



National Toolkit for Hosting Events

2015 WHITE HOUSE
CONFERENCE
on **AGING**

History of White House Conferences on Aging

The first White House Conference on Aging was held in 1961, with subsequent conferences in 1971, 1981, 1995, and 2005. These conferences have been viewed as catalysts for development of aging policy over the past 50 years. The conferences generated ideas and momentum prompting the establishment of and/or key improvements in many of the programs that represent America's commitment to older Americans including: Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and the Older Americans Act. The 2015 White House Conference on Aging is an opportunity to recognize the importance of these key programs, as well as to look ahead to the issues that will help shape the landscape for older Americans for the next decade.

2015 White House Conference on Aging

The face of America is growing older and more diverse as the first baby boomers reached retirement age in 2011, accelerating a population surge in the number of Americans over the age of 65. Each day for the next 15 years, thousands more will reach retirement age, creating new opportunities for how we define what it means to be an older American.

As we listen to aging leaders and older Americans, some of the common themes we hear include the following:

Retirement security is a vitally important issue. Financial security in retirement provides essential peace of mind for older Americans, but requires attention during our working lives to ensure that we are well prepared for retirement.

Healthy aging will be all the more important as baby boomers age. As medical advances progress, the opportunities for older Americans to maintain their health and vitality should progress as well and community supports are important tools to promote this vitality.

Long-term services and supports remain a priority. Older Americans overwhelmingly prefer to remain independent in the community as they age. They need supports to do so, including a caregiving network and well-supported workforce.

Elder justice is important given that seniors, particularly the oldest older Americans, can be vulnerable to financial exploitation, abuse, and neglect. The Elder Justice Act was enacted as part of the Affordable Care Act, and we need to realize its vision of protecting seniors from scam artists and others seeking to take advantage of them.

Retirement Security

A secure financial foundation for retirement was historically envisioned as a three-legged stool with support from Social Security, pensions, and savings or investments. As private pension options change and fewer workers spend their careers with a single employer, the sources of retirement security are changing too.

Determining when to retire often depends on whether you have enough money saved or become eligible for retirement benefits. Protecting Social Security is critical to helping ensure that all older Americans can retire with dignity. Many retirees and near-retirees saw their earnings, savings, and investments fall due to the recession, and although the economy has improved, these sources of retirement income are still recovering. In addition, currently over 75 million working Americans—about half of the workforce—do not have access to retirement plans through their employers. These workers need more ways to save for retirement and prepare for unforeseen expenses. Some older Americans work out of economic necessity. Others may be attracted by the social contact, intellectual challenges, or sense of value that work often provides. Improving wages and benefits for all American workers—especially older workers—and ensuring opportunities for older Americans who choose to remain in the workforce, can provide additional avenues for income security in retirement.

Healthy Aging

While we cannot stop the passage of time, we can make healthy choices that shape how we age. Exercising, eating well, regular health screenings and immunizations provide the foundations of staying healthy throughout life. Adopting these healthy habits can have a positive effect on quality of life as a person ages.

We can all take steps to prevent the onset of disease—and these steps are especially important as we grow older. The National Prevention Strategy is a comprehensive plan that provides a framework and actionable steps to help increase the number of Americans who are healthy at every stage of life. For example, the National Prevention Strategy includes steps that the federal government, state and local governments, business partners, and individuals can take to encourage tobacco-free living. Primary prevention in late life also includes reducing risks for preventable injuries such as falls—a significant cause of disability affecting nearly one in three older adults a year.

As a result of the Affordable Care Act, Medicare now provides coverage without cost-sharing for many preventive screenings to help older Americans stay healthy. By enhancing health insurance coverage among people under 65, the Affordable Care Act will help future retirees be healthier by ensuring access to preventive care and treatment for chronic conditions.

Creating and supporting communities that are age-friendly can allow older adults to age in place in the community as well as assist in supporting their health and vitality. Bringing together enhanced partnerships among health care services, aging services, and housing can help support older Americans thriving in their communities as they age.

Long-term Services and Supports

Despite efforts to stay healthy and prevent disease, many older adults will eventually develop some limitations and need some paid or unpaid help with basic daily living activities. Long-term

services and supports help older adults and people with disabilities accomplish everyday tasks such as bathing, dressing, preparing a meal, or balancing a checkbook. In many cases, assistance with just a few of these tasks help older adults remain independent in their own home in the community, which a majority of older Americans prefer. These supports are overwhelmingly provided at home by family and friends and other caregivers, but may be provided in settings such as assisted living or nursing facilities as well.

