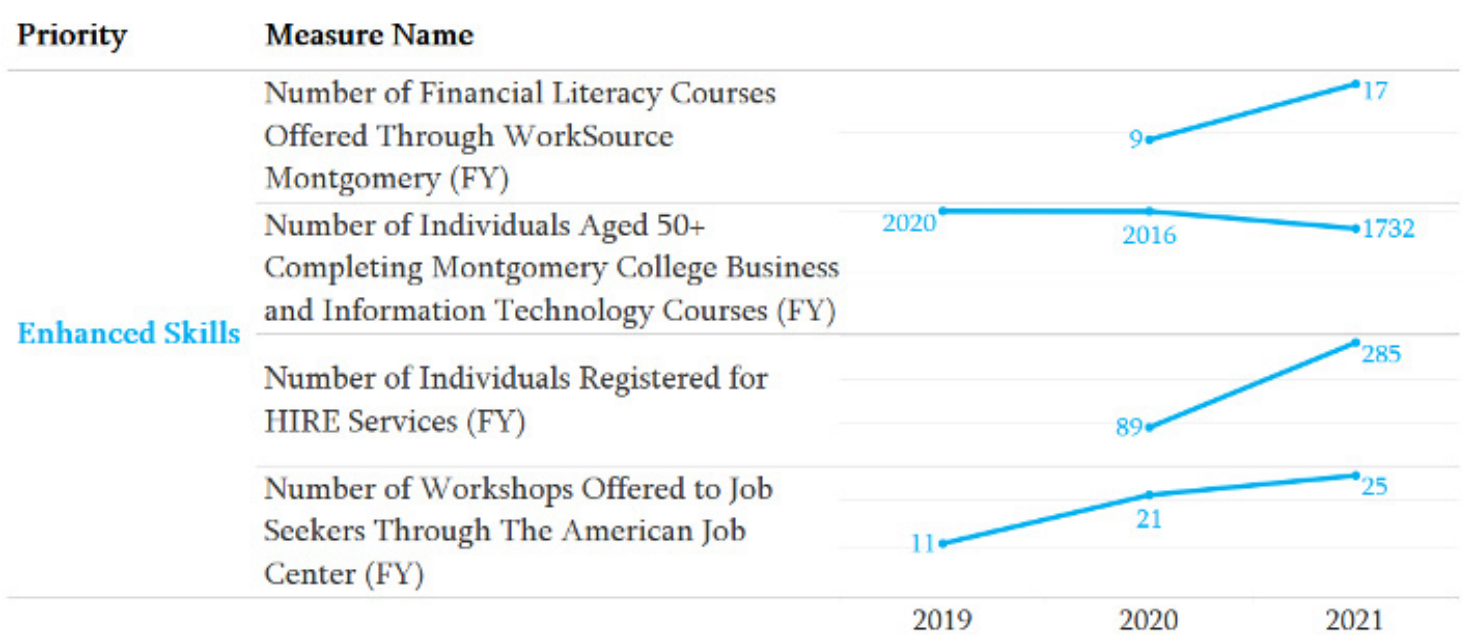
- WSM offered a larger array of workshops to job seekers once the virtual platform got underway, increasing from 11 workshops in 2019 (cut short due to COVID) to 21 and 25 in 2020 and 2021, respectively. A workshop specific to jobseekers over 50 was offered during each of the three years.
- In partnership with United Way, WSM began offering CAFÉ Montgomery, a financial literacy provider, to assist customers, mostly 50+,

effective July, 2021 and offered 17 unique courses. WSM offered just nine financial literacy courses in 2020. These services were greatly needed due to the stress the state unemployment Insurance claims department experienced, varying and limited COVID-19 relief, and workers fleeing or being forced to leave the workplace. United Way received funding from M&T Bank to open a Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) in Montgomery County and it subcontracted that service with CAFÉ Montgomery, which is responsible for managing the FEC in Montgomery County.

## METRICS

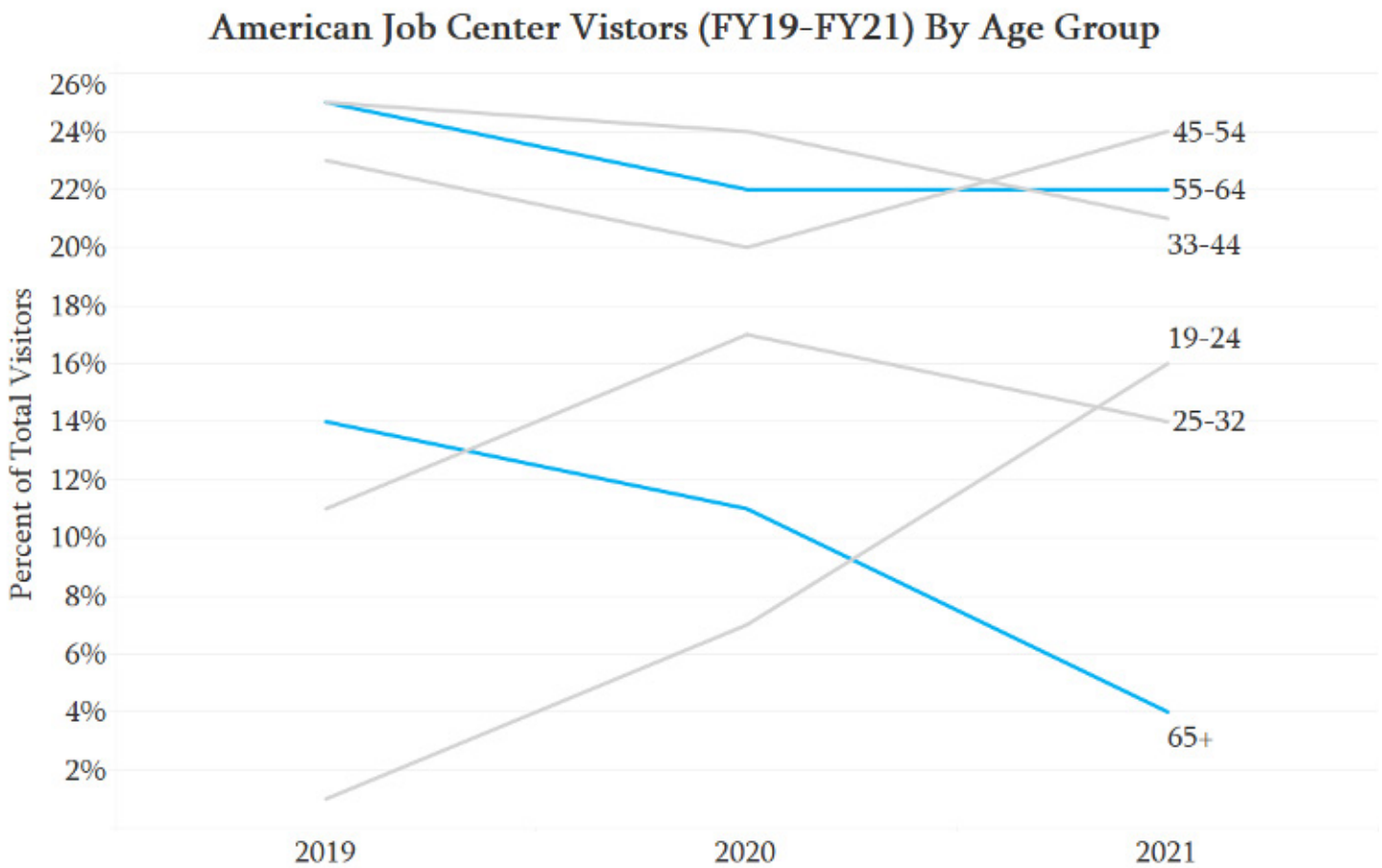
Are we able to report on the metrics proposed in the Action Plan – or are there other quantitative insights/evidence that can be included to support the narratives?

**Figure 1. Three-Year Trend of Services for Enhancing Skills (FY19-FY21)**



Note: FY19 data for number of financial literacy courses offered and number of individuals registered for HIRE services is unavailable. All Worksource Montgomery workshops offered through the American Job Center in FY2020 and FY2021 took place virtually.

**Figure 2. Three-Year Trend of American Job Center Visits by Age Group (FY19-FY21)**



**Figure 3. JCA Senior Community Service Employment Program Outcomes (FY19-FY22)**

	FY2019		FY2020		FY2021		FY2022 (Projected)	
	Actual	% of Goal	YTD Actual <sup>1</sup>	% of Goal	Actual	% of Goal	YTD Actual <sup>2</sup>	% of Goal
Service Level <sup>3</sup>	83%	100%	60% (83%)	72.3% (100%)	63% (77%)	81.8%	71% (74%)	95.9%
Unsubsidized Employment <sup>4</sup>	7%	38.9%	1% (14%)	5.5% (75%)	1% (17%)	6.3%	3% (16%)	18.8%
MIN <sup>5</sup>	3.25%	110.2%	2.84% (3.25%)	94.7% (108%)	3.39% (3.0%)	112.3%	2.89% (3.0%)	96.3%
Employment Rate (2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit)	31.6%	80%	0% (35.7%)	85%	0% (42%)	0%	0% 42%	0%
Employment Rate (4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit)	18.2%	52%	0% (22.2%)	60%	0% (37%)	0%	0 (37%)	0%

For more than four decades, JCA has run the **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)**, which is the county’s only

on-the-job training program for low-income job seekers age 55 or older. It serves job seekers with incomes at or below 125 percent of the

federal poverty line, and JCA pays the SCSEP interns minimum wage while they work 20 hours a week at local nonprofits and government agencies that provide them guidance and supervision. Through their assignments and individual employment plans (IEPs), the interns improve their skills, confidence and job-search networks. service skills, industry-specific technical skills and more.

**Figure 4. 50+ Expo Attendance and Satisfaction (FY19-FY21)**

	FY2019 In-Person	FY2020 In-Person	FY2021 Virtual
# of Employers Registered <sup>6</sup>	47	48	29
# of Registered Resource Institutions – Training, Education, etc.	30	35	16
% of Exhibitors Rating the Event Very Good or Better <sup>7</sup>	94%	90%	92%

**The 50+ Employment Expos:** In April 15, 2019, JCA convened its annual **50+ Employment Expo**. There, job seekers age 50+ networked with area employers and community resource organizations, received a free résumé review and learned new job-search skills. Every Expo in FY 21 and FY 22 featured 8-10 or more employers with at least three to five job openings.

**COVID-19:** At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 50+ Employment Expos went virtual. JCA began using the Zoom platform to host the eight virtual Expos in FY21 and the six virtual Montgomery County Expos in FY22.

