

Area Agency on Aging
Annual Report

2024-2025



Area
Agency
on Aging

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A Message from the Director, Dr. Shannah Tharp-Gilliam:

Each year, this Annual Report gives us the chance to reflect on how the Area Agency on Aging is meeting the needs of older adults and caregivers across Allegheny County.

We are serving a growing and changing population. More residents are aging into our system, needs are becoming more complex, and costs continue to rise. At the same time, public funding has not kept pace with demand. These realities require us to be thoughtful, creative, and disciplined in how we deliver services.

Innovation at the Area Agency on Aging is not about doing things differently for the sake of change. It is about finding the best ways to protect access to services and maintain quality in a difficult funding environment. Across the agency, we are testing new approaches, improving how work gets done, and using technology to increase efficiency while keeping older adults at the center of every decision.

This report highlights several of those efforts. From improving how residents connect to services, to strengthening response times in Protective Services, to redesigning nutrition and home-based programs, our focus has been on using resources wisely and responsibly. These changes help us stabilize core services, reduce risk, and better respond to community needs.

I am proud of our staff and provider partners, who continue to show commitment, flexibility, and care in their work. Their willingness to adapt and improve allows our agency to move forward, even in challenging conditions.

As you review this report, I invite you to explore the Innovations section to see how the Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging is responding to today's challenges while planning for the future. Our commitment remains clear: to support older adults in living safely, independently, and with dignity in their homes and communities.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support.

Shannah Tharp-Gilliam, PhD

Director

Area Agency on Aging

Office of Aging Services

Allegheny County Department of Human Services

Introduction

What is the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (ACDHS)?

ACDHS seeks to create an accessible, culturally competent, integrated, and comprehensive human services system that ensures individually tailored, seamless, and holistic services to Allegheny County residents, particularly the County's vulnerable populations. The purpose of ACDHS is to support people during their most vulnerable times by preventing and resolving crises; to help children and youth grow up safer and healthier, and adults live more securely and independently; and to advocate for support and services so people in Allegheny County can thrive.

ACDHS provides a broad range of services through five Program Offices:

1. Children, Youth, and Families (CYF)
2. Area Agency on Aging (AAA)
3. Office of Behavioral Health (OBH)
4. Office of Community Services (OCS)
5. Office of Developmental Supports (ODS)

Three additional ACDHS offices provide crucial support to the Program Offices, to the network of providers who deliver services, and to the community more broadly:

1. Administration (OA)
2. Equity and Engagement (OEE)
3. Analytics, Technology, and Planning (ATP)

The ATP team is comprised of the Organizational team, located on the 4th floor of ACDHS headquarters in downtown Pittsburgh, and the Programmatic teams, which are embedded within their Program Office locations to ensure continuity between the analysts and the program/service leadership and staff. Together, these teams support ACDHS' internal operations through research, data analysis & visualization, planning, and process/quality improvement. ATP is integral to the AAA and the development of this report.

Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) Leadership:

DHS is overseen by the office of the County Executive and relies on community members to give input on decisions that affect how we do what we do.

There are five advisory bodies attached to specific offices which are required by mandate to oversee the provision of services, and to assist in policy planning. Other advisory bodies are created and convened by DHS to help identify community needs and preferences, and to help shape planning processes and initiatives.

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) has a mandated Advisory Council which works as an advocate for the older adults of Allegheny County by informing and educating the public about the needs of older adults. The Council's membership (maximum: 19; minimum: 15) is selected and appointed by the Allegheny County Council from a list of names submitted by the County Executive. As stated in the Advisory Council's by-laws, at least 50 percent of the membership must be age 60 years or older, including a minority contingent in proportion with the older minority population of the County. The Council must also include representatives of those older adults with the greatest social or economic needs, recipients of AAA services, local elected officials, and representatives of the general public.

The council advises the AAA on the development and implementation of the four-year plan and the annual Aging Block Grant application. The council also ensures that applicants for service have access to the AAA appeal procedures and provides guidance to the applicants.

Current Advisory Council Members

Jessica Adams

DeafStone Services Inc.

Rep. Jessica Benham

District 36

Gina Goth

Christine Hunsinger

*Golden Triangle Council of the Blind,
Pennsylvania Council of the Blind*

Elaine Jenkins

AARP Chap. 4706 Hill District

Lorraine Burnett King

Carver Hall (ACHA)

Lycia Neumann

The Alzheimer's Association

Kathleen Madonna-Emmerling

Allegheny County Council

Christopher Rosselot

*Pittsburgh Community
Reinvestment Group*

Zinna Scott

Carrie Stott

Carlow University

Jeff Weinberg

Caregiver Champion LLC

Area Agency on Aging

Who We Are

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) assists Allegheny County residents who are 60 years of age and older in living safe, healthy, and, when possible, independent lives. To achieve this mission, the AAA offers an array of programs and services that support healthy and happy living for older adults and their caregivers.

The AAA office is located on the 2nd floor of ACDHS's Southside location. At the writing of this report, AAA employs 127 staff members.

Purpose of the Annual Report

This Annual Report details the AAA's programs and services, including notable utilization data, challenges, and innovations in each program/service. We aim to simplify information sharing and increase transparency with stakeholders, including the local and greater community, elected officials, human service agencies, aging-oriented organizations, and others who may be invested in the AAA's work and outcomes.

This report briefly updates the AAA 2020-2024 Four-Year Plan by discussing how recent efforts have addressed identified needs and strategies in the plan. The overarching goals are as follows:

1. Advocate for the rights of older adults and ensure their safety and dignity by raising awareness of and responding effectively to incidences of abuse, injury, exploitation, violence, and neglect.
2. Improve services for older adults and the ability to advocate for them by using evidence-informed planning, committing to data integrity, and being accountable for results.
3. Establish and enhance efforts to support healthy living, active engagement, and a sense of community for all older adults in Allegheny County.
4. Strengthen the aging network's capacity, promote innovation and best practices, and build efficiencies to respond to the growing and diversifying aging population.

Additional Aging Resources

We acknowledge findings from the [Aging Services Landscape Scan, 2022](#), from the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health. This Scan identified more than 30 comparable aging services agencies across the nation. It examined their county demographics and services in comparison to the AAA. It reviews the national aging landscape operated by county governments. It provides recommendations for the Allegheny County AAA to remain competitive.

The University Center for Social & Urban Research (UCSUR), also at the University of Pittsburgh, published the [State of Aging, Disability, & Family Caregiving in Allegheny County](#) in December 2022. This report details findings from the study aimed toward understanding the characteristics of the County's aging and disabled residents to plan for the region's future properly. Allegheny County Department of Human Services and the AAA were collaborators on this project and eight other organizations/agencies that support these populations. UCSUR also published a supplemental report called the [Allegheny County Age-Friendly Community Index](#), which utilizes five domains to measure age-friendliness and reports rankings by Census Tract. The AAA and this Annual Report acknowledge these documents and use their findings to plan and evaluate our programs/services.

