

Aging Centered Outreach

Best Practices for Connecting with Older Adults

Aging service and health providers have a hard time reaching older adults and, likewise, older adults would like to know and learn more about aging services, programs and activities. This document is intended to address the disconnect by providing best practices for getting information to older adults.

This information was derived from a research study of older adults ages 75 and older. This fact sheet is the second of two aimed at: 1) enhancing face-to-face interactions with older adults; and 2) providing outreach strategies for targeting them.



Connect Through Health Care

People want more information about support and services, through channels that they rely on. Service providers should collaborate with health care sites and providers in order to connect with people over the age of 75:



People ages 75 and older visit **health care sites** about 8 times per year, compared to younger people who may only do so annually. Put print materials like brochures in **emergency rooms** and **doctor's offices** and speak to staff members at those sites about the materials and services so that they are informed.



When older adults attend **health fairs** and **health related events**, including “Lunch & Learns” they talk learn about services through talking with others and picking up print information. Be sure to disseminate print materials like brochures, newsletters, and fliers at these sites and deploy informed and friendly staff who can take the time to chat about them.



Newspapers, home delivered meals, and postal mail are the best methods for connecting with people over age 75. This is especially important for getting information to people who are home bound and can't get out.



Based on findings from the Monroe County Older Adult Needs Assessment, this study examined awareness, communication, and engagement barriers between aging service organizations and people ages 75 and older. The content of this fact sheet comes from the results of the 2019 study and aims to help address those issues. Questions? Contact carrieleach@wayne.edu at the Institute of Gerontology at Wayne State University.



Disseminate Print Materials

Print media is an important communication resource for staying informed about community, social and health related matters. Older adults read newsletters, fliers and brochures, and newspapers; organizations should cross-advertise and collaborate on creating content for enhanced reach. Place materials at *Hot Spots* identified below.



Visit Communication “Hot Spots”

Older adults learn about services and programs in everyday conversations at recreation and senior centers, the local YMCA, library, American Legion, VFW hall, pharmacy, beautician, and while congregating for meals and coffee in community rooms. Disseminate information to these communication “Hot Spots” in person or post fliers or contribute to their newsletter. Contact local Hot Spots for advice on getting the word out based on their practices.



Employ Sensitized Front-Line Workers

Replace automated menus with friendly older workers or volunteers who have the time to talk and are sensitized to hearing issues. People who share similarities have an easier time talking including those who live in the same city or are the same age. Questions about income should be asked only after a personal greeting is offered, such as saying “Hello,” or “How may I help you?” Older adults want to feel acknowledged before going through screening for eligibility.



Establish an Elder Advisory Committee

Older adults are experts on aging and sensitized to the changes and challenges that occur at different ages and stages of life. They can be valuable advisors for helping organizations tailor their messages that address information needs and strategies for increasing reach.



Create Spaces for Connecting

Retirees, older adults, and volunteers are key informants who provide trusted opinions and information about services. Facilitate events for older adults to socialize and provide transportation or encourage ride sharing for those who are unable to get out. Congregate meals are an important way for them to connect.