**The first virtual expo November 20, 2020.**

During FY 21, a total of 3,011 job seekers registered for the Virtual Employment Expos. The average registration of 376 job seekers exceeded the required minimum 150 per event.

- Each expo continues to include two educational and skill building workshops. Each workshop lasts 45 minutes including Q&A which was moderated in the chat box, allowing for interaction between the attendees and presenters.
- Topics for the workshops were designed to address job seeking skills, and unique concerns of older adults looking for work especially during a pandemic. Topics were selected by the expo planning committee. Workshop presenters were identified, recruited and booked by the expo consultant. Workshop titles for FY 21 included but were not limited to:
  - How to Network in the COVID Era
  - Find Your Career Passion to Create Your Career Brand
  - Jump Start Your Job Search with AARP
  - You Got the Interview Now What?
  - Federal Government Jobs: understanding the announcement and writing the resume.
  - There is more to your job search than salary and title; why company culture matters.

**The Career Gateway program**, now in its 12th year, offers 30 hours of intensive classroom training, take-home materials and long-term mentors – compassionate and committed volunteers -- who work one-on-one with each participant.

<sup>1</sup> As of August 14, 2019

<sup>2</sup> As of August 14, 2019

<sup>3</sup> This is essentially the number of persons that JCA can serve or that has served under the SCSEP grant.

<sup>4</sup> These are “regular jobs,” i.e., those not supported by SCSEP or another federal program.

<sup>5</sup> The grant requires JCA to serve an extraordinary number of persons who are Most In Need (MIN), which U.S. Department of Labor defines as person who are age 65+ or persons who are veterans, homeless or who have a disability, limited English proficiency, low literacy skills, low employment prospects, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Each employer must have at least five jobs that it is eager to fill. Most tell JCA they have dozens.

<sup>7</sup> JCA collects data through exit interviews and follow-up surveys. The organization generally reaches 70 percent or more of the exhibitors.



**Figure 5. Gateway Series Events and Participation (FY19-FY21)**

	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022 Projected
# of Gateway series	6	6	6	6
# of participants	95	90	99	106

JCA designed the program for mid-level managers and other professionals age 50+ who are seeking employment. For the past two years, we have pivoted our in-person programming

to a virtual, interactive, online training. Same curriculum class facilitator, presenters and volunteers addressing all the important job-seeking skills as in our in-class programming and all from the comfort and safety of our participants' own home. The Career Gateway continues to grow and the curriculum and classes are continuously being updated to address the needs of our 21st Century (delete the preceding highlighted phrase) 50+ job seekers, the ever-changing job market, changes in technology, and of course, changes due to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

## What have we learned?

### LESSONS LEARNED: BUILDING FROM WHAT WORKS AND CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

What have we learned over the past three years that should inform future activities?

#### NARRATIVE

- Experiencing COVID-19 has been eye-opening. On the one hand, its impact on employment was huge and devastating. Businesses suffered and employees realized how vulnerable they are. COVID-19 was more than an economic issue –it was life-threatening, and in fact many lives have been lost.
- There was also a positive lesson from the pandemic experience, and that was the potential to use technology more aggressively to open doors to learning and to connections. Face-to-face is wonderful, but there are also advantages to connecting with others, especially on Zoom where many faces can be seen at the same time. No question that it has had a dramatic impact on education – how we provide it and how we experience it. Education options will change a lot moving forward, and for the worker who is looking to up-skill, it will open new doors.
- We believe that Montgomery County itself should become a model employer. Thus far, and despite having many exemplary programs, it has not pledged to do so, and it has not signed the AARP Age-Friendly pledge.
- As we noted in our last report, no office within Montgomery County government focuses on employment issues for county residents. And that is still the case. It would be a huge help to have a Senior Fellow, who reports to the County Executive, assigned to our work group. Among the many benefits, a Senior Fellow could enable us to secure more visibility for the topic of senior employment and to compile essential data. In the meantime, there is now a senior assistant to the County Executive who is a liaison with Worksource Montgomery and the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation, to whom we will try to connect and discuss our goals.
- Our work group suffers because it has no natural advocate in the County budget process for financial or staff resources to support age-friendly employment. We suggest that Montgomery County commit to specific funding for this area of work, and that that funding build upon -- not replace -- what is already available.

- It has been essential to continue to seek and involve new partners throughout the county and beyond in our education and outreach

efforts for the benefit of both the job-seeker and the employer.

## WHAT'S NEXT: EXTENDING PRIORITIES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES, AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Building from what we have learned and accomplished (or not) over the past three years, what do we want to collectively aspire to within this domain moving forward?

### NARRATIVE

The three priorities that have guided our work until now are still at the heart of the employment challenge, and we recommend keeping them. This means a focus on workers 50+, including job seekers and those currently employed, on employers and on fighting age discrimination.

#### 1. Enhance Skills

- A. We must continue to expand and otherwise improve communication about available resources for job seekers while identifying organizations that could help us spread the word. Heightening visibility on the Montgomery County website is especially important. We will work with the Office of Public Information and the Commission on Aging to accomplish this
- B. We will continue to collaborate with AARP Maryland to find ways it can help let AARP members know about the resource list. One possibility to explore is placing a link to it on their website.
- C. We will reach out to Montgomery College Workforce Development to explore ways to help them promote resources for job seekers.

#### 2. Improve Employer Engagement

- A. As businesses and employer organizations return to in-person meetings and conferences, we will seek to arrange presentations to reach them with credible

information about the benefits of hiring, engaging, and retaining the 50+. We have developed an effective presentation that can be given by various workgroup members.

- B. We will seek to garner support from the head of the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC), striving to ensure that MCEDC sees older workers as a resource.

#### 3. Combat Age Discrimination

- A. We will continue to work with the Montgomery County Office of Human Resources to include information about age discrimination as a regular part of their briefings for both employers and employees.
- B. We will test the efficacy of reaching out to law firms that deal with employment issues to encourage them to include age discrimination in their briefings of employers. We will seek to share the age discrimination fact sheet with students at the Montgomery College Work Force Development unit.

# Home and Community-Based Services

## MISSION

To better support Montgomery County residents and caregivers to access: coordinated, personalized, community-based support that allows them to age safely and with dignity in their communities.

## What have we accomplished?

### STATUS OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES

To what extent has the County completed the planned activities for this domain as outlined in the Action Plan? (Please also credit “who” contributed to success –i.e., department, organization, etc.).

## PRIORITY

### HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES SUPPORT (HBCS)

Raise awareness of County and other provider supports.

## NARRATIVE

#### Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Aging & Disability Services Caregiver Support Program

- Conduct/ed caregiver support outreach events in the community
- Publish/ed monthly caregiver electronic newsletter
- Publish/ed County’s blog for caregivers
- Expanded the Montgomery County Caregiver Coalition to represent the diversity of County’s public-private service providers and advocacy
- Developed a comprehensive response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Created the County’s Engage@HOME YouTube channel – this became a virtual community center and a trusted virtual hub
- Partnered with the County’s Commission on Aging in 2021 on Age-Friendly Roundtables focused on HCBS and Workforce challenges. Stakeholders represented County staff, education workers, service providers, health

care service providers, advocates, and recipients of care. A key recommendation was for County Council to establish a task force to deepen the analysis. The County Executive approved and in March 2022 this taskforce will commence meeting.

- Expanded “A Guide to Caregiver Supports in Montgomery County” resource guide. The guide is available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Russian, and is available on the County’s caregiver webpage.
- Prepared an advertisement for the Beacon newspaper designed to educate readers about the following: caregiving services, lifelong learning, digital supports, and the County’s Aging & Disability Resource Unit. (240-777-3000).

## PRIORITY

### NAVIGATION

Optimize navigation of HCBS resources.

## NARRATIVE

#### DHHS Caregiver Support Program

- Expanded County’s Caregiver eNewsletter to include a blog and podcasts available via subscription and 24/7 on the County’s Caregiver webpage

- In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, developed the County’s Engage@HOME YouTube channel. Engage@HOME spotlights non-commercial and trusted virtual opportunities to help viewers NEST WELL through community engagement. Episodes feature topical interviews and video content that enhances quality of life and personal resilience

**County and Age-Friendly HCBS Workgroup**

- Identified services that encourage cross sector referrals among HCBS provider organizations to address the workforce challenges and the need for a coordinated approach to stimulate training, recruitment, and retention of HCBS workers
- Raise public awareness of HCBS in environments among audiences previously not connected to services

- Promoted access to affordable HCBS resources for residents and caregivers
- Encouraged innovation and sustainable funding strategies

**PRIORITY**

**AFFORDABILITY**

Expand access to affordable HCBS resources for residents and caregivers

**NARRATIVE**

**DHHS’ Nutrition Program**

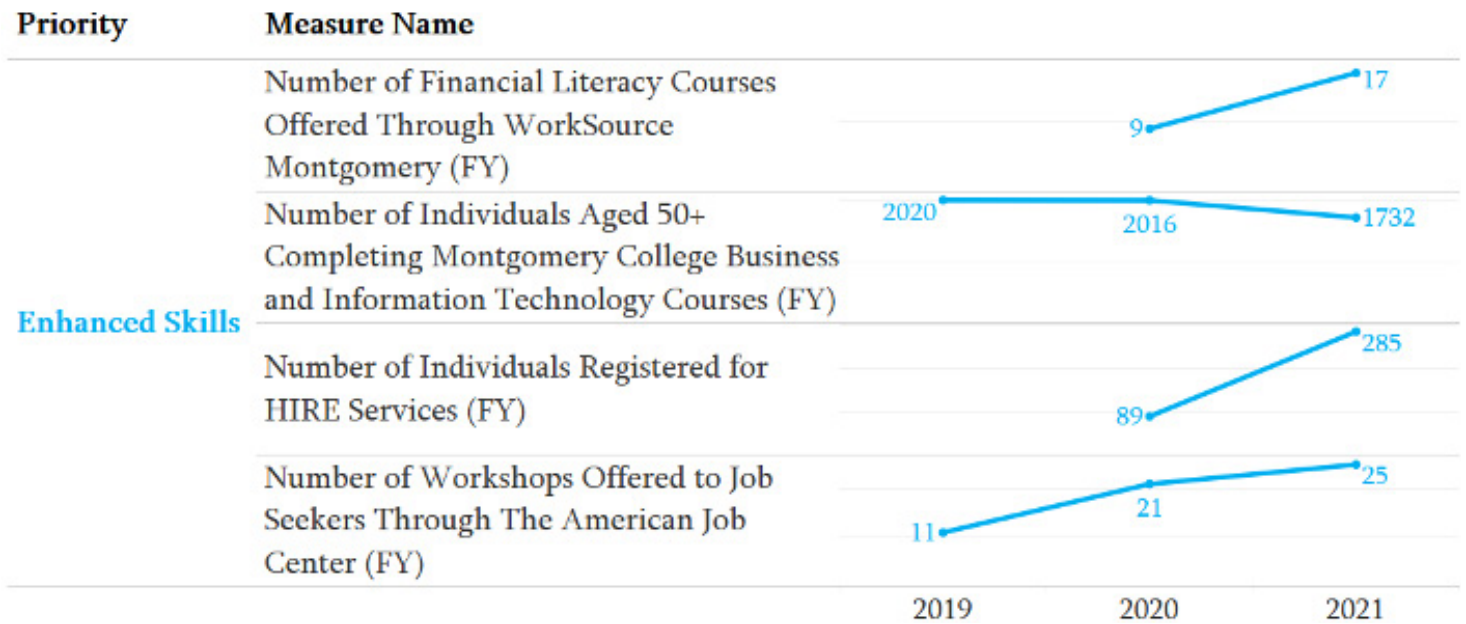
Provided home delivered and lunch meals in senior centers for County residents. Meals are provided at no cost with a voluntary donation





## METRICS

Are we able to report on the metrics proposed in the Action Plan – or are there other quantitative insights/evidence that can be included to support the narratives?