Snapshot of Aging in Allegheny County

Snapshot:	Allegheny County
Location:	Southwestern Pennsylvania
Size:	730 square miles of land, 745 total including water
# of municipalities:	130
County Seat:	Pittsburgh
Population:	1.2 million
# of Major Hospitals:	46
# of Major Universities and Colleges:	9 (Carlow, CMU, Chatham, CCAC, Duquesne, La Roche, Point Park, Robert Morris, Pitt)
# of Senior Living Facilities:	197 (Nursing: 52, Personal care/assisted living: 106, Daily living centers: 25, Domiciliary care: 14)
# of Parks:	172 (163 Pittsburgh parks and 9 County)

Socio-demographics

The 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) five-year estimates inform the main demographic characteristics of Allegheny County unless otherwise noted.

Aging Population Projections and Trends

Approximately 27% of Allegheny County's population is over the age of 60, compared to roughly 23% nationally. According to the Southwestern Pennsylvania Partnership for Aging, the number of people aged 65+ will increase by 40% between 2015 and 2030 and 75% between 2030 and 2045.¹



Gender

The older adult population (aged 60 and over) is 44% Male and 56% Female.

Race

The older adult population is approximately 87% White, 9% Black or African American, 2% Asian, and less than one percent American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander. The older adult population is about 1% Hispanic or Latino origin, regardless of race.

Disability Status

Approximately 28% of older adult residents have a disability.

Educational Attainment

Of the older adult population, approximately 37% of residents have completed high school or earned their GED, and 31% have earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

Income and Poverty

Approximately 11% of older adults were below the federal poverty level within the past year.

Housing

It is estimated that there are 545,763 total households in Allegheny County, 212,455 of which are older adult households (39%). Of these older adult households, it is estimated that there are 159,586 owner-occupied units, 79% of which are considered affordable, and 52,869 renter-occupied units, 51% of which are considered affordable.

¹ Southwestern Pennsylvania Partnership for Aging. (n.d.) *Age-Friendly Greater Pittsburgh*. Retrieved March 10, 2023, from <https://www.swppa.org/agefriendly/>.

Living Alone

Of the older adult households, about 49% are considered family households and 51% are nonfamily households. Within the nonfamily households, approximately 48% contain householders living alone.

Snapshot of Aging Services in Allegheny County

Socio-demographics

The information provided is a snapshot of the socio-demographics of the people receiving services from the AAA. In some cases, information may be missing or not provided by the individual and we have noted this where relevant.

Age

AAA consumers are evenly distributed between the ages of 59 and 85+. The greatest percentage (15%) are 70-74, with the smallest percentage (7%) in the 60-64 group.

Gender

Over half of the people the AAA serves are women (54%) 27% Male and 19% missing information.

Race

AAA consumers are approximately 57% White, 17% Black or African American, and less than one per cent Asian, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander. The older adult population is less than 1% Hispanic or Latino origin, regardless of race.

Disability Status

Approximately 11% of older adult consumers have a disability.

Income and Poverty

Approximately 17% of older adult consumers were below the federal poverty level within the past year. 36% of consumers have Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Language

Most consumers speak English (99%) and understand English (99%).

Living Alone

Approximately 40% of the household AAA serves contain householders living alone.

What are some of the new challenges our population faces?

The older adult population in Allegheny County is larger than the national average and is projected to continue increasing in the coming years. This growth will bring a rise in demand for Aging Services among a larger pool of potential consumers.

In addition to the expanding older adult population, this group's needs and preferences are evolving. As the Silent Generation transitions, Baby Boomers now constitute the majority of the older adult population, with Generation X soon to follow. The "young-old" have different interests and issues compared to previous generations, yet the Aging Services landscape has been slow to adapt to these changes. At the AAA, we are actively seeking innovative ways to enhance our programs and services in response to this shifting environment.

One area of need is the development of safe and affordable housing options for older adults. This demographic is the fastest-growing group within the homeless and unhoused populations. Older adults have unique needs that differ from those of other homeless individuals. The AAA is working to better understand these needs and to create programs that assist older adults in securing adequate housing.



Programs and Services

The AAA coordinates programs and services to support older adults in Allegheny County. This section describes the major programs/services offered, notable utilization information, and the challenges and innovations experienced during the 23-24 fiscal year.

The AAA's organizational structure features the following bureaus: Administration, Older Adult Safety, Older Adult Support, Older Adult Service, Community Based Services, Special Services and Strategic Initiatives, and Internal Systems. Our programs and services are divided across five of these bureaus and their locations are noted below.

Older Adult Safety

- Protective Services

Older Adult Support

- OPTIONS Care Management
- Caregiver Support Program
- Human Services Development Fund (18- to 59-year-olds)
- Ombudsman Program

Special Services and Strategic Initiatives

- Community Care Transitions Program
- Miscellaneous Providers

Older Adult Services

- Domiciliary Care
- Housing
- Outreach
- Senior Companion Program
- Information & Assistance (SeniorLine)

Community Based Services

- Home Delivered Meals/Nutrition Services
- Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
- Senior Community Centers
- Assessment

The Administration Bureau assists with agency and regulatory oversight, fiscal and budgeting, and Human Resources. It also oversees Contract coordination across the agency and directs the program operations of the Community Based Services, Older Adult Safety, and Older Adult Support bureaus.

The Internal Systems Bureau is a support office that works across all AAA units to facilitate broad services and high-quality programs for Allegheny County's older adult residents. This is accomplished through implementation of four main strategies: providing training and professional development, monitoring programs and data, developing standard operating procedures and workflows, and evaluating and measuring outcomes. Internal Systems directs the program operations of the Special Services and Strategic Initiatives and Older Adult Services bureaus.



Assessment Services

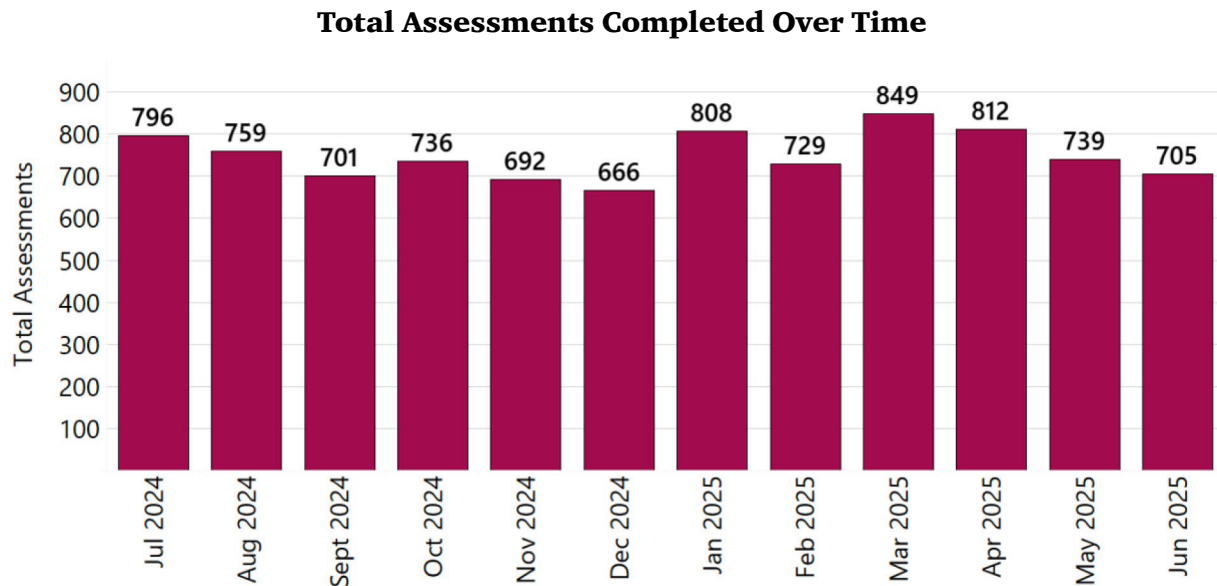
The AAA Assessment Unit conducts Functional Eligibility Determinations (FEDs) to assess residents' levels of need and eligibility for community-based and institutional care services through a partnership with Aging Well PA, a subsidiary of the Pennsylvania Association of Area Agencies on Aging. Assessment Services are a fee-for-service, which brings in resources. Using the standardized FED tool, our assessment team determines whether individuals qualify as Nursing Facility Clinically Eligible (NFCE) or Nursing Facility Ineligible (NFI). AAA staff conduct these evaluations wherever clients reside, including private homes, hospitals, or nursing facilities.