While most people get help from family and friends with no money changing hands, almost 35% of older people pay for services, raising issues of access, affordability, and quality. For older adults with functional limitations who cannot rely solely on family and friends, long-term care can be costly. Private services in the home cost an average of \$1,800 a month, and nursing homes cost anywhere from \$70,000 to \$80,000 a year. Medicare does not cover most long-term care and since Medicaid pays only for services for people with limited financial means, individuals often only qualify after depleting all their resources. Through the Affordable Care Act, the Administration is partnering with states, consumers, and advocates to create long-term support systems in which people with disabilities and chronic conditions have choice, control, and access to a full array of quality services that assure optimal outcomes, such as independence, health, and quality of life. The Affordable Care Act also provides incentives for states to rebalance their long-term services and support systems more towards community settings.

Long-term care planning should be part of comprehensive retirement planning. There are few private mechanisms available to help people plan ahead to pay for their future care. Many older adults use their homes or other assets to pay for this care. Long-term care insurance can be costly and difficult to purchase, particularly for those with pre-existing health conditions or disabilities. Less than three percent of Americans currently have a policy. There are opportunities to explore new options to assist Americans in preparing for these needs as they age.

Elder Justice

As Americans live longer and technology becomes increasingly sophisticated, older Americans can be vulnerable to scam artists and others seeking to exploit them for financial gain. They also can be vulnerable to abuse and neglect. The negative effects of abuse, neglect, and exploitation on the independence, well-being, and health of seniors are extensive. Elder abuse increases the risk of premature death and causes unnecessary illness, injury, and suffering and can threaten the economic security of older Americans. And it impacts elders across all economic, racial and ethnic lines, regardless of where they live—at home, with families, in assisted living, and nursing homes. People living with dementia are at higher risk for abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Cognitive impairment reduces financial capacity, increasing the risk of financial exploitation.

Elder abuse carries both a human cost and an economic cost. It undermines our public investments in long-term services and supports. The costs of elder abuse are borne by public

programs of the federal government and the states, private businesses and most importantly, by families and individuals.

The Elder Justice Act, enacted as part of the Affordable Care Act, recognizes the nation's need to address this issue. Since 2012, the federal Elder Justice Coordinating Council, authorized by the Elder Justice Act, has brought together federal agencies to build the federal capacity to address elder abuse. In 2012, the White House hosted a World Elder Abuse Awareness Day event which focused on the issue of elder financial exploitation.

These steps are only the beginning. We can continue to develop public-private partnerships, as well as partnerships with state and local-level entities, to stem the tide of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Hosting An Event

The White House Conference on Aging will build on broad public engagement in the lead-up to the Conference, including regional forums around the country. Members of Congress and Governors may wish to host aging events in their home states leading up to the national conference in Washington, DC and have the results considered as part of the 2015 White House Conference on Aging. To do so, we ask policymakers to share a summary of their events within 30 days of completion, and not later than June 30, 2015. The results of these events will be posted on the White House Conference on Aging (WHCOA) website (www.whitehouseconferenceonaging.gov). We have provided a template for this purpose and to transmit your information to the WHCOA website.

Feedback from Members of Congress and Governors' community conversations will be compiled, and priority issues, successes, and solutions will be used to inform the national conference. Additionally, select stories of individuals may be shared on the website and on other materials.

Community members who wish to individually submit input or personal stories may do so at the WHCOA website, as well.



Suggested Template for Members of Congress and Governors to Consider Using for Sharing Information with the White House Conference on Aging

Name of Event: _____

Date of Event: _____

Location of Event: _____

(include city and state)

Number of Persons attending: _____

State or Congressional District: _____

Contact Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Email: _____

Following this format for each priority area, with the most important listed first, will assist in facilitating consideration of your feedback and input. Please ensure that your state and/or congressional district name and contact information is provided at the bottom of each page submitted.

Again, to facilitate consideration of your input, we suggest a document of no more than 5 pages in length. Recommendations should be related to one or more of the 2015 Conference priority areas: retirement security, healthy aging, long-term services and supports, and elder justice. We ask that recommendations be prioritized by rank, with the highest listed first.

Priority Issue #1: (describe specific issue)

Barriers: (list any barriers that may exist related to this issue)

Proposed Solution(s): (list suggested solutions to the challenges described above)

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