All measures are on the federal fiscal year (Oct – Sep).

## TELL YOUR SUCCESS STORY

What are some examples of how the initiative has directly helped older adults, and how?

### NARRATIVE

The County’s Caregiver Support Program launched the Engage@HOME YouTube channel in March 2020. The goal was to provide an immediate response to social distancing and to allow viewers opportunities to discover quality social engagement that could help them maintain resilience during the upheaval associated with COVID-19. To address this challenge, it was evident that we needed to support our community to develop new healthy social engagement behaviors. To achieve this, the County’s caregiver support program’s facilitator created Engage@HOME and, as its producer/host, develops interview-based episodes that feature available video content.

In early March 2020, our region had adopted strict “stay-at-home” orders that resulted in a mandatory shut down of all County and community-based recreation centers, libraries, adult day programs, lifelong learning centers, private gyms, art and culture centers, and a broad range of activities. The negative impact of COVID-19 on the entire population and particularly the county’s older adult and caregiver population was predicted to be significant. As this demographic was already at risk of social isolation there was an immediate need to identify and start offering thoughtful and trusted social engagement content on an easy-to-use virtual platform. In the early days, weeks, and months of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was limited video-based content available that could replicate in-person experiences.

Research indicates that when faced with change, adoption of alternatives to the familiar can build new pathways to wellness.

The Engage@HOME YouTube channel is designed to address social isolation by curating programming that would speak directly to the diverse needs of older adults and caregivers. The Engage@HOME objective is to provide viewers with meaningful episodes to help them discover virtual social engagement. In a modest way, Engage@HOME is a virtual community center that presents social engagement opportunities from around the world. Rather than produce all the content on Engage@HOME, the County also curates virtual activities from a broad range of trusted providers.

Additionally, we knew many older adults had limited experiences using Zoom and other virtual meeting tools to participate in lifelong learning, exercise, healthcare, arts and entertainment, and other activities. Therefore, early Engage@HOME episodes provided navigation assistance to help viewers build skills and gain confidence to effectively utilize online activities. We selected YouTube to host Engage@HOME, based on its ease of use and our target demographic's broader familiarity with the platform.

The County's caregiver support program leveraged its internal and external partnerships when developing original content. These include the County's minority health initiatives, libraries, recreation and senior centers, transportation networks, health and wellness staff, key advisory group stakeholders, and broader regional partners. Through Engage@HOME we have expanded our stakeholder network and involved a broader range of contributors. These partners are either interview guests or their programming is featured on an episode.

Through Google analytics, we have learned that this channel is popular in our region and quickly secured its audience within our target demographic. Up to March 2022, 640,000 viewers have been reached through Engage@HOME. Engage@HOME has received a National Association of County's 2021 – Achievement Award, and was selected as an example of excellence by **The National Resource Center for Engaging Older Adults** as well as being included in the engAGED Innovations Hub.



# What have we learned?

## LESSONS LEARNED: BUILDING FROM WHAT WORKS AND CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

What have we learned over the past three years that should inform future activities?

### NARRATIVE

The County has pivoted exceptionally well in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A key part of this success has been that the County's caregiver support program and regional partners adapted programming swiftly and effectively, developing new virtual programming. Engage@HOME, County libraries and recreation, County vendors, regional local lifelong learning programs, and diverse service providers made meaningful changes to their programs. These ensured continuation of service was guaranteed and new innovative approaches to service delivery were explored.

Montgomery County government took the lead with the County's COVID-19 portal. This highly visible portal, accessible on every page of the County's website, provided residents and businesses a clear pathway to fact-based information and assistance.

Older adults specifically have faced considerable challenges associated with COVID-19 and over the last two years we have learned the following:

- Older adults are keen to engage with family, friends, and community, but often need assistance to affordable and safe connectivity to the internet and are able to secure devices (e.g., laptops, smart phones, handheld tablets, etc.).
- Access to virtual resources and support, whether via telephone or online, allow older adults to make the choice between what activities they wish to participate in person and those they are comfortable to join virtually. This is particularly impactful when the older adult is a caregiver for a loved one living at the same residence.
- As COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, older adults will again need support in finding the ideal balance between in-person and virtual activities. As providers, it will be critical to embark on thoughtful outreach campaigns to motivate and provide, as need be, tailored support for older adults who have been significantly isolated over the last two years.

## WHAT'S NEXT: EXTENDING PRIORITIES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES, AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Building from what we have learned and accomplished (or not) over the past three years, what do we want to collectively aspire to within this domain moving forward?

### NARRATIVE

Montgomery County government has demonstrated that it has capacity to provide significant leadership in the areas of HCBS workforce development, caregiver support, virtual communications, alternative approaches to sharing of resources, and collaborative approaches.

The last two to three years have demonstrated that there is an ongoing need for the County to facilitate public-private stakeholders to increase the following outcomes:

- Number of in-person and virtual supportive programs
- Supports and resources for the culturally and linguistically diverse community
- Collaborative activities that address the needs of the “whole person” older adult
- Ability for persons living in all geographic areas of the county to successfully access stimulating and engaging activities that will positively impact health outcomes





# Health and Wellness

## MISSION

To bring together government and community partners to expand and promote health and wellness awareness, resources, and activities for adults 55+ that help maintain or improve physical, cognitive, and emotional health.

## What have we accomplished?

### STATUS OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES

To what extent has the County completed the planned activities for this domain as outlined in the Action Plan? (Please also credit “who” contributed to success –i.e., department, organization, etc.).

## PRIORITY

### EARLY-STAGE MEMORY LOSS

## NARRATIVE

#### SOCIAL DAY CLUBS

In December of 2019, the Jewish Council on Aging (JCA) and the Department of Recreation continued serving men and women with a diagnosis of early-stage memory loss with a social day club in upper Montgomery County at the Germantown Community Center for two days per week and in lower Montgomery County, at the Schweinhaut Senior Center, one day per week.

This social club seeks to reduce social isolation and loneliness for seniors with dementia, create a community of peer support, decrease the stress and anxiety associated with the stigma of a diagnosis of dementia, and encourage their participation in community life. The social model adult day program also maximizes the cognitive and physical functioning of seniors with early-stage dementia by providing therapeutic activities, nutrition and wellness, brain health-enhancing cognitive activities, and community outings. It also provides vital respite to caregivers.

The Schweinhaut Senior Center’s County grant of \$30,000 was supplemented by a private Health Initiative Foundation grant of \$15,000 to expand services from one to two days a week and relocated the club to a larger space at the White Oak Recreation Center in Silver Spring, in February 2020. JCA also maintained a location at its headquarters in Rockville. Senior nutrition meals were offered to older adults in late 2019 at the Germantown Community Center, in addition to the sites at the Schweinhaut and White Oak centers. By December of 2019, three locations, covering upper Montgomery County (Germantown) to down county (Silver Spring) were offering stimulating programs to seniors with early-stage dementia.

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, on March 13th, 2020, Montgomery County Recreation closed all 55+ programs and all three Kensington Club (KC) programs for early-stage memory loss closed as well. At that time, the program closures caused over 40 men and women with early-stage dementia suddenly to be without the regular, organized group stimulation and interaction that was provided by this social adult day program.

The State of Maryland and Montgomery County’s “stay at home” orders for seniors 65+ heightened the risk for marked physical and mental decline for these vulnerable older adults. To curb this decline, the Kensington Club pivoted and created virtual programs to help more seniors with early-stage dementia and their caregivers access resources during the pandemic. While some supports were limited or unavailable in a virtual setting (i.e., nutritious meals, caregiver respite), JCA modified its program to continue maximizing the cognitive and physical functioning of seniors and provided caregiver support. JCA’s staff developed and delivered the following services:

- **KC Phone Pals:** A telephone reassurance program for homebound older adults with dementia
- **JCA KC Caregiver Coping:** Comprehensive caregiver support with newsletters, area resources, referrals, and consultations
- **KC On-Screen:** Pre-recorded therapeutic video programming, developed specifically for those with early-stage dementia
- **KC LIVE:** Live and interactive group cognitive and physical activities, six days per week, as developed by yoga, music, art, and recreation therapists, using a video conferencing platform. This program also offers a mailed art supply kit and engagement package to enhance the virtual activities.

Between July 1, 2019, and June 30, 2020, Kensington Club served a total of 62 men and women with early-stage memory loss. Between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021, Kensington Club served a total of 70 men and women with early-stage memory loss, with a thriving virtual program prior to returning to in-person social clubs.

## EARLY-STAGE MEMORY LOSS

### NARRATIVE

With falls affecting over 25% of seniors, Montgomery County has conducted many falls prevention classes and programs over the past several years. The venues have varied from low-income privately and County-run senior residences to community recreation centers, libraries, and churches. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, fall prevention programs were required to shut down. Many fall prevention services transitioned to web-based services but there was a learning curve of six months or more before services were available. Below is a breakdown of how the Recreation programs handled COVID and began to slowly introduce services back into the Centers.