In compliance with federal nursing facility regulations established in January 1989, and through our agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Aging and Aging Well PA, the AAA Assessment Unit serves as the designated evaluation agency to conduct specialized Pre-Admission Nursing Facility Screenings for individuals diagnosed with Mental Illness (MI), Intellectual Disability (ID), or Other Related Conditions (ORC). The purpose of these screenings is to ensure that nursing facility placement is appropriate given any other needs the individual may have related to their MI, ID or ORC.

And last, the AAA Assessment Unit regularly participates in hearings resulting from an individual appealing a decision that they are ineligible to receive, or to continue receiving, community-based services within the Department's managed long-term services and support program. The Assessment Unit's role includes providing testimony regarding the most recent FED outcome, determining whether there has been a change in the individual's status, and whether another assessment is warranted to re-determine Level of Care.

Data and Trends

The assessment unit completed almost 9,000 assessments during the 24/25 fiscal year, averaging 749 assessments per month. These assessments have generated over \$4 million dollars in revenue, serving as a pivotal funding supplement for the agency while providing key services to the community.



Care Transitions Program

The Community Care Transitions Program (CCTP) is designed to support recently hospitalized individuals in successfully transitioning back to their homes and communities. The program aims to reduce avoidable hospital readmissions and empower patients to take an active role in managing their health.

At the heart of the program is the Community Health Worker (CHW), who delivers a structured 30-day intervention to eligible patients. The CHW identifies participants, provides tailored support, and serves as a vital link between patients, hospitals, and health plans. Using an evidence-based coaching model, the CHW helps patients navigate their recovery, understand their care plans, and access necessary resources. The CHW also collaborates closely with the multidisciplinary healthcare team to ensure that discharge planning and care transition pathways are followed effectively.

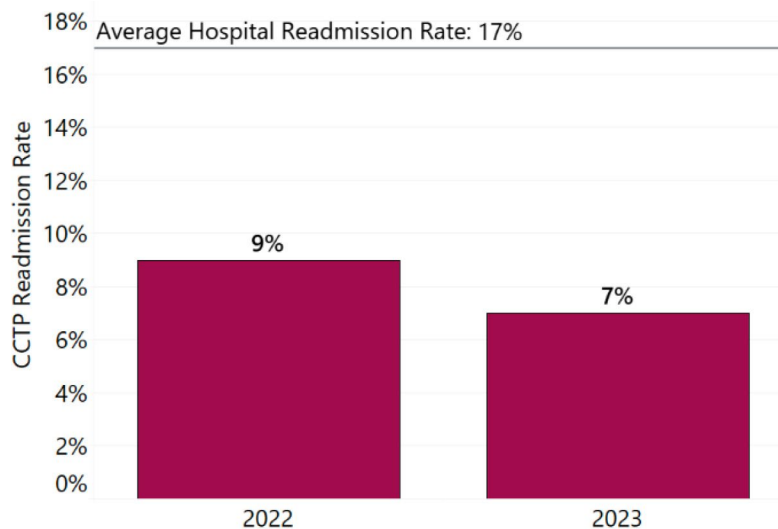
Data and Trends

Between the 2022 and 2023 calendar years, the program has saved our primary partner over 9.9 million dollars by having an 8% average admission rate compared the 17% average the hospitals experience without the program. Cost savings can be calculated using publicly available information about hospital readmission rates, accounting for additional penalty rates when readmissions occur, and average readmission costs provided by the partner. The program is expecting to report more positive performance data when partners finalize data for the 2024 at the end of the 2025 calendar year.

Money Saved by Year and Business Line

	2022	2023
Medicaid	\$1,057,994	\$1,290,192
Medicare	\$3,427,214	\$4,181,123

Readmission Rate by Year



Caregiver Support Program

The Caregiver Support Program helps adults who are caring for their loved ones. Taking on the responsibility to provide for a loved one can be a lot. The CSP is a reimbursement program designed to reduce the financial burden often experienced by Caregivers.

Eligibility Requirements

Both the caregiver and care receiver must be a resident of Pennsylvania. Caregivers must be an adult who is primarily responsible for providing care on a regular basis and meet one of the following eligibility categories.

Category 1: Caregiver of functionally dependent individuals age 60+ or individuals ages 18 – 59 living with Alzheimer’s Disease or a related disorder.

- Caregiver is age 18 and older
- Caregiver and Care Receiver are not required to be related or live in the same residence.

Category 2: Grandparent/older relative caregiver of children.

- Caregiver must be age 55 and older
- Caregiver and Care Receiver must live in the same residence
- Caregiver cannot be the biological parent
- Caregiver has legal guardianship, or is raising the child informally



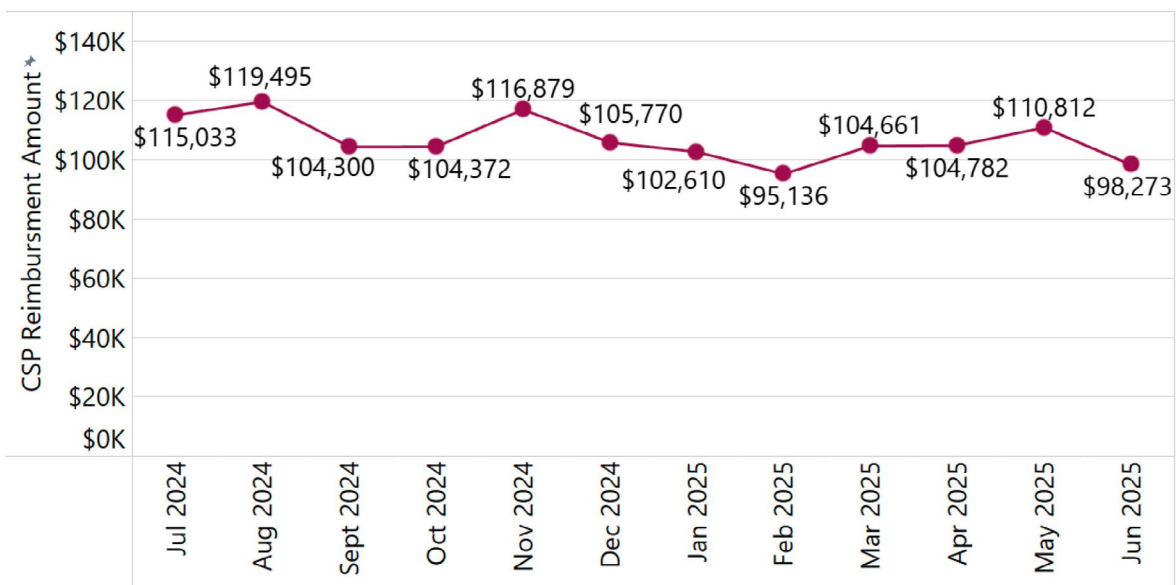
Apply for Caregiver Support

Contact SeniorLine at 412 350-5460 to get started

Data and Trends

While consumers in the Caregiver Support Program have access to many services, most consumers receive reimbursements for personal care, respite, and nutritional supplements. Over the past 2024-2025 fiscal year, the program has consistently provided reimbursements that total to nearly \$1.3 million dollars in savings for 464 caregivers.

