



**Onondaga Department of  
Adult and Long Term Care Services**

**Office for Aging**

**J. Ryan McMahon, II**  
County Executive

**JoAnne Spoto Decker**  
Commissioner

**Maria Mahar**  
Deputy Commissioner

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

## 2023 Public Hearing: Results



Thank you to the one hundred-plus adults, caregivers, advocates, and professionals who attended our Public Hearings and those who forwarded comments to our department.

Within this document, you will find the collected suggestions we compiled to assist older adults and caregivers in 2024. We appreciate our community members' feedback, comments, and innovative ideas, and as a result, we hope to better support Onondaga County's aging community in the coming year ahead.

### 2023 Public Hearing Dates

Thurs. Nov 2 at 1 pm  
Bob Cecile Senior Center  
174 W Seneca Turnpike  
Syracuse, NY 13205

Thurs. Nov 9 at 12:30  
Town of Salina Town Hall  
201 School Rd,  
Liverpool, NY 13088

## Public Hearing Questions during Community Forum:

- **Are you familiar with our services?**
- **What are the biggest challenges older adults face?**
- **Where are the roadblocks in accessing resources?**
- **What new services are needed?**
- **In your opinion, what is the most effective way for our department to gather ongoing feedback from the community?**

## Hearing

### Agenda

- A short overview of the Department of Adult and Long Term Care Services
- **Community Forum**  
Discuss ways we can better serve you.

## Other Collected Comments

We also collected comments by mail and email. All comments collected are compiled within.



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# IN CONCLUSION

## 2023 Public Hearing

### Findings from 2023 Public Hearings

Older adults are looking for ways to live independently but need assistance:

#### **Navigating (knowledgeably and safely) information and devices in the tech-forward world**

- Basic computer literacy
- Online search
- Making online appointments, navigating digital medical records
- Identifying scams
- Find reputable handyperson services
- Find information about resources for older adults in Onondaga County

#### **Finding affordable and safe housing**

- Affordable housing, implementing a senior house-mate program
- Assistance finding a place to live, help when unfairly evicted
- Help with moving due to unfair senior tenant eviction
- Low-income HUD assistance
- Energy assistance
- Implementing Tenant Action Networks, Aging in Place Task Force, Whistle Blower

#### **Maintaining their home while aging in place**

- Taking into account mobility in and around the home, ramp rental
- Identifying, troubleshooting, and limiting hazards, ex. falls
- Vetted yard/snow care, laundry, housework, shopping, and home care
- Assistance finding a nurse or home aide, expand EISEP

#### **Understanding how to navigate common health issues: cognitive decline, dental, physical, and mental health**

- How to afford medications
- Find mental health resources
- Isolation issues
- Create Foster-a-Grandparent, Companion Program, Friendly Visitor Program, etc.
- Knowledge of resources available and income guidelines
- Filling out and understanding paperwork

## **Education about Medicare and Medicaid, and related paperwork**

- Income guidelines
- Tips to navigate and troubleshoot
- Too much mail

## **Mobility and transportation in the community**

- Can't drive/no driver's license
- Lots of planning to prepare for getting transportation
- Cost of transportation
- Ability: Being able to get on and off the bus
- Navigate the limitations of senior transportation services, ex. Only to doctors' appointments, etc. Seniors need more options.

## **Getting information about our community**

- Voting
- Aging services, benefits, and resources available
- Understanding donation sites, recycling

## **Food/ Senior Congregate Meals**

- Food insecurity
- Vegan/vegetarian options
- Multi-cultural considerations/options
- Transportation to congregate sites

## **Professional and community members need communication tools to better reach and speak with underserved and multilingual communities**

- Need access to language interpretation tools and services
- Professionals are looking to acquire more government funding to assist the growing senior and refugee communities

## **Reaching Aging Adults and collecting comments**

- Better communications from OFA: promotions, advertising
- Utilize newspapers
- Better email communications
- Utilize local TV shows and advertise through commercials
- Have more public forums/regular meetings
- Utilize libraries
- Suggestion boxes at community centers, on Facebook, at community events
- More outreach to present information about services
- Senior centers, apartment complexes, communities, nursing homes
- Leave literature after the presentation and distribute throughout the community
- Present services to other county departments and community professionals
- Use general mail, postcard communications
- Phone surveys, including at the end of phone calls
- Find ways to reach home-bound individuals
- One-on-one discussions

# Comments and Responses Collected

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Before the Public Hearing, the Office for Aging mailed flyers and invitations to local organizations. During sign-in, we collected how attendees heard about the event. Many answered they had heard about the event from these organizations.