- **March 2020:** COVID hit Montgomery County and senior centers were closed diverting recreation staff to supporting other efforts – Senior Meal Delivery, Board of Elections, Food Access Call Center, 311, etc.
- **August 2020:** Outdoor programming and virtual services launched
- **Winter 2020/21:** Only virtual programs were made available
- **June 2021:** Senior centers reopening on rolling basis – the first was Holiday Park Senior Center (HP) and Damascus Senior Center (DSC), opening five days a week; White Oak Recreation Center (WO), Wheaton Senior Center, (WSC), and North Potomac, (NP) opened two days a week; Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center (MSSC) opened on Saturday; and Long Branch (LB) ran outdoor programs at the LB outdoor swimming pool when weather permitted.
- **End of August 2021:** All centers (except LB) reopened to its normal (delete highlighted word) operating hours.
- **Fall 2021:** Outdoor programs resumed due to improved weather conditions

- Winter 2021-2022: Omicron variant caused class reductions, in addition to increased social distancing depending on room size and activity, and we looked to run programs outside again for larger events that we could not reduce due to pre-registrations

In 2019 Stepping On, an evidence-based fall prevention program, was offered throughout the County in senior centers, libraries, and active adult day programs. Stepping On has been offered at five locations, with over 60 individuals that may have fallen within the last year or would like to have instruction on preventing falls. Based upon the pre-surveys, most listed their health as good or better and reported that fear of falling did not limit any activities on their part. All the post-surveys indicated the clear majority were sure or very sure of the benefits of the program and felt greater confidence that they could reduce

their risk of falling. A majority felt they were now better equipped to improve their physical strength with intention to resume exercising and would recommend the class to a friend. Unique to the recreation center group was a consensus that strongly agreed they had more confidence in recovering from a fall. This group also found the session on home improvements most useful, the majority saying they had made safety-oriented changes.

There were no Stepping On classes allowed to be taught during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. All leaders were trained online to teach virtual classes. One class with eight participants was held utilizing a hybrid model in FY 21. A survey will be conducted for the hybrid model class.

## OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITHIN DOMAIN

What else has the County accomplished in this domain beyond the planned activities?

### ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

#### FALLS PREVENTION

### NARRATIVE

The Washington Metropolitan Oasis program has been promoting healthy aging and active lifestyles for over 25 years. Research indicates each year, one of four adults aged 65 and older fall. Oasis's goal for its fall prevention program is to offer exercise classes that improve balance and mobility as well as fall prevention education to the older adult residents of Montgomery County. Partners included local hospitals, doctor's offices, physical therapists, and others that treat injuries related to falls. These program offerings continue to grow and are now a part of all County-sponsored senior programs and many other non-county sponsored programs as well. Montgomery County Recreation offered over

20 fall prevention programs, classes, or special fall prevention events in 2019, with over 350 individuals participating.

### ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

#### MEDICATION MANAGEMENT

### NARRATIVE

Before the COVID pandemic, the County was continuing to expand medication awareness events at multiple locations around the county- from libraries and senior centers to senior housing facilities, community centers, and non-County sponsored programs for seniors. Special events with senior centers, senior apartment complexes, libraries, and other community partners were held, Holy Cross Hospital's health and wellness program were able to serve about 10 participants during 2021.

As a result of the pandemic, other medication take-back programs and classes could not take place due to COVID-19.

#### ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

### SOCIAL ISOLATION (NEW PRIORITY)

#### NARRATIVE

Loneliness and social isolation are different, but related. Loneliness is the distressing feeling of being alone or separated. Social isolation is the lack of social contacts and having few people to interact with regularly. You can live alone and not feel lonely or socially isolated, and you can feel lonely while being with other people.

Those who find themselves unexpectedly isolated due to the illness of a loved one, loss of mobility, worsening vision or hearing problems, disability, or lack of mobility or access to transportation, are at particular risk of loneliness and social isolation.

The world-wide pandemic has caused additional separation from friends or family.

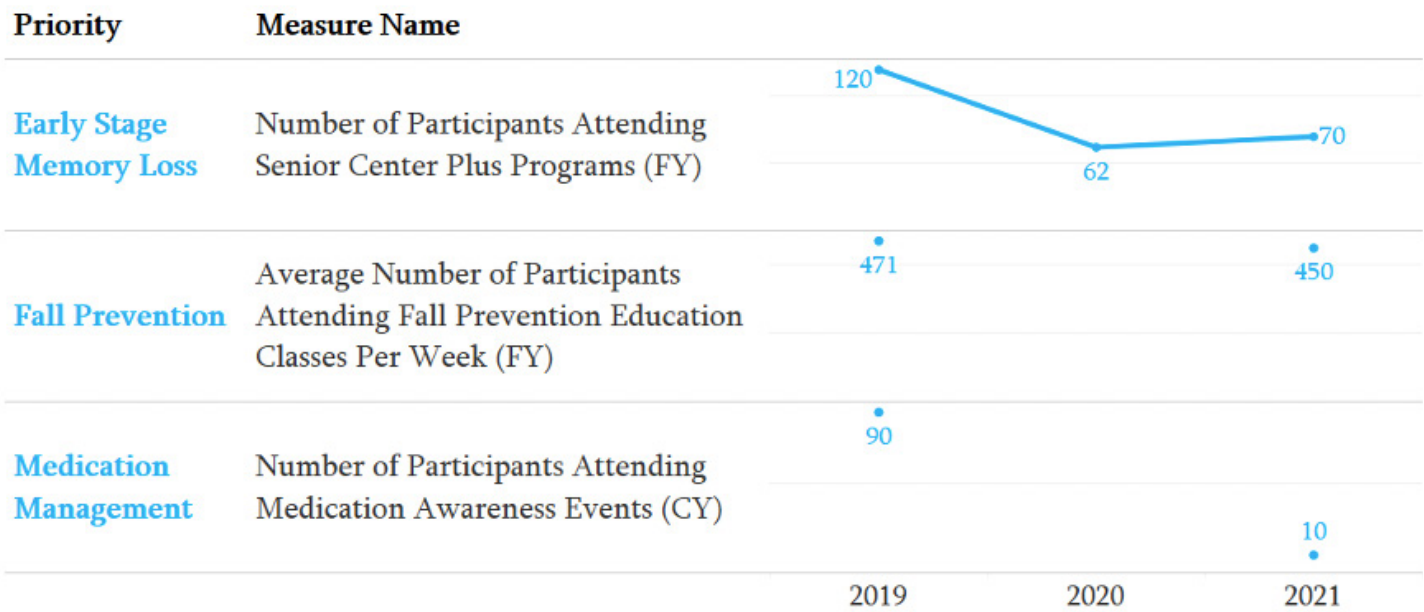
In 2021 the Commission on Aging held a successful webinar on social isolation. There were 220 people registered and 160 people participated. Participants mentioned that “Our Village will continue to do what it has been doing all along which is to provide opportunities for people to become members, to recruit more volunteers, to provide programs and events, and to keep people connected through our newsletters. Participants also mentioned that they will “reach out to anyone that I know is living alone or who does not have family close by.” Another significant comment was to help their neighbors become aware of County services and programs. The Social Isolation Committee of the Commission developed a fact sheet (see attached) and plans to support legislation that help protect and combat social isolation and foster more interaction with people who live alone.





## METRICS

Are we able to report on the metrics proposed in the Action Plan – or are there other quantitative insights/evidence that can be included to support the narratives?



FY20 data for the Number of Participants Attending Medication Awareness Events is not available. Fall prevention events did not occur in FY20 due to the COVID pandemic and, therefore, data for these events is not available. Number of Participants attending Senior Center Plus programs only includes Kensington Club programs.

## What have we learned?

### LESSONS LEARNED: BUILDING FROM WHAT WORKS AND CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

What have we learned over the past three years that should inform future activities?

#### NARRATIVE

Additional funding for the Health and Wellness programs mentioned is always helpful. One factor to consider is when the Recreation coordinator identifies a senior with memory loss in the free MCR 55 + Program and would like to refer he/ she into the social day program for memory loss. Since the social day club for early-stage memory loss is fee-based, the biggest challenge a senior might face would be paying for it. It is likely that 40% or more of their total income is being spent on housing. Many seniors 65 and older are surviving on only Social Security month-to-month.

The remaining money goes to transportation, healthcare, and food. A County voucher program (like Head Start for children) so that all seniors diagnosed with memory loss, despite income level, could then transfer from their MCR 55+ Program to the memory loss program, tailored to their needs, without interruption. Recreation directors and programs are identifying seniors with dementia at their centers every day. It is essential that a plan for referral is established right away to meet the need of the whole active senior in Montgomery County.

Another factor is that it takes up to three years for a new social day club for early-stage memory loss to build a steady referral base, especially in an under-served area. It is important for the County and JCA to establish communication and possible partnerships with area healthcare/agencies/businesses serving older adults to ensure everyone is aware of the continuum of activity for seniors who want to remain at their community/senior center.

Transportation is still a barrier for participation for many older adults in Montgomery County. It is essential that there be bus transportation coordination with the County, contractors, the county recreation director, and the early-stage memory loss club manager.

As COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, older adults will again need support in finding the ideal balance between in-person and virtual activities. As providers, it will be critical to embark on thoughtful outreach campaigns to motivate and provide, as need be, tailored support for older adults who have been significantly isolated over the last two years.

Our work group suffers because it has no natural advocate in the County budget process for financial or staff resources to support age-friendly employment. We suggest that Montgomery County commit to specific funding for this area of work, and that that funding build upon -- not replace -- what is already available.

## WHAT'S NEXT: EXTENDING PRIORITIES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES, AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Building from what we have learned and accomplished (or not) over the past three years, what do we want to collectively aspire to within this domain moving forward?

### NARRATIVE

This Committee is still interested in the issue of social isolation and in FY22 is looking at mental health issues related to social isolation. Our WISH partner from 2017-2019 (which was tasked with reducing avoidable hospital visits by connecting people aged 65-plus living in Montgomery County and parts of Prince George's County to the support and services they need to remain healthy and independent at home) lost their funding in 2020 as the COVID pandemic was surging in the county. This made it extremely difficult to deliver services in many of the senior apartment buildings in the County. County Nutrition and Health and Wellness staff worked closely with the Recreation Department, local hospitals, villages, and the Senior Planet program to help get meals and virtual programs

to County(delete County) older adults that were isolated and unable to go out of their homes due to the COVID pandemic.