Total Caregiver Reimbursements FY24/25



Domiciliary (Dom) Care Program

The Domiciliary Care (Dom Care) Program provides a family-like living arrangement, daily support, and supervision to adults age 18 and older who are unable to live independently in the community and do not require a nursing facility level of care. The Dom Care program provides individuals a bedroom with basic furnishings and services to meet their unique needs. Dom Care services include daily meals, assistance with personal care, daily living tasks, medication set-up, and transportation to medical appointments.

Traditional Dom Care homes are private residences of Dom Care providers, certified by the local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) to provide support and services to no more than three individuals eligible for Dom Care. Providers receive a monthly stipend for sharing their homes and providing Dom Care service to residents.



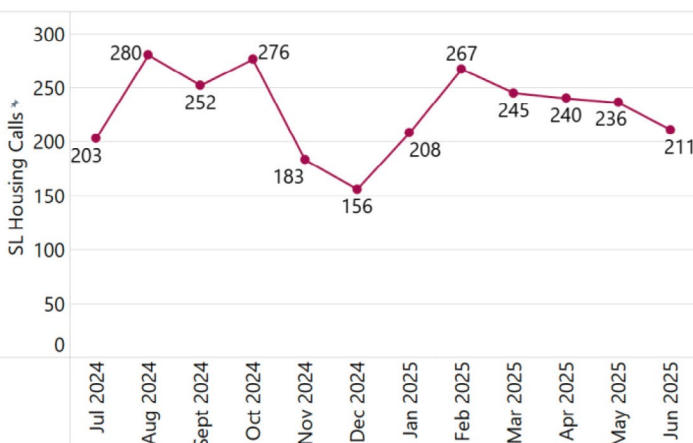
Housing Support Services

The Shared Housing and Resource Exchange (SHARE) Housing Match-Up Program is designed to address an increasing need for affordable housing options for seniors and seniors with disabilities, and the desire for seniors to age in place and remain living in their homes and communities rather than in an institutional setting. The SHARE Housing Counselor will match senior homeowners (Home Host) who have extra space in their homes with individuals seeking affordable housing. This program will help match Home Hosts with Home Seekers (Sharers) of all ages, including other seniors, individuals experiencing homelessness, individuals transitioning out of nursing homes and veterans. It also seeks to match non-senior homeowners with senior Home Seekers (Sharers).

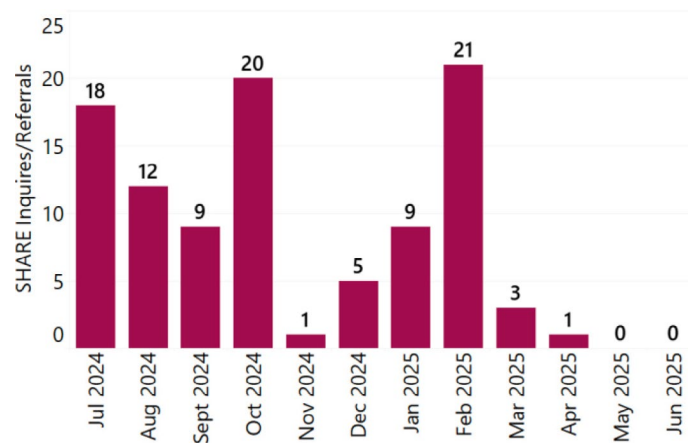
Data and Trends

In the past 2024-2025 fiscal year, the SHARE program has received almost 100 referrals and inquiries for the program. Additionally, the AAA receives an average of 230 calls each month from the SeniorLine where housing topics are discussed. The most common housing topics discussed with SeniorLine care managers are about housing repairs or modernizations, assistance in locating housing, and subsidized housing. The AAA often utilizes SeniorLine calls about housing to estimate and monitor community housing needs.

SeniorLine Housing Calls Over Time



Share Inquiries & Referrals Over Time



Nutrition

The AAA Nutrition Program consists of the Senior Center Congregate and Home Delivered Meal Programs.

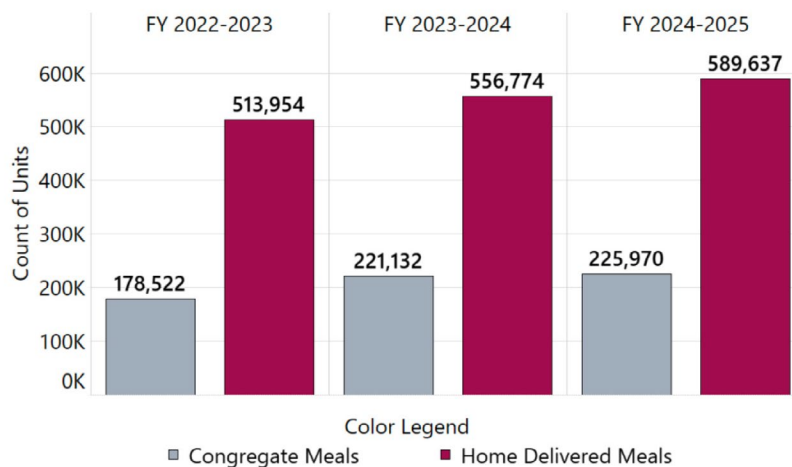
The Home Delivered Meal Program is a program that delivers nutritious, prepared meals to the homes of seniors who are unable to cook or shop for themselves due to illness, injury, or frailty. It serves as a, often, daily check-in to ensure safety and social connection, primarily supporting independence for homebound individuals.

The AAA provides a congregated meal service at all AAA-sponsored Senior Community Centers. The congregated meal is a lunch service offered in a social setting, Monday through Friday, at senior centers across the County. There is no income restriction on receiving congregated meals. Donations for the lunch service are accepted but not required.

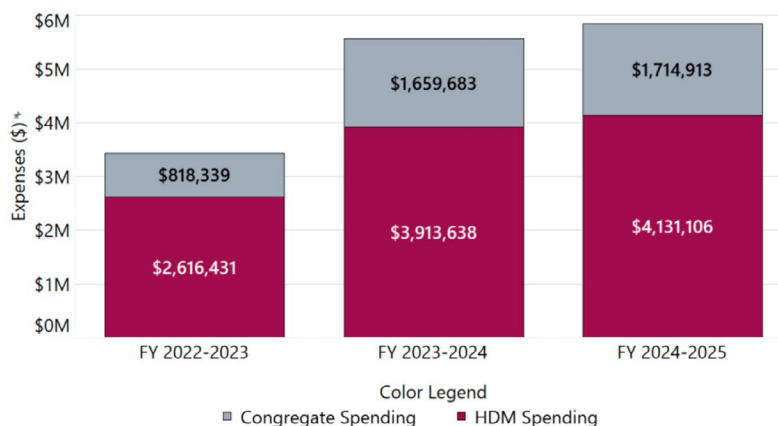
Data and Trends

Meal services at the Area Agency on Aging is once again seeing increased numbers of meals served at both congregated and home delivered meal settings, along with associated higher costs. While many factors contribute to the rise in meals served, the increasing older adult population and higher service levels across the entire AAA are primary causes. However, the significant jump in meal costs is associated with the meal rate increase that was awarded with the Request for Proposal in 2023. To learn more about this rate increase, please see the Nutrition RFP summary in the Innovations section.