## **Are you familiar with our services?**

Many who showed up knew nothing about OFA, and most others knew at least one of our services but hadn't heard all that the OFA had to offer.

## **What are the biggest challenges older adults face?**

- Transportation: Bus stop locations and climate, assistance getting on/off, limits of where senior transportation goes
- Learning technology: such as smart devices/PC's. They want to stay connected, making appointments
- Food Insecurity
- Isolation
- Energy measures in the home
- Accessing mental health counseling & assistance
- Grocery shopping
- Lawn/snow care
- Getting medication, high cost, accessibility
- Interpreter services for outreach (for partnering professionals)
- Home mobility/ handicap accessibility
- Housing/HUD housing (too expensive)
- Health Insurance—raising prices, changes, rising medicine prices
- Disqualification for services due to savings
- Fear of falling
- Memory or cognitive decline, dementia
- Communicating aging and change in a positive light
- Health issues, including dental
- Living—housework and home care issues
- Understanding when to vote and how
- Spend down, Medicaid assistance
- Scams/fraud

## **Where are the roadblocks in accessing resources?**

- Unable to drive, limited transportation— expand senior transportation: more rides, more places
- Filling out paperwork
- Missing in-person contact –talking to machines, staying on the phone
- Not knowing about resources
- Not enough resources
- Falling and not being able to get to the phone
- Time to plan transportation
- Income guidelines—disqualifying seniors for benefits
- Technology— everything high tech, too many passwords, making online appointments
- Scams-awareness efforts, empowered to report
- Lack of communication from our department
- Mail navigation (Medicare)
- Afraid/not knowing where to start

## **What new services are needed?**

- Safe homes for seniors, helping maintain and keep safe
- More government funding for non-profits
- More low-cost transportation for older adults
- Housing and housing assistance, moving assistance for unfairly evicted seniors
- Tenants Action Network: Whistle Blower, Age-in-Place task force, Share-a-Home house mate program
- Care at home—shopping laundry, clothing, food, yard work, nurse/aids
- Vetted vendor list to help navigate scams, to find reliable contractors
- Vegan /vegetarian accommodation at congregate meals
- Help find donations sites for items that donation centers don't take, ex. tires.
- More Senior Programs: Companion Program, Friendly Visitor Program, Senior Activism Groups
- Better outreach to underserved communities
- Make Shoppingtown a senior center, with apartments, classes, health care, and age-related services
- Adding a senior group/activism category to encourage more seniors to team together

- Ramp rental program
- Computer literacy training—very basic, safety, navigating, and using devices
- Mental health assistance: meditation, depression support, support for isolation, meet & greet, adopt-a-senior, zen center
- Family members able to participate in nursing home/assisted living
- Help in efforts to recruit nurses
- Transportation to senior meal sites
- Cleaning services or cleaning services directory
- List more senior centers not just county locations
- Education about new technology, safety cameras, Ring doorbell (how to afford, what products to choose, contractors for installation, how to maintain)

**In your opinion, what is the most effective way for our department to gather ongoing feedback from the community?**

- Expand promotion: newspaper, TV commercials, email
- Phone calls, one-on-one
- Regular public meetings
- Comment/Suggestion box in the community (senior centers), on Facebook, etc.
- Postcard/general mailing
- Visiting senior centers, complexes, communities, nursing homes, etc. to speak
- Leave literature at community centers
- Phone surveys at the end of phone calls
- Talk to DFS, and other county departments to communicate offerings
- Local TV news programs
- Provide regular forums
- Surveys at events and services when our department is out in the community
- Advertising
- Ways for elders who don't leave home to share opinions
- Literature, outreach events, and promos at libraries