For FY19-22, we will continue our Dental Program for Seniors, Active Aging Week activities and Walk MD Day. In 2019, we had over 95 programs highlighted during our first Active Aging Week and in 2020 we went virtual with County Cable TV holding all programs online. Even though it rained in 2021, Active Aging Week still held their Walk with a Doc at Brookside Gardens with over 50 participants, and the local centers held both in-person and virtual programs. There were also pop-up programs from the Department of Energy where residents could turn in their light bulbs and get advice on how to lower their electricity bill. We plan to continue this successful program every year.

# Housing

## MISSION

To ensure that Montgomery County’s older adults will have choices of dwelling types to meet the changing needs and preferences of this population. The County will support initiative to assist older adults to age in place, downsize, choose rental housing or home ownership. Further, the County will support housing with supportive services so that older adults can remain in their communities.

## What have we accomplished?

### STATUS OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES

To what extent has the County completed the planned activities for this domain as outlined in the Action Plan? (Please also credit “who” contributed to success –i.e., department, organization, etc.).

## PRIORITY

### EXPAND AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR SENIORS AT 30% OF AMI AND 40% OF AMI

### DEVELOP HOME SHARE MODEL

## NARRATIVE

### EXPAND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

#### St. Anne’s Senior – funding committed (2021)

County loan of \$2.5 million from Federal HOME funds will support new construction of a 76-unit affordable property on land controlled by St. Anne’s Episcopal Church in Damascus. Seven percent (5) of the units are for very low income up to 30% of the area median income (AMI), an additional 7% (5) for up to 50% of AMI, 83% (63) for up to 60% AMI and 3 % (3) up to 70% AMI.

#### North Montgomery Senior – funding committed (2021)

The County provided a HIF loan for new construction of 111 affordable housing units in Germantown—at least 15% of units for very low income, or 20 % for low income or 30% at MPDU income.

#### Sandy Spring Senior Village – funding committed (2021)

As an adaptive reuse, the County supported provided lending support to convert three commercial office buildings into 56 affordable housing units for seniors that included units available at 40% and 60% of AMI.

#### Silver Creek Senior Living – funding closed (2021)

The County provided a HIF loan and PILOT for new construction to achieve 94 affordable housing units for persons age 62+. It has 10 units available at 30 % of AMI, 69 units at 60% of AMI and 15 units at 80% of AMI.

#### Willow Manor at Fairland – ribbon-cutting (2020)

The County provided a HIF loan to achieve 60 affordable units among the total of 121 units for persons age 62+. Six at 30% AMI; six at 50% AMI; and 48 at 60% AMI. It opened in Fall 2020.

### HOME SHARE

The home share program launched in January 2022 and the COVID-19 pandemic proved a significant barrier for the program’s launch and

implementation. Housing Initiative Partnership, which was awarded the contract, successfully built a website, hired staff, developed a marketing plan and began offering intakes and matches. The program has three matches to date and staff has identified the need to provide low-income homeowners financial resources to get their homes ready to rent. We are currently working on a solution to this issue, which would increase the number of available homes for the program.

#### PRIORITY

### **INTRODUCE AGING IN PLACE & WRAP AROUND SERVICES FOR TAX CREDIT AFFORDABLE SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITIES**

### **INSTITUTE A WEATHERIZATION PROGRAM FOR SENIOR HOMEOWNERS**

### **PROMOTE SECURITY INSPECTIONS OF ALL TAX CREDIT AFFORDABLE SENIOR LIVING BUILDINGS**

#### NARRATIVE

#### **Weatherization Program**

The Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) approved and serviced 152 single family homeowners in the Pepco weatherization program. Of the 152 homes, 79% of the total serviced had a senior living at property or were senior homeowners. A total of 152 homes have been serviced in the Pepco weatherization program and 120 of those were senior homeowners or had someone living at the property age 62 and older. In 2022, the goal is between 150 – 175 program participants. Of that number, the goal for senior homeowners is 50%.

### **Promote Inspections of all Tax Credit Affordable Senior Living Buildings**

DHCA housing code inspections of multifamily properties, including senior living buildings, are handled systematically. At apartment buildings deemed compliant, a minimum of 25% of units are scheduled for inspection at least once every three years. At-risk properties are scheduled for inspection of 25% or more units on a more frequent basis. Troubled properties are subject to an annual inspection regime including 100% of units, as well as a requirement to develop a corrective action plan for violations found. Due to COVID-19, systematic inspections were limited to common areas, as residents did not want inspectors in their units; however, full building inspections were reinstated by July 2021 and continue apace.

#### PRIORITY

### **EXPLORE CREATION OF AN AFFORDABLE ASSISTED LIVING PROGRAM FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY SENIORS**

#### NARRATIVE

#### **Explore the creation of an affordable assisted living program for Montgomery County seniors**

DHCA convened a work group to look at the issue of affordable assisted living. The first meeting was held in September 2019. This effort was overtaken by the housing demands related to COVID-19. When DHCA hires a new senior fellow, this effort could be continued.



## OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITHIN DOMAIN

What else has the County accomplished in this domain beyond the planned activities?

### ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

#### SUPPORTED RENTERS AND LANDLORDS IMPACTED BY COVID TO AVOID EVICTIONS:

1. Provided COVID Rent Relief to landlords, on behalf of renters
2. Provided free Financial Counseling and Support for Renters
3. Provided free Legal Assistance for Renters.

These efforts were consistent with Best Practices that were identified by Maryland AG and the White House Summit.

### NARRATIVE

#### Connected Tenants and Landlords to Supports

In 2020 and 2021, County agencies and support organizations conducted broad, sustained outreach to renters, especially at-risk populations, and to landlords, who can reach tenants behind on rent. The consistent message for renters was: apply for rental assistance; contact a support organization for help with application; and call for free legal assistance. The breadth of such outreach and communications is demonstrated by the substantial number of applications received and fulfilled: By Nov. 2021, \$65M of COVID-19 assistance was provided to more than 9,100 renter households. As surveys indicate a rolling monthly average of 15,000-20,000 renters behind on rent, the County continued working to

reach even more at-risk renters and landlords.

#### Best Practices

This overall approach for outreach, counseling and legal assistance for tenants addresses best practice recommendations from the Maryland Attorney General's Task Force and the White House Summit. Since 2020, Montgomery County's approach has been consistent with the 2022 Maryland Attorney General's Task force recommendations [2022 Maryland Attorney General's Task Force recommendations](#) for early and ongoing outreach; uniform messaging; targeting those most likely eligible; using various and trusted messengers; mix of print, digital and in-person; centralized number and website; coordinating agencies and nonprofits; adequate and bilingual staffing; and avoiding disruptive displacement. Further, Montgomery County's approach since 2020 has been consistent with the [2021 White House Summit recommendations](#), which called for targeted outreach to vulnerable tenants; providing renters access to counseling, navigator and legal services; diverting evictions; and connecting renters and landlords to available resources.



## METRICS

Are we able to report on the metrics proposed in the Action Plan – or are there other quantitative insights/evidence that can be included to support the narratives?

### PRIORITY

## EXPAND AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR SENIORS AT 30% OF AMI AND 40% OF AMI

## DEVELOP HOME SHARE MODEL

### NARRATIVE

**Expand affordable housing options** for seniors at 30% and 40% area median income (AMI):

- St. Anne’s Senior – 76 units; five at 30%, five at 50%, and 63 at 60% of AMI
- North Montgomery Senior – 111 units; 30 at 40% of AMI

- Sandy Spring Senior Village – 56 units at 40% to 60% of AMI
- Silver Creek Senior Living – 94 units for seniors; 10 at 30% of AMI
- Willow Manor at Fairland – 121 units; six at 30% of AMI

### Develop Home Share model

Contractor has been identified; three matches have been identified, with plans underway for contractor to assist homeowners in getting their homes ready to rent.

## What have we learned?

### LESSONS LEARNED: BUILDING FROM WHAT WORKS AND CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

What have we learned over the past three years that should inform future activities?

### NARRATIVE

Given that many renters were behind on rent and at risk of losing their housing during the pandemic, it was critical to focus on strategies to prevent evictions. At the same time, the County continued working to protect, preserve and produce affordable housing. As pandemic impacts recede, it’s important to identify, and address, the ways the crisis made things even tougher for people who already lived with severe housing cost burdens. That includes a need for continued support for tenants in avoiding eviction and homelessness, i.e., tenant financial counseling, free legal assistance, and emergency housing assistance.

At the same time, we need to redouble efforts to protect, preserve and produce affordable housing. With a growing senior population in Montgomery County, these efforts continue to address housing for those age 62+ - especially for people with incomes up to 30% and 40% of AMI.

Regarding affordable housing, there are more than 20,000 households in our county who are earning up to \$31,000/year (30% AMI) who are severely housing cost burdened. Further, the Planning Department predicted we could lose up to 11,000 affordable housing units by 2030.

To address this challenge, we need to continue preserving existing affordable housing – because affordable units lost to rising rents cannot be replaced with new construction for the same cost – and, because we need to protect tenants living in these buildings from being displaced.

To further expand affordable housing efforts, the County increased the FY23 capital lending budget for affordable housing to \$100 million – more than two-and-a-half times any prior year funding. That level of lending can preserve and produce up to about 2,000 affordable housing units, per year.

## WHAT'S NEXT: EXTENDING PRIORITIES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES, AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Building from what we have learned and accomplished (or not) over the past three years, what do we want to collectively aspire to within this domain moving forward?

### NARRATIVE

#### Affordable Housing

The County must continue expanding and leveraging all available tools and financial resources to protect, preserve and produce affordable housing, especially for 20,000 renter households earning up to 30% AMI who are spending more than half their income on rent.

#### Home Share

Staff at the Housing Initiative Partnership identified a need to provide financial resources to low-income homeowners to get their homes ready to rent.

#### Supports for Renters

The County needs to maintain free tenant counseling services and free legal assistance for renters, which was initiated during COVID-19 and remains critical to helping tenants, including older tenants, to avoid eviction and remain housed.



# Planning, Open Spaces, Parks and Community Buildings

## MISSION

To “change the way we age” by enabling older adults to stay active to the fullest extent possible within all areas of life: physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, vocational, social, and environmental. Aging within these dimensions of wellness keeps us alert and enjoying a productive life (Adopted from the International Committee on Active Aging.)

## What have we accomplished?

### STATUS OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES

To what extent has the County completed the planned activities for this domain as outlined in the Action Plan? (Please also credit “who” contributed to success –i.e., department, organization, etc.).

## PRIORITY

### EXPLORE HOW TO ADDRESS SENIOR FACILITIES IN COMMUNITY PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND THE GENERAL PLAN

The plan will recommend strategies for increasing pedestrian safety and accessibility for residents of all ages and will account for residents who use canes, walkers, strollers, wheelchairs, etc.