Number of Meals by Fiscal Year



Meal Spending by Fiscal Year



Numbers above exclude Kosher meals and costs required to manage meal delivery for Home Delivered Meals

Older Adult Protective Services

The Older Adults Protective Services Act (OAPSA) requires that older adults who can't protect themselves and are at risk of abuse, neglect, abandonment, and/or financial exploitation receive help. The Pennsylvania Department of Aging oversees this service across the state, while the AAA manages it locally.

OAPS helps older adults located within Pennsylvania who are 60 and older and:

- At risk of danger to person or property
- Unable to perform or obtain services necessary to maintain physical or mental health
- Does not have a responsible caretaker/caregiver

The older adult does not have to be a resident of Pennsylvania to receive assistance.

The Protective Services (PS) Helpline takes and refers reports of abuse, neglect, abandonment, and exploitation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to the AAA. The AAA partners with provider agencies who are trained to receive and follow-up on reports. When an older adult is alleged to have been harmed while in-patient at a care facility or from a home care provider, the AAA will notify their regulatory licensing authority and the ombudsman office.

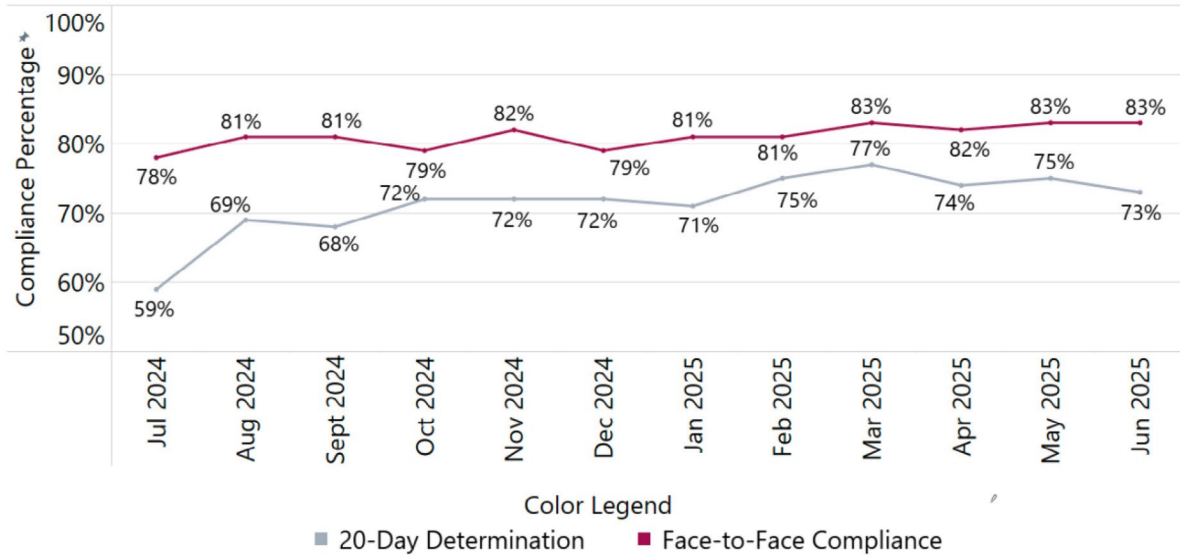
Anyone can report abuse including the older adult and people who do not know the older adult. Reporters can stay anonymous and are protected by law for reporting. To make a report, contact the Statewide Elder Abuse Helpline 24/7 at 1-800-490-8505.



Data and Trends

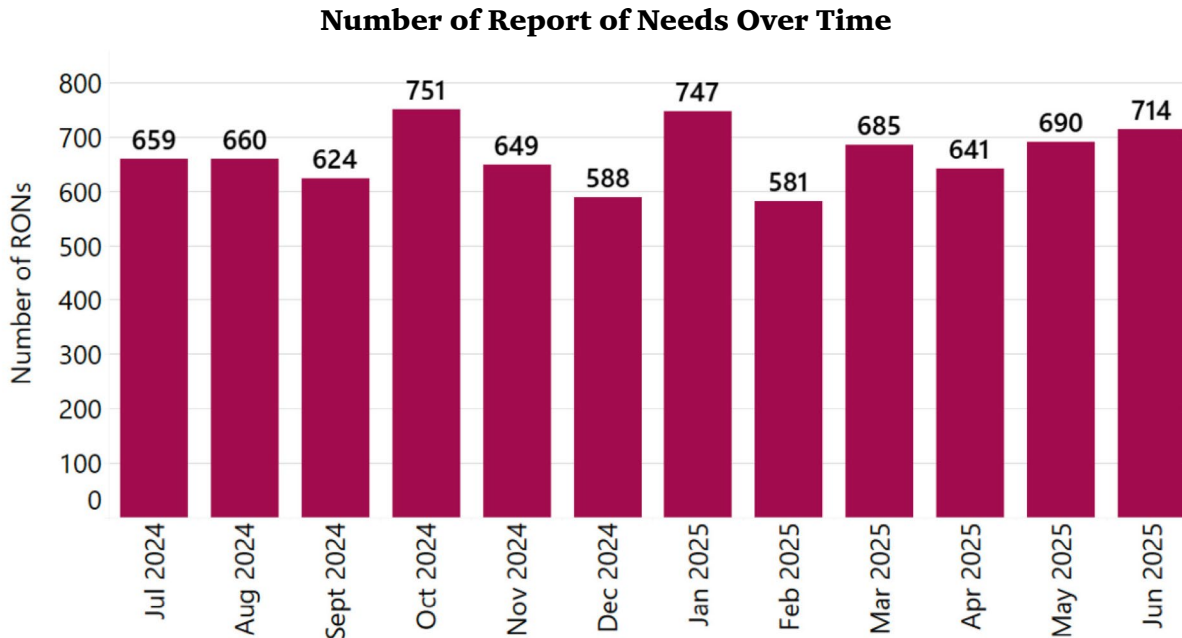
The Older Adults Protective Services program's many innovations and initiatives are having positive impacts for consumers. This impact is particularly evident in the program's two key compliance numbers, which significantly improved during the 2024-2025 fiscal year. The 20-day determination metric, which measures how many cases had an initial allegation determination in the first 20 days of the investigation, saw an increase from 59% compliant in July 2024 to 73% in June 2025. Additionally, the face-to-face compliance percentage counts how many cases investigators visited the consumer within the state mandated timeframe for new cases and also grew from 78% to 83% compliant. Both improved numbers speak to how the program's innovations are contributing to faster response times for consumers in protective service cases.

