

CVCOA Needs Assessment Fiscal Year 2019 – 2022

There are approximately 26,000 people age 60+ living in the 54 towns of the central Vermont region. Those over 60 are the fastest growing demographic in Vermont, and the proportion of those age 65+ will double between 2000 and 2030 to 25%. From our experience, while many older people are active, healthy and satisfied with their situation, others lack resources and physical capabilities to meet their basic needs. Some face serious health challenges, suffer from poor nutrition, lack strong social connections, confront boredom and inactivity, and live in unsafe circumstances. The challenges of aging make it difficult for these older Vermonters to maintain their quality of life without some support. We know that threats to living independently include poverty, high housing costs, living alone or with chronic disease, low physical activity, depression, dementia and inability to handle home chores or maintenance. Many older Vermonters rely on family caregivers, but this is emotionally and physically exhausting work, often performed by older individuals in poor health

A statewide needs assessment was conducted by Kelly Melekis, MSW, PhD. Surveys and interviews of older adults, service providers, key stakeholders, and focus groups indicated that the most commonly identified concerns, challenges and recommendations include:

- Financial security of individuals
- Funding for programs supporting older Vermonters
- Health Care/Long Term Care
- More affordable housing options
- Improve and increase transportation options for both services and socialization
- Maintaining independence and dignity
- In-home assistance, including home repairs and modifications
- Information access and coordination including simplifying paperwork and public awareness

More locally, analysis of CVCOA's topic codes from Fiscal Year 2017 calls to our Senior HelpLine show slightly different priority areas for those calling for information or assistance, although certainly there are some overlaps. In order of numbers of topic areas, the most prevalent issues were:

- Medicare assistance
- Public benefits (excluding fuel)
- Nutrition/meals
- Fuel Assistance
- Financial Assistance
- Housing
- Caregiver support

- Dementia services
- Health Insurance (excluding Medicare)
- Transportation

Additionally, review of the needs assessments conducted by our service area hospitals (Copley Hospital and Gifford Medical Center in 2015, and Central Vermont Medical Center in 2016) show that the focus areas in both our area plan and strategic plan address issues that were identified in these documents. In the Central Vermont Medical Center catchment area, the percentage of adults eating the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables has decreased in the last 10 years and adult obesity has increased. In the Gifford catchment area, adult obesity and addiction issues are higher than the statewide average, and 28% indicate that “aging diseases” are a concern for them. In the Copley Hospital catchment area, the cost of health care, lack of opportunities for physical exercise, lack of social connections and chronic health conditions are of greater concern.

It can be challenging to coordinate care services, especially for those who need comprehensive services to maintain their quality of life. Service providers indicated that lack of and decreased funding, coupled with increasing numbers of older Vermonters, hampers their ability to support those in need. Restrictions on funding, antiquated data systems and bureaucratic roadblocks contribute to these challenges.

The gap between the identified needs and service capacity requires innovative strategies that will engage both provider agencies and the broader communities to work for collective impact in supporting older adults. CVCOA’s Strategic Plan (in process of being revised) lays out our internal direction in meeting the needs that we see in our daily work, and how we hope to position the agency in meeting these needs. Our goals, which complement the Area Plan goals (delineated in Executive Summary) include:

1. **CVCOA services enhance quality of life, social connection and healthy aging.**
The focus areas of this goal are on high quality nutrition services, robust family caregiver support, wellness programs and dementia expertise.
2. **Central Vermonters receive aging services they need.**
The focus areas of this goal are on outreach and education, building staff capacity, and coordination with healthcare systems.
3. **Communities engage in developing positive culture around the aging process.**
The focus areas of this goal include promoting livable communities and inclusion of social determinants of health in our planning.
4. **CVCOA is a strong, vibrant and sustainable organization.**
The focus areas of this goal are collecting reliable and useful data, creating a sustainable business model to support the agency, ensuring a high-quality workplace, increasing agency recognition, and ensuring that staff and board understand and support organizational goals.