## NARRATIVE

1. The General Plan (Thrive 2050) has been reviewed by the Planning Board and the County Council’s Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) committee. Themes of the general plan include a vibrant economy, equity for all residents, and a healthy environment. The PHED draft of the general plan recognizes the importance of healthy living for seniors, especially as the senior population continues to grow. The plan recommends improved housing choices in compact, complete communities that can help improve public health for all, including seniors. The general plan is expected to be approved and adopted by the Council in the fall of 2022.
2. The Planning Department is developing a Pedestrian Master Plan to improve pedestrian conditions countywide.

## PRIORITY

### CONTINUE PARTICIPATION ON COUNTY-WIDE TASK FORCES DEVELOPING INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS THAT ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY RESIDENTS WHO ARE 60 AND BETTER

## NARRATIVE

Staff from the Planning and Parks Departments are currently involved in task forces including, but not limited to Age-Friendly Montgomery and Healthy Montgomery.



**PRIORITY**

**CONTINUE ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION DURING THE DESIGN PROCESS TO ENSURE NEW FACILITIES ARE AGE-FRIENDLY THROUGH INCLUSIVE, UNIVERSAL DESIGN PRACTICES**

**NARRATIVE**

The Department of Parks is adding multi-generational fitness equipment to all playgrounds in the playground renovation program.

**PRIORITY**

**HIRE AN INCLUSION SERVICES AND OUTREACH SPECIALIST**

**NARRATIVE**

The Montgomery County Department of Parks has hired a specialist who will be coordinating inclusive programs and events throughout the park system to be welcoming to all citizens.

**PRIORITY**

**EXPLORE POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CO-LOCATION OF SENIOR CENTERS IN MULTI-PURPOSE SPACE OR CO-LOCATION WITH COMPATIBLE PUBLIC FACILITIES**

**NARRATIVE**

Referencing studies examining types of public facilities in the county that could benefit from colocation of senior activities, in support of the concept of building complete communities such as the “Colocation White Paper” (2015) and the “Colocation of Public Facilities” (April 2018) commissioned by the Montgomery County Planning Department.

**OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITHIN DOMAIN**

What else has the County accomplished in this domain beyond the planned activities?

**ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE**

**PICKLEBALL COURTS**

**NARRATIVE**

The pickleball study concluded April 2019 to locate service needs and gaps, user preference for facility location and design, and service delivery strategies for fast-track implementation. Twelve parks currently have pickleball facilities that serve residents, in addition to a wide range of other age groups, and additional pickleball facilities are planned for five parks.

**ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE**

**MULTI-GENERATIONAL PARK IN ROCK SPRING**

**NARRATIVE**

The Planning Department and the Parks Department partnered with Erickson Living to design a 1.75-acre intergenerational park next to the future Erickson on the former Marriot Headquarters in Bethesda. Erickson Living will construct the Park, which will eventually be dedicated to the Parks Department.

ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

### MONTGOMERY PARKS ACCESS TEAM SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT (JANUARY-JUNE 2021)

NARRATIVE

This [document](#) highlights progress in the Park’s Departments efforts to plan, build and remove barriers in parks and facilities, and program for and engage with members of the community with disabilities.

ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

### PARK’S ACCESSIBILITY WEB TOOL

NARRATIVE

This [tool](#) allows users to find parks and trails based on accessibility features.

ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

### MONTGOMERY EXPLORERS

NARRATIVE

This is an organized walking club sponsored by Montgomery Parks for residents 50 and older of all fitness levels and abilities. The program encourages participants to maintain a healthy way of life and explore unique areas while engaging in a walking challenge.

## METRICS

Are we able to report on the metrics proposed in the Action Plan – or are there other quantitative insights/evidence that can be included to support the narratives?

Priority

Measure Name

Planning, Parks, and Open Spaces

Percent of residents aged 55+ satisfied with Montgomery County open spaces (CY)



Percent of residents aged 55+ satisfied with Montgomery County parks (CY)



2017 2019 2021

Note: The National Community Survey that collects resident satisfaction data was not conducted in 2018 or 2020.

# What have we learned?

## LESSONS LEARNED: BUILDING FROM WHAT WORKS AND CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

What have we learned over the past three years that should inform future activities?

### NARRATIVE

Partnering with other County agencies or private companies will be essential to deliver new facilities and programs. Also, in general, the programs and amenities provided need to be inclusive to all ages and abilities and not specifically geared to one segment of the population.

The older adult population is growing and will affect the development of parks, trails, and the types of park programming in the coming years.

## WHAT'S NEXT: EXTENDING PRIORITIES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES, AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Building from what we have learned and accomplished (or not) over the past three years, what do we want to collectively aspire to within this domain moving forward?

### NARRATIVE

- To identify initiatives and programs that enhance the quality of life for Montgomery County residents who are 60 and older as a part of every master plan, sector plan, and parks initiative.
- To increase communication about available programs and amenities.
- To stay informed about the latest trends in senior friendly design and programming.



# Public Safety Workgroup

## MISSION

To provide physical, financial, technological protection and safety for older adults.

## What have we accomplished?

### STATUS OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES

To what extent has the County completed the planned activities for this domain as outlined in the Action Plan? (Please also credit “who” contributed to success –i.e., department, organization, etc.).

#### PRIORITY

### DEVELOP A MASTER CALENDAR FOR EVENTS AND OUTREACH (OFFICE OF CONSUMER PROTECTION, OCP)

#### NARRATIVE

The Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) has worked with the Department of Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions (DTEBS) personnel on designing a master calendar. The initial phase was fact gathering on participants, parameters of calendar needs, and technological limitations. A special focus was paid to security concerns if the calendar would include non-governmental participants. It has been determined that a Sharepoint calendar can be used to accommodate County participants, but a Google or other external calendar would be required if nonprofit and other third-party participants were to be included. A decision was made by the Work Group’s leadership to use Google for its calendar. This Calendar has been created.

#### PRIORITY

### DEVELOP A PUBLIC SAFETY MASTER CHECKLIST/BROCHURE (MC POLICE DEPARTMENT, MCPD)

#### NARRATIVE

MCPD’s Keeping Seniors Safe program has a website that contains numerous brochures and links on a myriad of senior topics. The Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (OEMHS) similarly has a website with numerous brochures and links. The OCP primarily uses third-party brochures from the Federal Trade Commission, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Consumers Union, etc. on topics relevant to the older community. Its own brochures and materials on topics of general interest to the public at large are available on its website under the “Media” tab. Similarly, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) has materials for older residents on its website and has recently updated the website to include (a) verified links to both County and external resources and information, and (b) Spanish language translation to all parts of the website. The plan is to collect all these materials to have a “checklist” of all possible educational materials to be used in outreach events. That way, at an event held by MCFRS, materials available from OEMHS, the Police Department (MCPD) and OCP could be immediately retrieved to supplement the educational curriculum.



**PRIORITY**

## **INITIATE A PUBLIC SAFETY SENIOR FORUM FOR AGENCIES (FRS)**

**NARRATIVE**

Due to COVID-19 all in-person events were suspended in 2020 and 2021. During this time OEMHS, FRS and MCPD were three of the primary responding agencies to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this response there was special attention paid to the 55 and over

community, as many of these residents were disproportionately affected by the virus. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the many County resources were deployed to help directly address the disparities affecting the 55 and over community's effects of COVID-19. This included specific distributions of personal protective equipment (masks, gloves and hand sanitizer), testing, and vaccinations directed toward this community and working to overcome potential barriers.

## **OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITHIN DOMAIN**

What else has the County accomplished in this domain beyond the planned activities?

**ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE**

### **HOME SAFETY**

**NARRATIVE**

OEMHS has utilized the NextDoor platform, in addition to more traditional social media platforms, to promote home safety initiatives. As soon as Montgomery County and The State of Maryland declared a Public Health Emergency, MCFRS and MCPD pivoted to remote means of providing group educational programs (utilizing Zoom, Teams, and similar platforms).

MCFRS Home Safety Checks were also modified to remote means and accomplished by using FaceTime, phone calls, and texts (with photos). When situations were identified in which a residence had no working smoke alarms, MCFRS personnel wearing appropriate PPE would complete an abbreviated, in-person Home Safety Check. Overall numbers declined from previous reporting periods as a result of the pandemic, yet MCFRS was able to achieve the following results in the period from March 2020 until December 2021:

- 233 Home Safety Checks performed
- 323 Smoke Alarms installed

MCPD Community Meetings were primarily held remotely throughout the pandemic. The department recorded 535 events during this time. When responding to in-person events or professional calls for service, interactions took place outside and using social distancing as much as possible.

**ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE**

### **EDUCATION**

**NARRATIVE**

Due to COVID-19 most education opportunities were suspended. Occasional virtual trainings were provided. As with so many other programs, MCFRS quickly pivoted as the pandemic started. First, MCFRS Senior Outreach staff began providing presentations to groups via Zoom and other remote platforms. These groups included: Villages, neighborhood and civic Associations, high-rise residential buildings, realtors and other professional organizations, healthcare provider agencies and companies, and retiree groups. During CY2020, MCFRS Senior Outreach conducted 34 of these remote events with 1475 contacts. And in CY2021, we held 58 events with

2891 County residents attending. Next, once HHS started robust drive-up and walk-up COVID testing sites, MCFRS personnel wearing PPE provided File of Life packets and fire prevention information at COVID testing sites throughout the County. During these events, MCFRS personnel were able to provide these information packets to 2030 residents. Finally, as Montgomery County has continued to emerge from the pandemic, we have started to see a steady increase in the number and type of in-person education events. One such example is the return of the annual “Friendship Picnic”, sponsored by Montgomery County Parks and supported by other Age Friendly Public Safety Work Group member Departments.

Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) outreach and education efforts continued during FY20-FY21 throughout the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic. During this timeframe, County employees and residents changed workflows and operating procedures from in-person interactions

to mostly remote video interactions as software solutions like Zoom and Microsoft Teams became ubiquitous in business operations. All County occupants and workplaces were affected by this pandemic which reduced the demand for presentations. Senior communities adapted with new resources and skill sets to support a virtual environment, and the County simultaneously crafted more support options for the virtual space. During this period, OCP provided 22 presentations to the senior community through Senior Centers, Villages, and various senior-focused organizations and events.

**ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE**

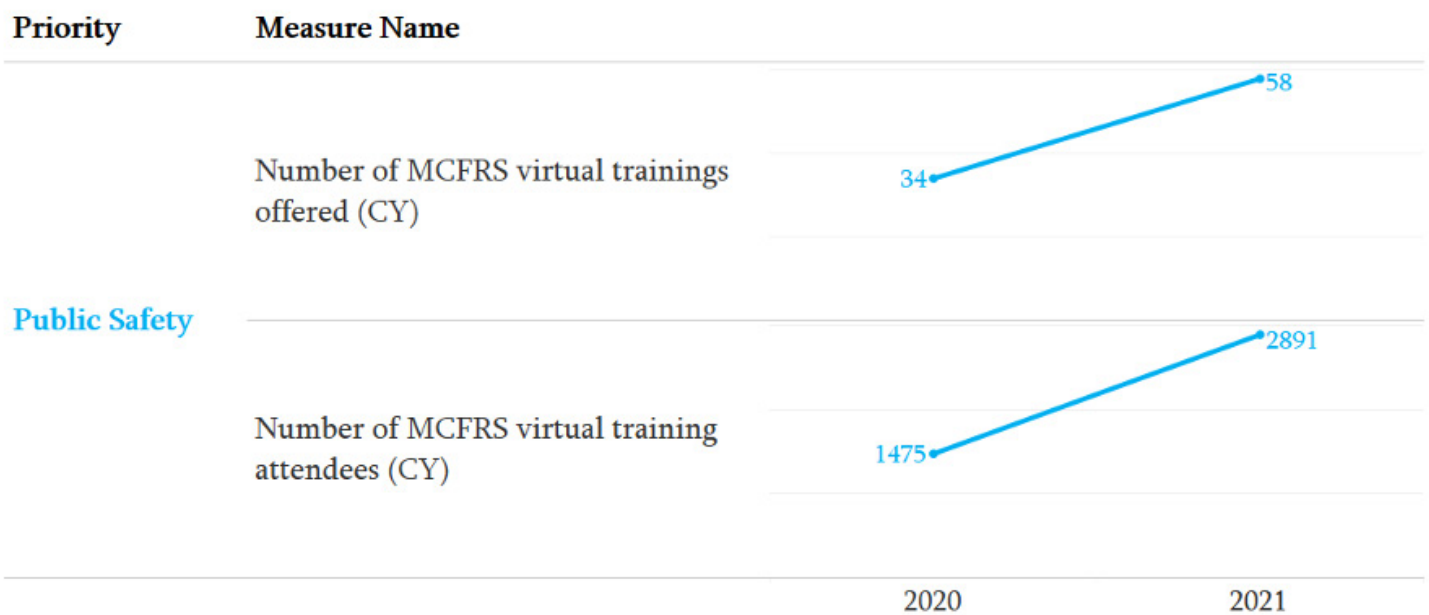
**PEDESTRIAN SAFETY/DRIVER SAFETY**

**NARRATIVE**

The focal point for Pedestrian Safety continues to be the Vision Zero Team, including representatives from MCPD and MCFRS.

**METRICS**

Are we able to report on the metrics proposed in the Action Plan – or are there other quantitative insights/evidence that can be included to support the narratives?



**PRIORITY**

**DEVELOP A MASTER CALENDAR FOR EVENTS AND OUTREACH (OCP)**

**PROPOSED METRIC**

Ad hoc coordination with agencies and nonprofits, primarily operating via word-of-mouth and researching/networking has greatly increased the outreach to the community and the service provided. Without statistics gathering by all workgroup members on outreach, and a comparison of statistics before and after the start of this ad hoc coordination, only experiential data and subjective assessments are possible.

**PRIORITY**

**DEVELOP A PUBLIC SAFETY MASTER CHECKLIST/BROCHURE (MCPD)**

**PROPOSED METRIC**

The purpose of this checklist is for internal convenience and efficiency. Metrics are not strictly necessary. However, website analytics could be used to see how often the relevant website pages have been accessed, if needed.

**PRIORITY**

**INITIATE A PUBLIC SAFETY SENIOR FORUM FOR AGENCIES (FRS)**

**PROPOSED METRIC**

- The first Meet & Greet Workshop for the Public Safety Working Group was held in 2016 with attendees representing all departments and agencies that service this work group, speakers from each of the member organizations, a Q & A session and a chance to meet and discuss issues across department lines. The goal of this Workshop was to foster an understanding of the range of services offered by each department to address the special needs of vulnerable seniors. The post-workshop evaluations demonstrated that this was accomplished.
- To date, the Public Safety Work Group has been unable to coordinate another Workshop. While the value of this program is recognized, the logistics and funding realities have not been overcome. Planning and executing a Workshop will continue to be a priority for the Public Safety Working Group going forward.

## What have we learned?

### LESSONS LEARNED: BUILDING FROM WHAT WORKS AND CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

What have we learned over the past three years that should inform future activities?

**NARRATIVE**

**Fire Rescue Services**

When it comes to senior public safety, the power and importance of partnerships cannot be overemphasized. This must occur at all levels of government. There must be a sustained, thoughtful, results-driven effort to embrace and expand upon the collaborative and cooperative,

wholistic approach to senior public safety. This must be reflected in the leadership of County departments that provide senior public safety services, and those that work for those departments.

There is a need to sustain and expand upon the ability for all departments involved with senior public safety to provide “crossover” of information and resources for those seeking

or in need of services or information. When a representative of one of the senior public safety departments has an interaction with a vulnerable senior resident, it is imperative that those providing the services be (1) aware of the range of risks that the resident is facing, and (2) that the representative be aware of the departments that can provide services to address the specific need(s) of the resident. This can occur at community events such as senior health and safety fairs, or in more personal settings such as an Adult Protective Services evaluation or a home safety check survey by FRS or MCP. In fact, the priorities and projects of public safety often require working with agencies outside this task force. For example, education and financial safety might require coordination with HHS's Aging and Disability Services or its Adult Protective Services departments. Working on pedestrian and driver safety requires coordination with Department of Transportation.

### **Data Analytics**

Historically, tracking of activities using data to direct educational efforts has been a time-consuming and challenging process due to reporting systems that were not integrated. MCFRS is in the final stages of designing an App that will address these challenges and will provide a smart system to capture real-time, geo-based data and intelligent metrics and analytics to efficiently and strategically document efforts by area, street address, organization and demographic. The use of "big data" has been shown to be a highly effective means of bringing the correct resources to the right place and providing critical data to direct resources to better serve vulnerable populations in Montgomery County. This needs to be an ongoing, funded priority.

MCFRS has continued to move ahead with using data to fight fires. During this performance period, the department has begun to roll out the use of a new mobile application that can better track activities associated with community risk

reduction efforts, including senior outreach-related activities and events, "After the Fire" home visits, community presentations and events, and other activities. MCFRS has also been chosen by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to be a demonstration community for the "CRAIG 1300" program. This innovative program allows for visualization of community risk assessment data and information, providing everyone from MCFRS members to elected officials and the general public with a clear understanding of the needs and challenges facing the community.

### **Community Risk Reduction**

The department's priority on creating a culture of community risk reduction starts with the recruits. Since 2017, the FRS Community Outreach Section has provided a full day of educational training in community risk reduction (with an emphasis on fire and injury prevention for seniors) to every recruit class. Over 150 new career firefighter/rescuers have received both classroom and field experience on senior fire safety. Because seniors are the most frequent users of MCFRS fire and EMS services, this critical program must be sustained and expanded.

The department will continue to build on and expand its collaborative approach, partnering with other organizations such as Meals on Wheels, faith-based organizations, Rebuilding Together, hospitals, home/visiting nursing programs, and other agencies that have trusted, well-established relationships with seniors and vulnerable, high-risk populations.

### **Frequent 911 Callers**

There has been a growing focus on reducing the number of frequent users of the 911 Emergency System as a means of decreasing healthcare costs and reducing the strain on Emergency Medical Services (EMS) resources. Frequent, repeat EMS users are a diverse group of individuals including senior citizens with a wide range of medical, behavioral and social challenges and account for a disproportionate



number of non-urgent EMS calls and transports. MCFRS has done extensive work to pre-plan for the future of “paramedicine” by partnering with local hospitals and County agencies to address the needs of the County’s aging population. The department has successfully deployed a multi-disciplinary team as part of the overall initiative to reduce the impact of “frequent users” of the 911 system for non-emergency situations, providing further evidence that senior safety is not “one size fits all” and that thinking progressively and focusing on high-risk audiences collaboratively will result in lives saved.

**MCFRS has developed, implemented, and improved** its ability to recognize and work with frequent 911 users through the Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) program. Now employing the services of two full-time paramedics to supplement the efforts of a manager, a social worker, and a registered nurse.

Statistically, older citizens are more likely to die in home fires than the rest of the population and the risk more than doubles for people 75 and older. As the fire department focuses on the County’s rapidly growing population of seniors who are choosing to “age in place” and are often the largest users of the 911 system, the fire chief has



instituted an “Every Call/Every Alarm” initiative which results in first responders checking a home’s smoke alarms to ensure they are working and up-to-date following the medical call.

Solutions to fire and injury problems can be complex. Community engagement and partnerships serve as a force multiplier to reach high-risk residents. Through the Senior Public Safety Work Group of the Age-Friendly Montgomery County program, staff have worked diligently to ensure progressive public education and community risk reduction programs are in place despite the staffing reductions and budgetary challenges of the current fiscal year.

### **Office of Consumer Protection**

Shared education and outreach efforts have operated on an ad hoc basis and in prior years have been able to address seniors in Mandarin and Korean at the Chinese Senior Center and the Korean Senior Center. This is in addition to outreach and education seminars at Villages, houses of worship, retirement communities (e.g., Homecrest House, Ingleside and Asbury, etc.), senior centers, civic groups, etc. This work group should continue to coordinate and network with other agencies to support the work and expand its reach. While the Department of Technology Services recommended the Sharepoint calendar for internal users, the Public Safety Taskforce recommended, and the work group leadership approved, the Google calendar function so that external stakeholder-members of the workgroup could participate. This Google environment has been created and work group members are encouraged to use them.

### **Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security**

The Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (OEMHS) often partners with the other member departments of the Senior Public Safety Work Group by providing the personal preparedness perspective at various outreach events,

including those targeting the County's senior population. OEMHS has participated in tabling events geared toward seniors, including the 50+ Employment Expo and the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day event, and continues to seek opportunities to reach out to the County's aging population to help them be better prepared for emergencies. OEMHS supports the shared Google calendar that will enable each of our member organizations be informed and aware of upcoming outreach opportunities.