OAPS Compliance Performance FY24/25



A case is substantiated if the evidence collected during the investigation either supports confirmation of the reported allegations or indicates that the older adult is at risk and in need of protective services




These increases are even more meaningful when the number of incoming Reports of Need are considered. The 20242025 fiscal year is continuing to see the increasing trend of RONs, averaging over 665 cases per month and almost 8,000 cases for the year. Just three fiscal years ago from July 2021 to June 2022, an average of 548 reports were submitted monthly, totaling to 6,572 reports in the year.



Information & Assistance (SeniorLine)

SeniorLine is the Allegheny County AAA call center dedicated to assisting older adults. It serves as the primary point of contact for the AAA. SeniorLine connects seniors, their families, caregivers, and professionals to valuable resources. Trained care managers are available to respond to calls, emails, and faxes, and they also assist individuals who visit our office. Residents of Allegheny County can subscribe to our monthly SeniorLine newsletter via email. Additionally, SeniorLine collaborates with partner organizations to reach specific communities. Below are some of the partners we worked with in FY 24/25

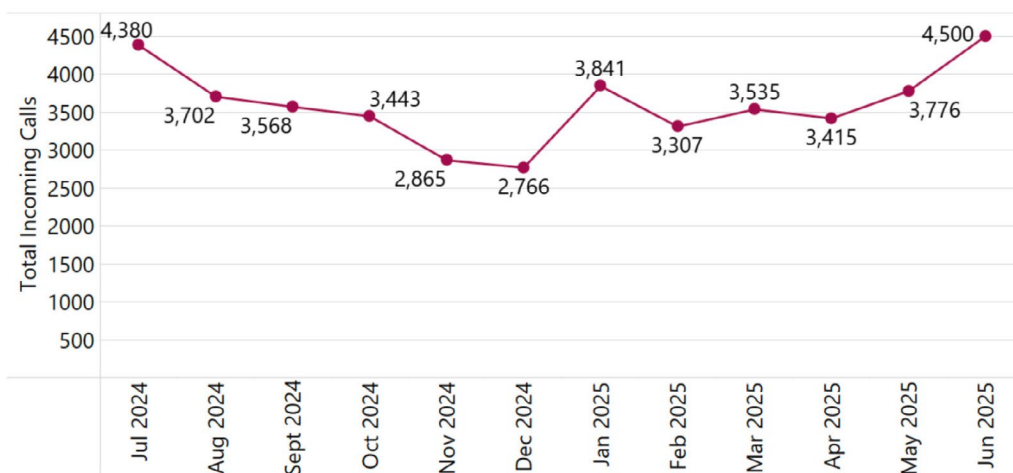
- American Indian Outreach (with COTRAIC)
- Faith Based Outreach (with Wesley Family Services)
- Supportive Living Enhancement Program (SLEP)
- Pennsylvania Medicare Education and Decision Insight (PA MEDI) (with Ursuline)

Contact the SeniorLine		
By phone	By walk-ins	Chat with Aria
 <p>(412) 350-5460 1-800-344-4319 (Toll-free)</p>	 <p><u>Birmingham Towers</u> <u>2100 Wharton Street, Second Floor</u> <i>Weekdays, during business hours</i></p>	 <p><u>alleghenycounty.us/ARIA</u> <i>Available 24/7</i></p>
<p>By email <u>Seniorline@alleghenycounty.us</u></p>		

Data and Trends

The SeniorLine received over 43,000 incoming calls during business hours in the past 2023-2024 fiscal year, which aligns closely with call volumes in the past few years. Of these incoming calls, SeniorLine staff were able to process 31,539 calls which is over 73% of all the incoming calls*. In these calls, the most popular conversation topics were around in home services, general information and assistance, community-based programs, and nutrition. Other common topics that have varied over the past 5 years include transportation, public benefits, and housing / utilities. The SeniorLine often receives more calls in the summertime, with a large proportion of those calls about the Farmer’s Market Voucher Program which begins every year at the beginning of summer.

Call Volume Over Time



Incoming calls may not reach a staff member if they are redirected to other numbers through the self-service menu options or if they hang up before the call gets connected.

Ombudsman Program

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman program advocates for residents of nursing homes, personal care/assisted living homes, domiciliary care homes, and other similar adult care facilities.

Under the Older Americans Act, every state is required to have an Ombudsman program that addresses complaints and advocates for improvements in the long-term care system. Each state has an Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, headed by a full-time State Long-Term Care Ombudsman who directs the program statewide. Across the nation, staff and thousands of volunteers are designated by State Ombudsmen as representatives to directly serve residents.

The program is available to all residents of a long-term care facility, or individuals receiving a long-term care service, e.g., community health choices, options, hospice, etc., in the community.

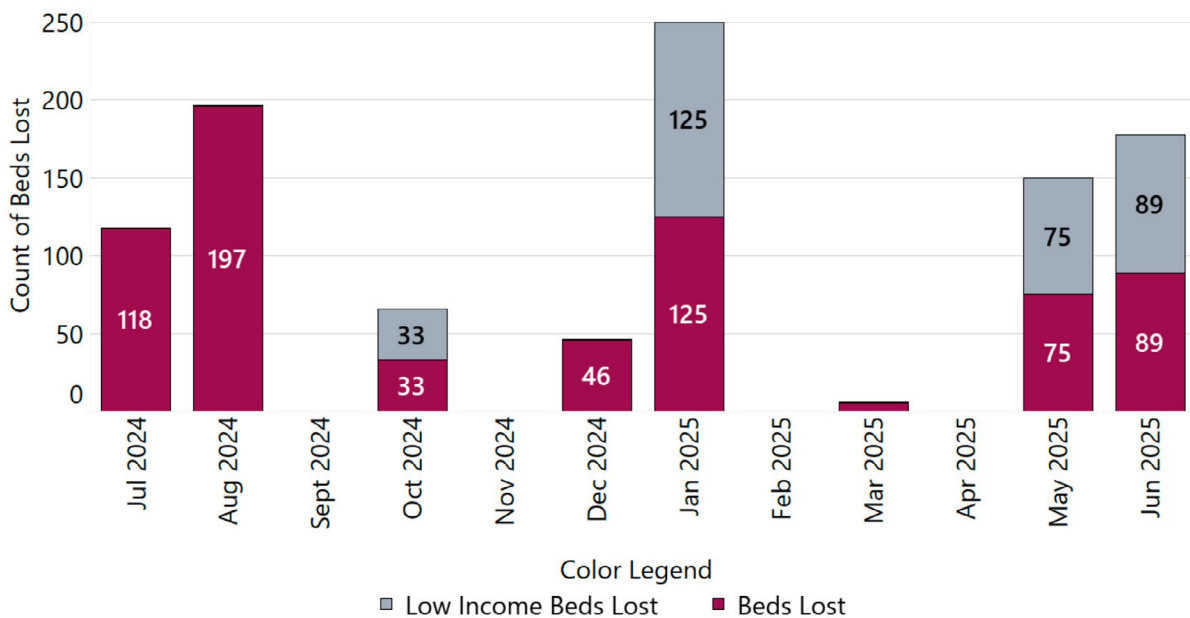


Contact the program by phone at 412-350-5044

Data and Trends

The Ombudsman program continues to see significant facility closures in the county, with 12 facility closures and 689 beds lost in the past fiscal year. These closures have particularly been affecting the low-income population as over 46% of the beds lost from the closures have been designated for low-income populations. On top of monitoring transitions from the multiple facility closures, the Ombudsmen team continues to support many people in facilities; completing over 13,550 interactions with residents, family, and staff, which averages to over 1,129 touch points each month.

Number of Beds Lost in Allegheny County Facilities Fy24/25



OPTIONS Care Management

The OPTIONS Program helps older adults age 60 and over live independently in their own homes and communities. Through this program, we provide personalized services and support to individuals who don't qualify for Medical Assistance Long-Term Services and Supports, helping them maintain their quality of life and stay connected to what matters most. Our Area Agency on Aging works with each person to create a plan that fits their unique situation, exploring all available resources—personal, community, and government programs—to find the best solutions for their needs. By combining different resources thoughtfully, we help extend and enhance the care people receive.

Eligibility Requirements

An individual shall be:

- Age 60 and older
- Experiencing some degree of frailty in regard to physical and/or mental status that impacts daily functioning
- A Pennsylvania/Allegheny County resident
- A U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident



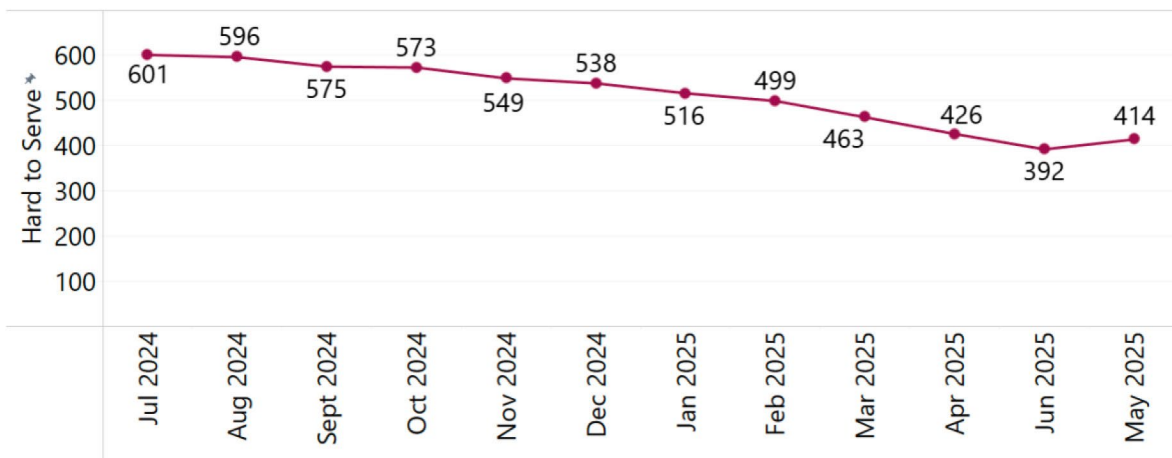
If interesting in learning more about the OPTIONS program or applying, contact the SeniorLine at 412-350-5460

Data and Trends

The OPTIONS program has implemented many innovative improvements to better serve older adults in their home in the past fiscal year. The Operation Boost initiative, mentioned in the innovations section, is continuing to decrease the waitlist size for personal care and home support service. The waitlist size was over 600 people at the beginning of the 2024-2025 fiscal year and has dropped below 400 in June 2025, which is almost a 35% reduction in a year. Additionally, the OPTIONS program has optimized their internal performance tracking to ensure that consumers are receiving their initial home visit in a timely manner.

As of July 2025, this home visit compliance rate was 98% which is well above the state's 85% standard. Both initiatives have contributed to an improved care experience, where consumers often receive in-house meals, personal emergency response system devices, home support, personal care, and other supplies.

Hard to Serve List Over Time



Senior Community Centers

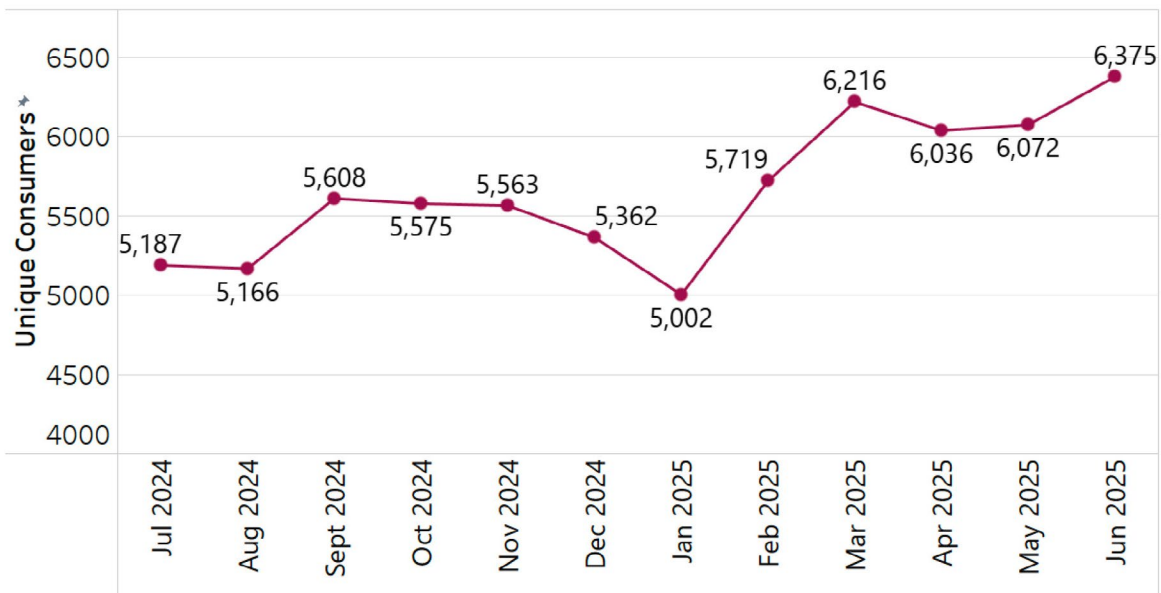
Senior Community Centers (SCC), aka Senior Centers, are vital spaces where older adults can fulfill their social needs, stay physically active, maintain emotional health, keep their minds sharp, enjoy nutritious meals, and access a variety of services. These centers are part of a comprehensive and coordinated system designed to support community-based services and activities. They offer programs and services that support independence, boost dignity, and encourage community involvement. SCCs play an essential role in reducing loneliness among older adults, as feelings of isolation can have adverse effects on both mental and physical health. In Allegheny County, we have two types of centers:

1. Focal Point Senior Community Centers are facilities where people 60+ meet to access services and fulfill social, emotional, physical, cultural, and intellectual needs. They promote well-being through coordinated services like information, outreach, nutrition, programs, volunteer opportunities, wellness activities, and access to community resources. They operate at least 5 days a week, 6 hours daily.
2. Satellite Senior Community Centers are smaller, less comprehensive, and must be affiliated with a focal point. They provide at least a congregate meal, with limited services and reduced hours.

Data and Trends

Senior centers continue to be a pivotal support system for the older adult community in Allegheny County. By providing activities, congregate meals, and spaces for socialization, the 43 centers in the network have consistently served over 5,000 unique individuals each month in the past 2024-2025 fiscal year; totaling to almost 12,000 unique people served in the fiscal year. These consumers received over 855,000 self-directed and instructor led activities, including health & wellness, life skills & education, arts & humanities, and fitness. Throughout the year, the network has seen noticeable increases in traffic, serving over 1,000 more people in June 2025 compared to July 2024. This growth can be attributed to several initiatives implemented by the senior center network in collaboration with the AAA, including the continued use of the Blooming Health communication tool, targeted outreach, and marketing to local communities.

Senior Center Attendance in Allegheny County FY24/25



Senior Companion Program

The Senior Companion Program is a federally funded program consisting of older adults, 55 and over, who provide regular visits to older adults, 60 and over, in Allegheny who could benefit from these visits.

Senior Companions must meet income guidelines (income not to exceed 200% of the federal poverty level) and receive a small tax-free stipend for their service. Individuals whose income exceeds the limit can serve as non-stipended volunteers. Care recipients must be 60 or older and reside in Allegheny County.



To access services, please call the Senior Line at (412) 350-5460 or the Senior Companion Program at (412) 350-4061.

How Volunteering Works:

- AAA staff match volunteers with older adults in need of companionship.
- Volunteers typically visit 2 - 3 times a week.
- Volunteers, who qualify based on their income receive a stipend every two weeks to support their needs such as transportation or small expenses associated with the visits.
- Receipt of this stipend does not impact Social Security benefits.
- Volunteers who do not qualify for the stipend are still welcomed to participate without compensation.

Data and Trends

In the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the senior companion program has facilitated companionship for 417 older adult participants, 138 of them being new to the program. The program also welcomed 14 new volunteers in November 2024, bringing the total to 109 volunteers active in the program during the past fiscal year. These volunteers served a total of 72,286 hours, which represents 96% of the target goal of 75,168 hours and exceeds the 90% goal AmeriCorp sets for the program.



Innovation Series: Advancing Aging Services in Allegheny County

To address the complex, evolving needs of older adults in our community, AAA continues to explore and implement groundbreaking Innovations in Aging Services. These innovations are designed to move beyond traditional, often fragmented, service models by piloting holistic, community-based solutions that leverage cutting-edge technology and interprofessional collaboration to improve service delivery. This report highlights some of the unique initiatives AAA implemented to meet the needs of older adults during the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Aging Resource and Information Assistant (ARIA): AAA is pilot testing ARIA, which is the agency's virtual assistant. This is a 24/7 interactive service for those looking for quick answers to questions like housing resources, nutrition services, etc. This service can be utilized as a resources outside normal office hours or before one decides if they want to talk to someone for more service details. Eventually ARIA will have the ability to connect older adults who contact AAA to community resource providers.

Dual Response Model: This refers to a new approach the agency's protective service program implemented when responding to report of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of vulnerable adults. It involves dividing investigative tasks between two groups where one investigative unit focuses on time sensitive items when responding to new reports while the other group completes any follow up tasks. The AAA adopted this approach to address both Reports of Needs (RON) volume, and compliance within the protective services bureau to ensure immediate safety of at-risk older adults served by the agency.

Protective Services Staff Retention and Investigator Salaries: With the increasing staff turnover rates during and immediately post pandemic, the AAA invested in an initiative to stabilize staffing through salary revisions to meet national averages across related occupations. This has resulted in an estimated 75% of staff retention.

Protective Services Staff Training Program: AAA partnered with Temple University to implement a structured training program for all AAA Protective Services staff that is both complementary to Protective Services Basics and specific to the needs of aging Allegheny County residents.

Care Transitions Staff Retention and Workforce Modernization: In the last two fiscal years, CCTP re-evaluated strategic ways to retain staff. This re-evaluation involved salary revisions and establishing career ladders. To accompany this, a state certification Community Health Worker training was introduced for all coaches. Beginning in 2026, this certification will be a requirement for all coaches and new hires to meet industry standards.

Admission, Discharge, Transfer (ADT) Alerting System: The ADT Alerting Service System is a healthcare alert system provided by the health information exchange Clinical Connect. The exchange is comprised of more than 40 hospitals, plus physician practices, Health Plans, MCOs ACOs, rehabilitation and post-acute care facilities. AAA uses this system to alert care managers in near real time when active OPTIONS consumers enter emergency rooms at hospitals in and around Allegheny County in the hopes of improving the efficiency and quality of care.

A Path To Home: Beginning in early 2025, AAA launched a pilot initiative in partnership with Highmark Wholecare to strengthen housing outcomes for individuals admitted to Bethlehem Haven's Medical Respite program. Individuals are referred to AAA Care Managers who meet the individuals face-to-face to assess housing needs, establish goals, and provide consistent, individualized support throughout the transition process. Through this initiative, AAA care managers assist at-risk individuals in securing housing, demonstrating the value of coordinated care management and targeted housing support in improving stability and long-term outcomes.

Blooming Health Communication Technology: Throughout fiscal year 2024-25, AAA continued to utilize Blooming text Health messaging technology across different programs including SeniorLine, Senior Centers, Community Based Services, Housing Programs, Senior Companions, and Ombudsman services to improve communication and service access for older adults in Allegheny County. In addition to the Six senior centers which adopted the platform, AAA also utilizes the technology as a platform to benefit other community partners as

long as their messaging fits our mission. Through this technology AAA reaches over 40,000 consumers across the county in multiple languages to inform them about vital resources, such as signups for Farmer's Market Nutrition Vouchers, Community partner events, transportation, and in-home assistance.

Senior Companions Timesheet Digitalization: AAA migrated from the traditional paper copy time sheets to digitally submitted time sheets to improve service delivery to reimbursement of senior companions. A Qualtrics timesheet was created, and senior companions are piloting its effectiveness using their smart phones to enter requires information, allowing the client to digitally sign off and then submit the form to AAA which eliminates human error. Approximately 30% of the senior companions are using this system which has proven to save staff time and improve accuracy. AAA continues to encourage all senior companions to adopt the new system to streamline and speed up the reimbursement process.

Senior Line Bookings: In response to feedback and requests from our community, AAA introduced Senior Line Bookings which give callers the ability to schedule a call ahead of time to allow them the opportunity to select a time that is convenient for them and all parties involved. This initiative was introduced to give older adults and anyone calling into Senior Line the autonomy to schedule a time that works best for them so their needs are affectively addressed.

Congregate and HDM meal separation: The Community Based Services bureau has made significant innovative changes in the congregate and home delivered meals services. This was accomplished through a nutrition Request for proposals (RFP) with a goal to allow for more accurate care plans and to reduce the number of lost meals. The RFP afforded AAA the opportunity to redesign the programs, separating Home Delivered Meals and Congregate Meal service and increasing meal rates to allow for higher quality food grade options and varied menu choices for older adults. All of the menus were redone to include enhanced proteins and sides as well as fan favorites like stuffed cabbage and soup. Senior center consumers have been surveyed on a regular basis and the satisfaction rate is an A+.

Meal Ordering Module (MOM): The AAA analytics team led a project to add a Meal Ordering Module to the Senior Centers' existing Copilot system where they can leverage their Copilot data to assist in streamlining the ordering of meals and meal items i.e. salt, napkins, plates, etc. With MOM, congregate meal sites have the capability to customize their menus based on client preferences which helps to eliminate confusion, food waste, and the resulting additional costs to the network.

