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June 2017

## Participants Outline Needs and Concerns In Public Hearings on Area Plan on Aging

Older adults' awareness of services available to them and the need for services in more locations were on the minds of the 67 community residents who took part in the annual Area Plan on Aging Public Hearings hosted by AgeOptions.

At the regional hearings, people are encouraged to comment on how AgeOptions can best use its resources to help older adults and people with disabilities remain in their homes and communities. This year's hearings took place at Sharp Park Senior Center in Melrose Park on May 17, Stickney Township North Clinic on May 19, and Mather Lifeways Cafe at the Ethical Humanist Society in Skokie on May 25.

AgeOptions is designated by the Illinois Department on Aging to plan, coordinate, advocate and fund services for people 60 and older in suburban Cook County. We produce an Area Plan on Aging that outlines how state and federal funding will be used to serve and support older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers in suburban Cook County. Public input can help influence how services are provided at local, state and national levels.

The leading themes at this year's hearings were:

### **Awareness and Connectedness**

Older people access the aging network through specific services but are not always aware of other services available to them. The network needs to be cohesive and provide cross referrals.

### **Location of Services**

There is a need for more locations for senior services, especially in communities that are struggling with community infrastructure. Our Aging and Disability Resource Network agencies

cover several townships and municipalities. Older people often are more aware of services if the office is in their municipality.

### **Limited English Proficiency**

The population of people with limited English proficiency is growing and the aging network needs to increase outreach and materials in multiple languages.

### **Volunteerism**

With the growing population of older adults, there is a need for more services. Since funding is not increasing, volunteer development and support are needed.

Other topics addressed by participants included Housing, Benefits Access, Home Repair Services, Exercise, Brain Health and Educational Programs, Wellness Checks, the Current Political Climate and a concern that the Census is not accounting for everyone.

AgeOptions has planned actions based on the input received at the hearings and will work to address the needs articulated by participants.

[Click here](#) to see the current Area Plan on Aging.