One of OEMHS's most popular publications is the Community Preparedness Workbook, which provides County residents with an easy-to-use template for developing a basic personal emergency preparedness plan. In addition, we have developed an expanded version that addresses the unique planning needs of those with access and functional needs. OEMHS recognizes that many seniors who have immigrated from other countries are not totally proficient in the English language. To address this, both publications are available, both in hard copy and on the OEMHS website, in Spanish, French, simplified Chinese, Amharic, Korean, Russian, and Vietnamese. In addition, the Access & Functional Needs Preparedness workbook is also available in hard copy in Braille.



## Montgomery County Police Department

Keeping Seniors Safe (KSS) is a program that has been developed in conjunction with the Volunteer Resources Section (VRS) of the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD). The KSS program was established to increase awareness of safety issues within the senior community and to provide guidance and resources to seniors' issues. The program draws its origins from AmeriCorps, a voluntary civil society program supported by the U.S. federal government.

While the charter and focus of the team are for the County's senior population, the information provided by KSS would generally apply to any adult. Topics included in a KSS presentation include safety tips, fraud, scam and identity theft identification and prevention, who to call for services in Montgomery County and home preparedness in case of a sudden emergency.

All administrative functions for the team are handled by VRS. While the VRS Director has management and oversight responsibilities, the KSS team operates almost entirely without MCPD civilian nor sworn-officer presence. This unique situation exists due to the sheer number of KSS presentations and the fact that they can be held anywhere in the County at practically any time.

### Training

The goal of the KSS team is to raise awareness of the topics presented and supplement the presentation with educational brochures, handouts, website links, etc. for the audience to then use at their discretion afterward.

Although there is no formal training program nor certification process there are multiple training materials available for each team member. These include the KSS website which has multiple resources including a template of a presentation script, and numerous links to law enforcement and other organizations with tips and information on KSS-related topics.

The brochures and handouts the team provides

to the public in its presentations can also be used as training materials. Team members are encouraged to be aware of current frauds and scams and to do their own research on those topics.

Occasionally, organizations such as AARP, FINRA (Financial Industry Regulatory Authority), and other partner organizations will provide professional training for law enforcement entities, including KSS. This training may be available either on-site or on-line. KSS members are also eligible for any/all training offered to MCPD volunteers and interns.

### **Customers**

Approximately 75% of the KSS team events are presentations given to a variety of citizen groups throughout Montgomery County. Those citizen groups are made up of retiree organizations, churches and religious organizations, community activist groups, and senior groups that meet at County recreation and senior centers.

Those presentations reach over 1,000 County citizens per year.

The remaining 25% of the team's events are those where KSS staff vendor tables to hand out team advertisement materials and engages with the general public. Those events can be hosted by either State and/or County government organizations or community groups. Hundreds of citizens may visit our table at any one of those events. In addition. Those events have proven very valuable in increasing community awareness of the KSS program.

### **Mission Partners**

The KSS team interacts with several entities in performing its duties. Included (but limited to) are MCPD Community Services Officers (CSOs), MCPD Financial Crimes, MCPD Community Engagement, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services (MCFRS), United States Postal Inspector Service (USPIS), and allied Montgomery County City Police Departments, including Rockville, Takoma Park, Chevy Chase Village, and Gaithersburg.





## WHAT'S NEXT: EXTENDING PRIORITIES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES, AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Building from what we have learned and accomplished (or not) over the past three years, what do we want to collectively aspire to within this domain moving forward?

### NARRATIVE

As the community begins emerging from earlier pandemic restrictions, it will be important to:

1. Gain a better understanding of how people “hear” us and the information we need to relay. The more conduits and mechanisms for information dissemination, the harder it seems to reach the older adults in our community. A broader survey by the County on how people hear from the County on important topics might be useful in focusing messaging.
2. Continue to assess the public’s readiness for in-person activities vs. its willingness to participate in virtual forums, recognizing that many older residents have become newly accustomed to and comfortable with participating in on-line activities and others may still be fearful of public gatherings.
3. Continue to explore new opportunities for both in-person and virtual educational and information sessions with the public
4. Continue to seek new partnerships with County and community organizations that further expand our abilities to reach the public, including ethnic, faith-based, and harder to reach communities





# Transportation and Mobility

## MISSION

To provide public and private transportation and mobility systems that enable older adults to go safely where they want to go, when they want to go.

## What have we accomplished?

### STATUS OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES

To what extent has the County completed the planned activities for this domain as outlined in the Action Plan? (Please also credit “who” contributed to success –i.e., department, organization, etc.).

#### PRIORITY

### ACCESSIBILITY

#### NARRATIVE

1. Continue to tweak use of the Transportation Services Improvement Fund (TSIF) to further incentivize drivers to lease/drive wheelchair accessible taxis.
2. Enabled residents to request pick-ups by Ride On FLEX via traditional telephone.

2. Pursued/received COG/Enhanced Mobility federal funding to allow lower co-pays for Call-n-Ride (subsidized taxi program for low-income older adults and residents with disabilities).
3. Using COG/Enhanced Mobility federal funding to provide free taxi trips for COVID-related trips
4. Continue to apply/receive COG/Enhanced Mobility federal funding to support and expand network of organizations providing mostly free volunteer transportation.

#### PRIORITY

### AFFORDABILITY

#### NARRATIVE

1. Expanded free hours for Ride On and most Metrobus routes in the county to all hours of operation for older adults and residents with disabilities.

#### PRIORITY

### AWARENESS

#### NARRATIVE

Aggressively promoted free taxi for COVID-related trips via advertising, social media, County website, etc.

## OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITHIN DOMAIN

What else has the County accomplished in this domain beyond the planned activities?

### ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

#### VISION ZERO

### NARRATIVE

County hired a full-time Vision Zero Coordinator to work toward the vision of zero traffic-related deaths in the county. The Vision Zero coordinator also coordinates the Fatal Crash Review Team, which seeks to understand all factors involved in fatalities.

### ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

#### TRAVEL TRAINING

### NARRATIVE

County applied for and was awarded a COG/Enhanced Mobility federal grant to train residents on how to use the fixed route transit system via a dedicated bus and mobility specialists.

### ACTIVITY / INITIATIVE

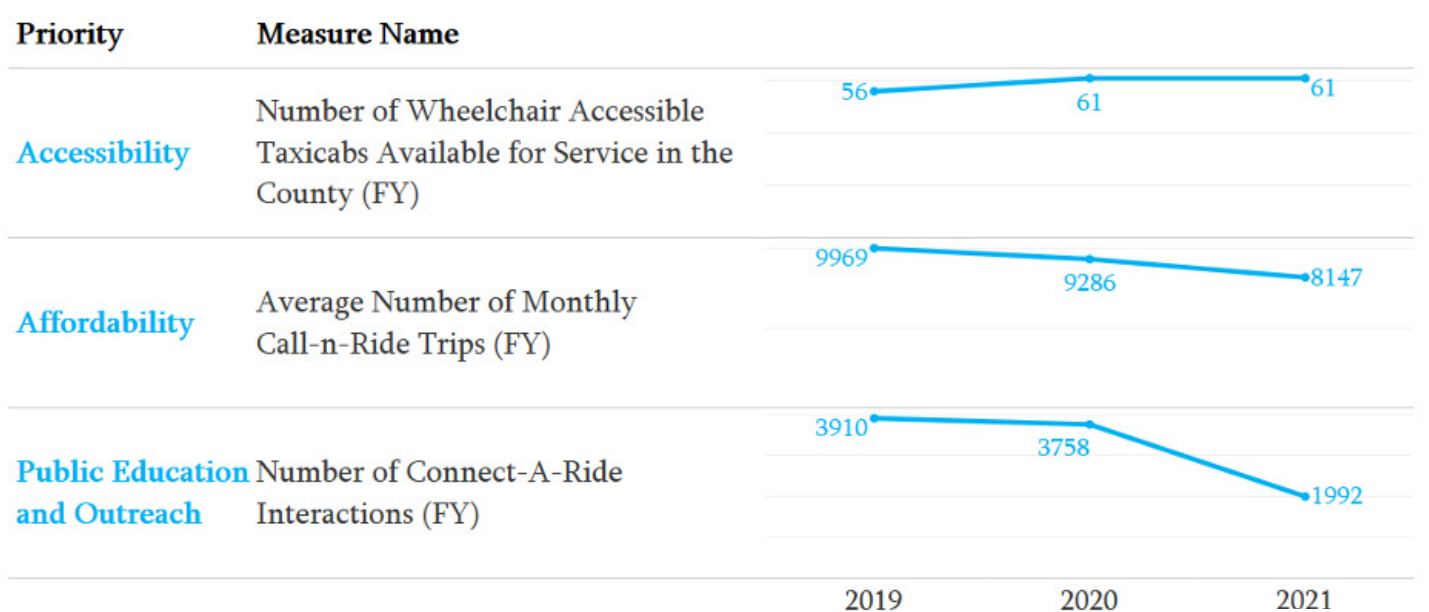
#### MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION

### NARRATIVE

The Office of Legislative Oversight produced a report called *Transportation Barriers to Medical Appointments* in November 2021. A “Corrective Action Plan” is in process.

## METRICS

Are we able to report on the metrics proposed in the Action Plan – or are there other quantitative insights/evidence that can be included to support the narratives?



# What have we learned?

## LESSONS LEARNED: BUILDING FROM WHAT WORKS AND CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

What have we learned over the past three years that should inform future activities?

### NARRATIVE

The pandemic understandably impacted older adults' need for, and comfort with, travelling away from their homes, and the numbers reflect that. It may have also impacted the comfort level of drivers to be in close proximity to other people. In addition, the economic ripple effects

of the pandemic resulted in serious driver shortages. The long-term consequences of this driver shortage are hard to predict but may demand new approaches to ensuring mobility for older adults. Also, awareness, affordability and accessibility are important, of course, but if passengers feel unsafe or disrespected, they will not use the services.

## WHAT'S NEXT: EXTENDING PRIORITIES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES, AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Building from what we have learned and accomplished (or not) over the past three years, what do we want to collectively aspire to within this domain moving forward?

### NARRATIVE

Because participants in volunteer-provided transportation report consistently good service, the County should help recruit volunteer drivers for the organizations who use them.

The County should determine how to ensure transportation is available when needed for people needing wheelchair accessible transportation and for those needing transportation to medical appointments.

Collaboration is needed with the new DOT ambassador, who will focus on reaching underserved populations with transportation information.





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A COMMUNITY FOR A LIFETIME

DECEMBER 2022



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**