BECOMING AGE FRIENDLY BERKSHIRES:
A MUNICIPAL CHECKLIST

A SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR MUNICIPALITIES

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What is *Age Friendly*?

Age Friendly communities are *livable* - providing appropriate housing, good transportation, work and volunteer opportunities, plus a range of leisure activities for all residents - across their lifespans.

Age Friendly communities enable people to actively participate in civic and social life and treat everyone with respect, regardless of their age or ability. They are places that makes it easy for older people to stay safe and connected to the people that are important to them. Age Friendly communities help people stay healthy and active -- even at the oldest ages and provide appropriate support to those who can no longer look after themselves.

An *Age Friendly Berkshire County* is a great place to grow up and a great place to grow old!

This Checklist is intended to be used to "start the conversation" in your city or town, around becoming age-friendly. Chances are, you're doing alot already! No need to start from scratch – just put on your age-friendly lenses, review your current programs, software and practices that you're using to Communicate or share important Information with your residents. Then identify ways to expand or adapt your Actions from the suggestions on the Checklist - or create some yourselves. Don't forget to share best practices or what you've discovered, with other Berkshire County communities, via www.agefriendlyberkshires.com. For additional assistance with using the Checklists call Age Friendly Berkshires at 413-442-1521 x16.

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Communication & Information

Staying connected with people, events, news and practical information is a key part of aging in place. Age-friendly communities recognize that not everyone has a smartphone or Internet access. Mass media is still instrumental in communicating emergency and non-emergency information to the wider community. Access to community information should be centralized and standardized across the region, to ensure that all residents are able to receive or easily locate, needed information. Governments and service organizations must ensure that information on policies and issues affecting the public be developed with their input. Timely, effective and accessible dissemination of municipal/regional news must be through a variety of all-ability-friendly communication channels. It is recommended that municipalities consult legal counsel for compliance with Massachusetts General Laws regarding public information and the creation of internal communications and social media policies.

COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION
REGIONAL GOALS:

➢ Maximize the dissemination of necessary and useful information to all Berkshire residents regardless of their location, age, economic status, technical expertise or physical limitation.

➢ Develop or improve municipal-level communication to reach <u>all</u> residents.

➢ Develop a county-wide "senior voice" of, for and by, the growing population of older adults and encourage them to be more actively involved in their communities

➢ Develop an all-encompassing, ongoing program of information, resources and technical assistance to implement the Age Friendly Berkshires Action Plan and engage all residents in implementing

➢ Hold annual Age Friendly Berkshires events, e.g. Legislative breakfast, AFB Progress awards celebration and others, to highlight/celebrate progress implementing the Action Plan

Communication & Information Checklist

☐ Create a basic, but effective Municipal Communication Plan. Inventory what municipal info is being shared by each department, including both non-emergency and emergency channels; Survey residents to see how they are getting their news, ID gaps and weaknesses in local communications; Research/adopt effective methods to fill communication gaps

☐ Make sure municipal website is updated regularly and is easy to navigate; Design for the broadest range of consumers, including those with visual or physical impairments

☐ Utilize existing community-based networks e.g. faith communities, civic groups, education channels, business groups, etc. to share pertinent info.

☐ Create or link town website to timely information and broadcasts of interest to older residents, via the Age Friendly Berkshires website and other elder-serving websites , Berkshire Senior, N. Adams TV and others. Share content with neighboring towns.

☐ Printed information – including official forms or invoices and text on visual displays in public spaces, have large lettering with main ideas in bold type

☐ Maximize use of municipal public access channel to create and help distribute content to residents; Elicit cooperation/input from public mass media to fill communication gaps inexpensively but effectively, for appropriate messages. Consider sharing contracted communication services with neighboring towns, i.e. web hosting, design services, survey and e-news services, to reduce costs

☐ Investigate new media outlets (Newsletters/Posting Boards/Blogs/Twitter/FB) and custom mobile apps to broaden communications to reach residents of all ages

- Identify and reach out to socially isolated residents via personal contact from trusted municipal staff

- Review all print or spoken communication, to insure the use straight-forward sentences and simple language

- Telephone answering services shall give instructions slowly and clearly and tell callers how to repeat the message at any time

- Voting kiosks and public-use computer terminals, have large buttons/keys and big lettering

- Municipal signage uses large, bold fonts and is well-lighted

- Services provided at municipal facilities always includes friendly, person-to-person assistance.

Add you current or future Municipal Communication Actions here: