Mapping Your Community's Resources to Improve Access to Public Benefits for Seniors

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What we're not going to talk about

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Agenda

- Introduction
    - What is the National Council on Aging?
    - What do we mean by benefits access?
    - What do we mean by community mapping?
- What is the goal of benefits access work?
    - Five Phases of Benefits Access
- Where do you fit in?
- Examples and best practices for community mapping
- Q&A

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National Council on Aging (NCOA)

NCOA is a nonprofit service and advocacy organization.

Our mission: To improve the lives of millions of older adults, especially those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged.

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What do we mean by benefits access?

- A basic level of income
- Medical care
- Prescription drugs
- Food
- Heating and cooling

➢ SSI

➢ Medicaid and MSPs

➢ LIS and SPAPs

➢ SNAP

➢ LIHEAP

Benefits make a big difference

LIHEAP $319.00

LIS $4,000.00

SSI $6,000.00

Total Estimated Annual Value: $12,947

SNAP $1,428.00

MSP min. $1,200.00
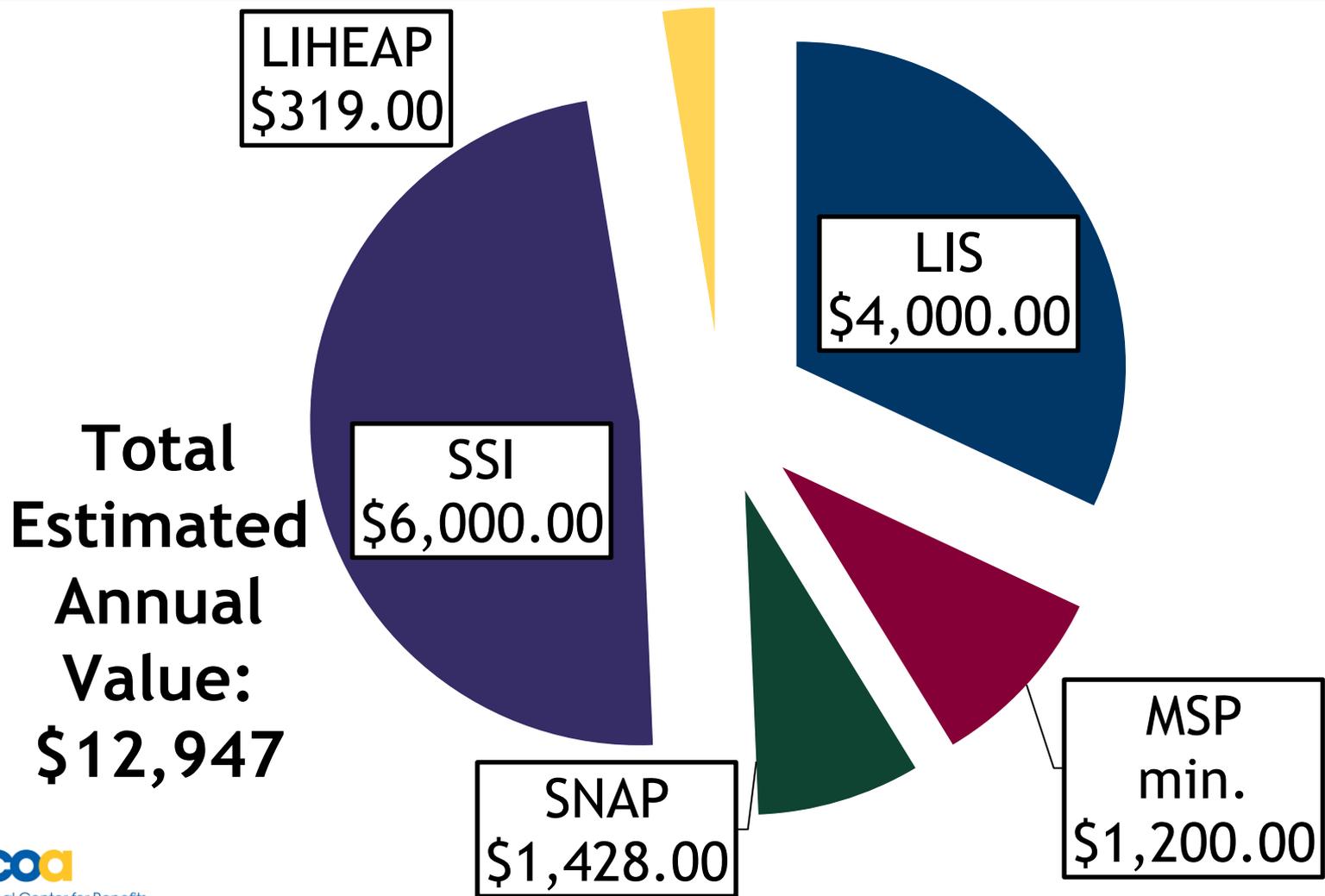
What is community mapping?

- Not about an actual geographic map

- Process of thinking more broadly about benefits access:
  - Taking stock of community resources
  - "What does this community provide for seniors?" instead of "What does my organization provide for seniors?"
  - How do we help seniors fully access benefits?

- Being more strategic in your partnerships

- Coalition building

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What is the goal of benefits access work?

Key Outcome:

Enrollment and Retention of Benefits

Who is your target population for benefits access?

- Different populations may have different needs or require different kinds of assistance

- You can draw a different community map for each of your target populations

- What are the distinctive needs of your target population(s)?

- How do those needs require different assistance from the community?

What needs to happen for your target population to enroll in and retain benefits?

5 Phases of Benefits Access

- Outreach and Education

- Screening

- Application Assistance

- Using the Benefit

- Retention/Recertification

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Example of Benefits Access Activities: Application Assistance

- **Goal of this phase**: Helping an individual move from screening eligible for a benefit to being accepted into the benefit

- Examples of activities in this phase:
  - Collect necessary documentation
  - Complete applications
  - Submit application and required documentation
  - Ensure client attends required interviews
  - Troubleshoot application, providing additional information or resolve delays
  - Track clients to ensure a timely decision is reached
  - Verify information contained in the application
  - Adjudicate the application

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Community Mapping Matrix

	Area Agency on Aging	Eligibility Agency	Community Based Organization	Legal Services
Outreach and Education	Events at senior centers	Letters to beneficiaries	Outreach to Low English Proficiency clients	
Screening	BenefitsCheckUp			
Application Assistance	Complete and submit applications	Verify and adjudicate applications	Volunteer translators for interviews	Appeals when appropriate
Use of Benefit	Follow-up to accepted clients		Posters explaining how to use the benefit	
Retention and Recertification	Tracking clients	Share recertification lists		

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What are your strengths and weaknesses?

- Looking at your list of benefits access activities, which ones are you best suited to do?

- Which activities are hardest for you to do?

➢ **Where in the process is your "hand-off"?**

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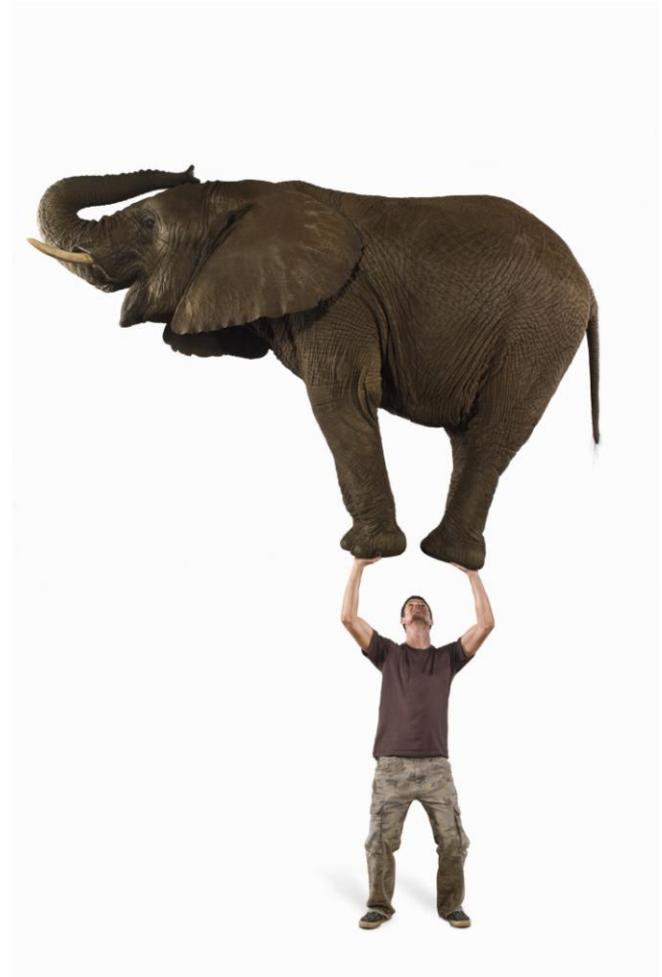
Bridging the Gaps

- What happens after you refer a client elsewhere?

- Does the client reach the key benefits access outcome (Get and Keep the Benefits)?

- If not, where do you think the gaps are?

- Who in your community can fill those gaps?

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Examples of Bridging the Gaps

- **Outreach and Education**
  - If someone calls in with a specific need, will anyone educate them about other benefits they might be eligible for?

- **Screening**
  - What happens after someone is screened for benefits and appears eligible for multiple benefits?

- **Application Assistance**
  - Is someone making sure clients don't get lost in the shuffle after submitting applications?

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Examples of Bridging the Gaps: Government Agencies

- **Non-traditional sources of outreach:**
  - DMV
  - Assessment and Taxation
  - Unemployment Office
  - Office of Faith–Based and Community Services

- **Eligibility Agencies:**
  - Completing perfect applications
  - Access to state databases to check on the eligibility status of clients

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Building Community Coalitions

- Are your partners at the table with you? If not, what are opportunities to start conversations?

- What's your vision for where you fit in?

- What brings your partners to the table?
  - What are their goals?
  - What incentives are there for them to work with you?
  - What constraints are your partners under?

- What are the win-win-win opportunities that exist for you and your partners and your clients?

Best Practices for Community Mapping

- Focus on intermediate goals
  - What can you accomplish in 3 months that would make it easier for your clients to access benefits?

- Not necessarily new partnerships, but more seamless ones
  - How do you clients work with your colleagues in your organization?
  - How do your clients work with your partners?
  - Are there ways to make it easier for your clients to move between people and organizations?
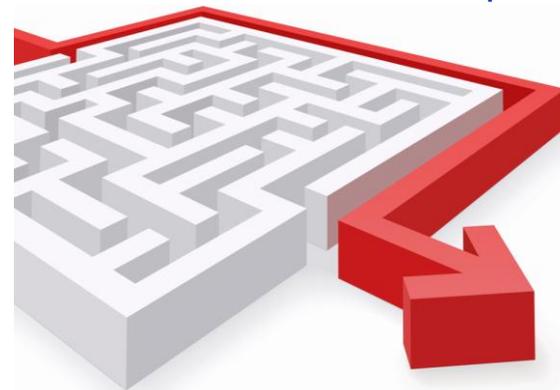
Adapting your community mapping

- Community mapping is not a one-time process, it's ongoing

- As new challenges arise, this process can be done again.

- Tracking your clients is one of the best ways to keep your community mapping dynamic
  - Where in the benefits access process are many of your clients falling off?

Resources: Center for Benefits

- Supported by Administration on Aging and housed at NCOA

- www.centerforbenefits.org
  - Benefits 101 webinar series
  - *You Gave, Now Save* consumer guide to benefits
  - Promising practices
  - Fact sheets
  - Resource library for professionals

- www.vimeo.com/channels/ncboe

Questions?

Contact Us

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Visit us on the Web at: www.centerforbenefits.org

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