



Department for the Aging 25-26 Annual Update

The following is an abstract that lays out the objectives and activities for programs and services within the Department for the Aging.

As the Area Agency on Aging, it is the responsibility of the Erie County Department for the Aging to plan, coordinate, advocate, and initiate the development of a comprehensive service delivery system at the local level to meet the short and long-term needs of Erie County's older adults and their families. The Department works with older adults, providers, elected and public officials, and volunteers to coordinate existing services, and to facilitate the development of new ones. The preparation of a four-year plan and subsequent Annual Implementation Plans outline efforts the Department will make to address existing and emerging needs in the community. These plans specify how federal, and state funds will be used by the Department throughout the planning period.

The Department for the Aging is committed to promoting the well-being of adults aged 60 and over through coordinated and cost-effective services that enhance their independence, dignity and quality of life. These services include information and assistance; congregate meals; transportation; health insurance counseling; fitness and health promotion; and intensive home and community-based services for our most frail older adults, including case management; home care; personal emergency response systems (PERS); and home delivered meals. Support is also extended to those caring for frail older adults through respite services like social adult day care programs, along with additional resources that ease the demands of daily caregiving.

ERIE COUNTY Department for the Aging' PRIORITIES FOR 2025-26

- Enhance the visibility and public awareness of Erie County's Aging and Disability Resource Center --- *NY Connects*; expand staff presence in Erie County communities; and increase the number of clients served annually.
- Continue to increase awareness on SNAP and HEAP program modifications while working with community partners across Erie County. Assist in getting new SNAP applications submitted.
- Establish new partnerships to help NY Connects and the Department for the Aging better serve veterans residing in Erie County.
- Strengthen the EISEP case management system to ensure older adults receive consistent service throughout Erie County.
- Enhancing capacity to address the increasing need for health insurance guidance: NY Connects staff pursue certification through the Health Insurance Information Counseling & Assistance Program (HIICAP) to strengthen service delivery.

- Address shortcomings in the availability of personal care services throughout Erie County by contracting with new agencies, expanding the use of consumer-directed services, and working with community partners to advocate for workforce development in this crucial area of need.
- Increase community capacity to serve caregivers of the frail elderly, especially those with Alzheimer’s disease, through new and expanded community partnerships and a campaign inviting caregiver input
- Build regional partnerships to gain efficiencies and increase the Department’s ability to generate new resources to support expansion of services.

ADVOCACY

To promote public policy, legislation, and private sector initiatives which address the needs of older adults. Department for the Aging will advocate for additional resources and modifications in public policy to further promote the independence and optimum well-being of older adults.

- The following are some of the advocacy issues that will be addressed by Department for the Aging in 2025-2026:
- Continue to promote the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act and provide input to help facilitate the modernization of the bill.
- Increase funding for Older Americans Act programs that expand home and community-based services, transportation, legal assistance, evidence-based health promotion, employment opportunities, caregiver support, and nutritional services.
- Advocate for a dynamic role for Area Agencies on Aging, as well as Aging and Disability Resource Centers, in the delivery of long-term services and supports in New York State.

PLANNING & COORDINATION

- To promote the development of a coordinated and comprehensive system of services for older adults, especially those with greatest needs, so that they may remain in their own homes and participate fully in community life.
- Enhance capacity within the Department and wider community to provide health and wellness evidence-based programs with Certified Master Trainers recruiting and training volunteer lay-leaders to support A Matter of Balance (falls prevention) and Living Healthy (Diabetes and Chronic Disease Self-Management) programs.
- Foster and strengthen strategic community alliances across Western New York to drive key initiatives—expanding access to caregiver support, broadening the reach of evidence-based wellness programs, and enhancing services for veterans.

COLLABORATIVE WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

- Department for the Aging will bolster cooperative efforts in the public and private sectors to successfully meet the demands of our growing population.
- The Department will work together with key community stakeholders in the following ways in 2025-26:

- Join with other community funders to address persistent concerns including prevalence of chronic disease, hospital re-admissions, and social engagement.
- Engage health insurers in the process of exploring what new and mutually beneficial ways the aging network's services may be of value to them and other payers.
- Work with community partners to address persistent gaps in the long-term services and supports system, including access to and awareness of services.
- Working with community partners to boost SNAP access for older adults can significantly reduce food insecurity and improve health outcomes

SERVICES OBJECTIVES

- To enable older adults to remain in their homes with a high quality of life for as long as possible through the provision of home and community-based services including support for family caregivers.
- In line with the above considerations, the Department for the Aging will maintain current programs making modifications as needed to reflect the changing needs of the consumer. These services include: (transportation, information and assistance, outreach, and case management)

ACCESS SERVICES

- Expand the Going Places Transportation Services program in Erie County, which supports older adults who are unable to drive.
- To maintain the county-wide case management system of Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP)-funded services as a tool for reducing long term care costs.

IN-HOME SERVICES

- Expand homemaker services, through Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly Program (Unmet Needs), funding available to functionally impaired older persons, including homemaker/personal care and housekeeper services.
- To continue chore maintenance and telephone assurance services, provided under contract with community-based agencies.
- To continue the distribution of personal emergency response services (PERS), which promote the safety and independence of frail and vulnerable older people.
- To ensure provision of home delivered meals for homebound Erie County residents unable to prepare meals for themselves.

WELLNESS AND NUTRITION SERVICES

- To provide hot, noontime meals and enhance socialization at congregate dining sites located throughout the county. Frozen take-home meals are also available, as well as dinner meals at select locations. Registered Dietitians provide nutrition education and one-on-one nutrition counseling. Nutrition staff also present healthy meal preparation demonstrations and interactive workshops.

- To continue to develop evidence-based programs, including the National Diabetes Prevention Program, the SNAP-Education Program, Walk with Ease and, A Matter of Balance workshops to help older adults remain healthy and active within their communities.
- To support the University Express Program, which provides older adults with opportunities for lifelong learning and social engagement through educational classes, field trips, book clubs, and fantasy sports leagues.
- To utilize technology to enhance programming at senior centers, promote online collaboration between senior centers, and improve connections with older adults at home.
- To offer the Club 99 resistance band exercise program designed to accommodate all levels of physical ability, ensuring that every older adult can participate and benefit from improved health and well-being. Club 99 also offers line dance classes at select locations and guided hikes in partnership with the Erie County Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department, which provide active and social ways to stay fit.

LEGAL SERVICES

- To continue to offer Education and Outreach opportunities in legal issues affecting older adults and their ability to plan for their own financial, long-term care, and health care needs.
- To continue to offer Legal Advice and Representation for older persons, grandparents and relatives who serve as primary caregivers of minor children, through a contract with the Center for Elder Law & Justice and the Kinship Care Program.

CAREGIVER SERVICES

- To continue to utilize social adult day care, providing care for frail and impaired older adults in a supervised setting while also serving as a respite program for the caregivers.
- To maintain in-home respite services while actively promoting the growth of community-based volunteer programs that support and strengthen family caregivers in their vital role.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- To continue community-based initiatives designed to recruit volunteers who provide direct assistance, such as transportation, Health promotions and minor home repairs, to at-risk older adults.

If you would like to see the Department for the Aging budget, please visit <https://www3.erie.gov/budget/county-budget>

For further information, please contact Jaclyn Strawbrich, (716) 858-6517

Written comments regarding the plans for services to older adults contained in this Abstract will be accepted until October, 24, 2025 at Erie County Department for the Aging Public Hearings, 95 Franklin St., Room 1341, Buffalo, NY 14202-3968. Comments may also be sent via SeniorInfo@erie.gov.