Becoming Age Friendly Berkshires: A Municipal Checklist 4 of 8

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 locally-available programs and practices that exist in your municipality to keep residents healthy and supported. 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.*

COMMUNITY & HEALTH SERVICES

Accessible and affordable community and health services are crucial to keeping residents healthy, independent and *actively aging*. Adults have different health care needs and preferences as they age. A range of services along the full continuum of care [preventive care, nutrition and wellness programs, providers trained in geriatrics, nearby hospitals, adult day centers, respite care, rehabilitation, nursing home care, home care and palliative care] is needed to meet these diverse needs. Ideally, community and health services should be in places convenient for all residents to reach and with appointments available in a reasonable timeframe. Providers should treat all clients with respect and attention. Education and centralized information on available health and wellness services and how to pay for them, would raise awareness of community care options for all.

COMMUNITY & HEALTH SERVICES
REGIONAL GOALS

➢ Catalogue all available health and community services for providers and the public alike

➢ Foster the establishment of new services after identifying gaps in the regional health and community service network

➢ Improve the overall quality of life by enabling greater access to and utilization of existing health and community programs, through targeted communications to all municipalities

➢ Work to improve health literacy; identify and address social determinants of health, to reduce regional inequities.

➢ Encourage the adoption of community -centered health and wellness programs, using new technologies and partnerships

➢ Adopt new community living models, e.g. co-housing or the Village model, to support healthier aging in place.

Community & Health Services Checklist

- ☐ Catalogue existing community, social and health service programs, and initiatives in town, to reduce confusion among both consumers and provider organizations.
- ☐ Work with key service providers to catalogue and disseminate health and community service info to residents via municipal channels, using a variety of media and including the AFB website.
- ☐ Encourage the location of accessible community and health service facilities close to downtowns, near public transportation.
- ☐ Identify barriers for residents to seeking assistance, including lack of transportation, fear, stigma or other. Create or participate in programs to engage at-risk elders, like TRIAD or other program
- ☐ Work with community organizations and businesses to offer health care providers, service personnel and first responders continuing education on concerns specific to older adults, including those with dementia or other cognitive or physical challenges
- ☐ Engage health system and community stakeholders to identify gaps in services and find solutions for more complete provision of health/medical and community services.
- ☐ Encourage the use of technology, such as telemedicine, where appropriate
- ☐ Facilitate ongoing collaboration among community service providers to establish 'safety nets' in areas where older adults currently may be at risk due to discontinuity between services.
- ☐ Review existing options and evaluate if they are addressing concerns specific to older adults and successful aging, particularly as they relate to access to geriatricians, prevention, nutrition, movement and psychological well-being.
- ☐ Promote successful programs to all age groups to increase utilization - e.g. A Matter of Balance, Get Cuffed.
- ☐ Support volunteerism in all age groups to increase social engagement and activism

☐ Ensure that community emergency planning takes into account the vulnerabilities and capacities of older people.

☐ Your Community & Health Services Actions here: