Knoxville-Knox County Council on Aging

2017 Senior Needs Assessment Report

Summary of May 11, 2017 Program

July 1, 2017

Acknowledgements

Many individuals contributed their experiences and vital suggestions to this senior needs assessment report. The May 11, 2017 meeting at the John T. O'Connor Senior Center brought together seniors, caregivers, senior service providers, community leaders and others to discuss and prioritize senior needs and possible solutions to these issues.

Special recognition and thanks are extended to the following facilitators and recorders who led eighty-eight participants through the extensive senior needs assessment process:

Introduction

Periodically, the Knoxville-Knox County Council on Aging (KCOA) sponsors a senior needs assessment process. The process aims to ferret out fresh insight into unmet and under-supported senior services. It helps guide the CAC Office on Aging and others in allocating resources effectively.

KCOA encourages, advocates on behalf of, and promotes issues of interest for all seniors in the community. An independent 501(c)3 entity, it is an advisory council to the Office on Aging. One key purpose of KCOA is identifying the needs of older persons in Knox County and the resources necessary to address those needs. The needs assessment process helps meet this intention. If you are interested in becoming involved with KCOA, please call 865-524-2786 and ask for Angela Grant (angela.grant@knoxseniors.org).

The last needs assessment occurred in May 2012. Sixty-two people contributed to that effort, and their concerns included free legal services, transportation issues, and fall prevention. They also cited the importance of resource information, adjustment of income eligibility criteria for services, and provision of more and better home care and assistance.

Program Preparation

This year, a similar structure for the needs assessment program was adopted. The program began with small discussion groups each led by two facilitators. Each small group participant offered issues and concerns; these in turn were consolidated into common themes. Each panel "voted" on its list to provide a weighting of importance, and then the participants suggested solutions. Each panel recorded the essence of its discussion.

To prepare for the program, planners met in early March to set a timeline. They identified potential leaders and issued invitations to a training session held on May 1, 2017. At that session, which drew 22 volunteers, participants were taught the roles of both facilitator and recorder.

Well before the training session, publicity for the program was provided in local media including an article in the May/June issue of *Elder News and Views*. The meeting was also featured in the Sunday *Knoxville News Sentinel* in the Office on Aging weekly bulletin, on Social Media pages including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and TV interviews on the Community TV outlet.

In addition to the meeting on May 11, two smaller meetings were held for Foster Grandparent Volunteers and Senior Companion Volunteers at O'Connor Senior Center.

Lastly, an on-line survey hosted by Survey Monkey was available for those who could not attend any of the meetings at O'Connor Senior Center.

Of the 137 participants, 73 answered that they are concerned citizens of Knox County and 64 answered they are representatives of organizations addressing the needs of seniors in Knox County; 110 participants answered female for gender while 27 answered male; 88 answered Caucasian for race or ethnicity, 31 answered African American and 18 did not answer. 53 answered under the age of 60 and 84 answered over the age of 60. The graphs below represent the ethnicity totals and shows the breakdown of the over 60 age group (next page).

Summary of Needs Assessment

Needs Assessment 2017: Race or Ethnicity
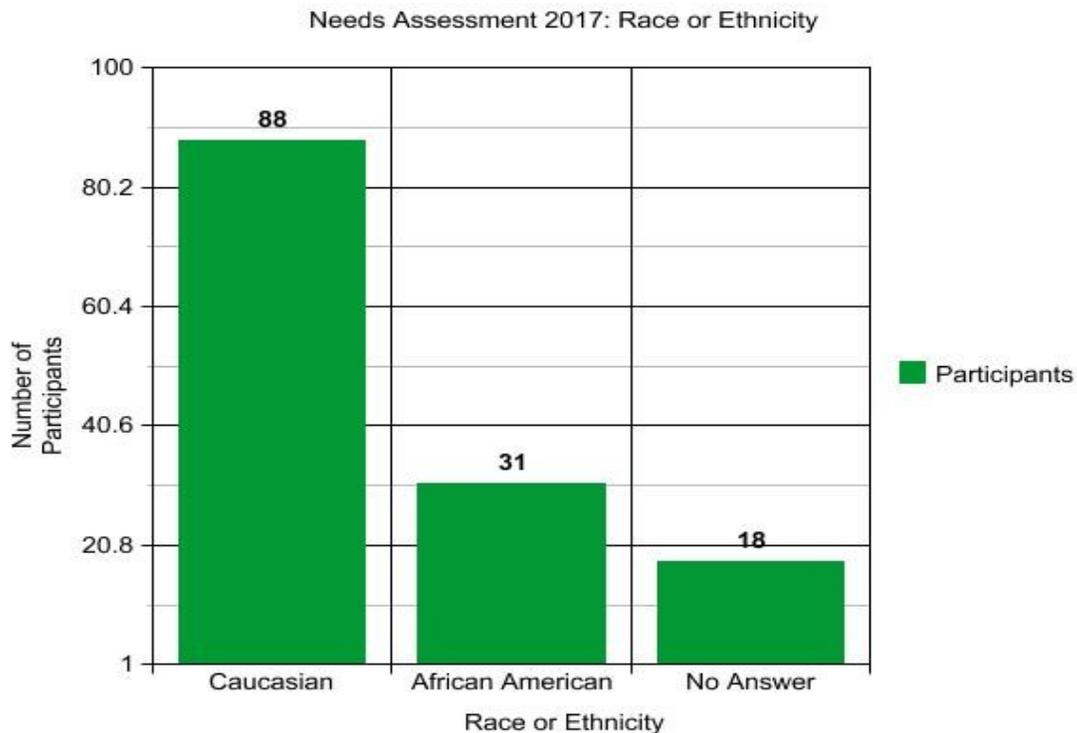
Needs Assessment 2017: Over 60 age group

8.33%
4.76%
22.62%
9.52%
5.95%
30.95%
17.86%

- 60-64 years old
- 65-69 years old
- 70-74 years old
- 75-79 years old
- 80-84 years old
- 85+ years old
- No Answer
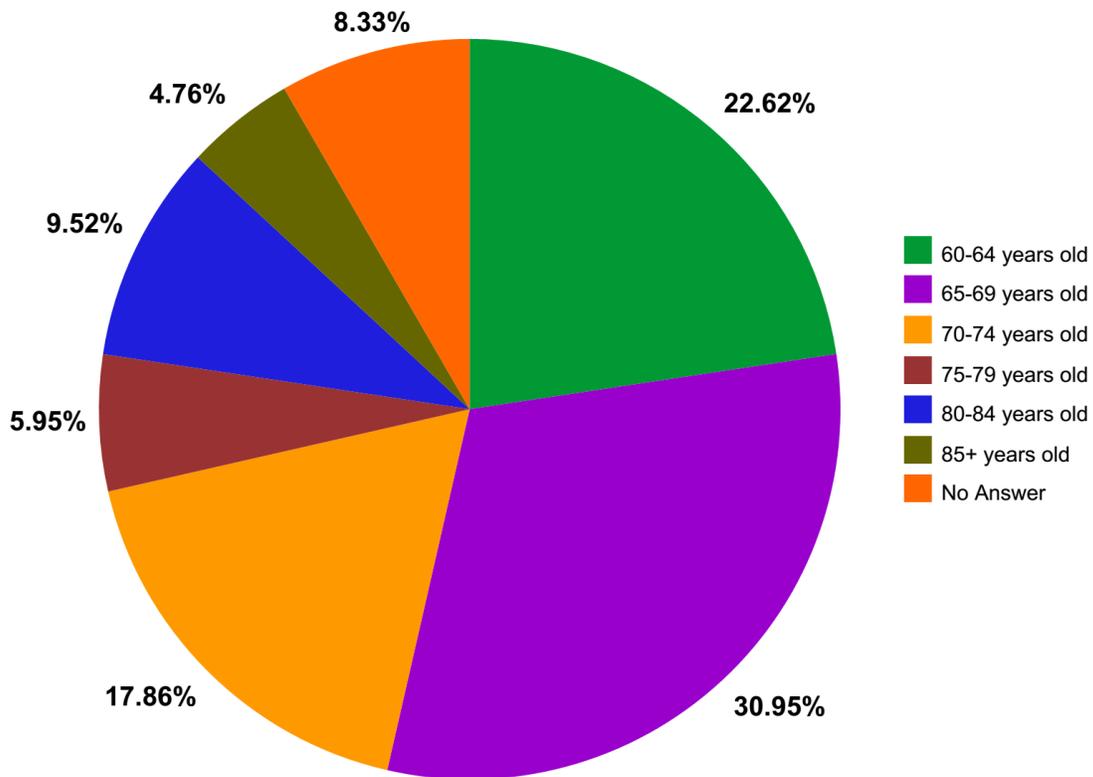
Ten distinct categories became evident after Office on Aging staff analyzed all feedback. These categories are listed in the following pages. The top five ideas in each category will be listed along with potential solutions.

662 Mentions Total

Healthcare—136
Quality of Life—94
Transportation—92
Housing—84
Outreach—58
Education—56
Safety—53
Information & Technology—50
Healthy Living—27
Legal—12

Needs Assessment 2017: Mentions

Legend:
- Healthcare
- Quality of Life
- Transportation
- Housing
- Outreach
- Education
- Safety
- Info. & Technology
- Healthy Living
- Legal
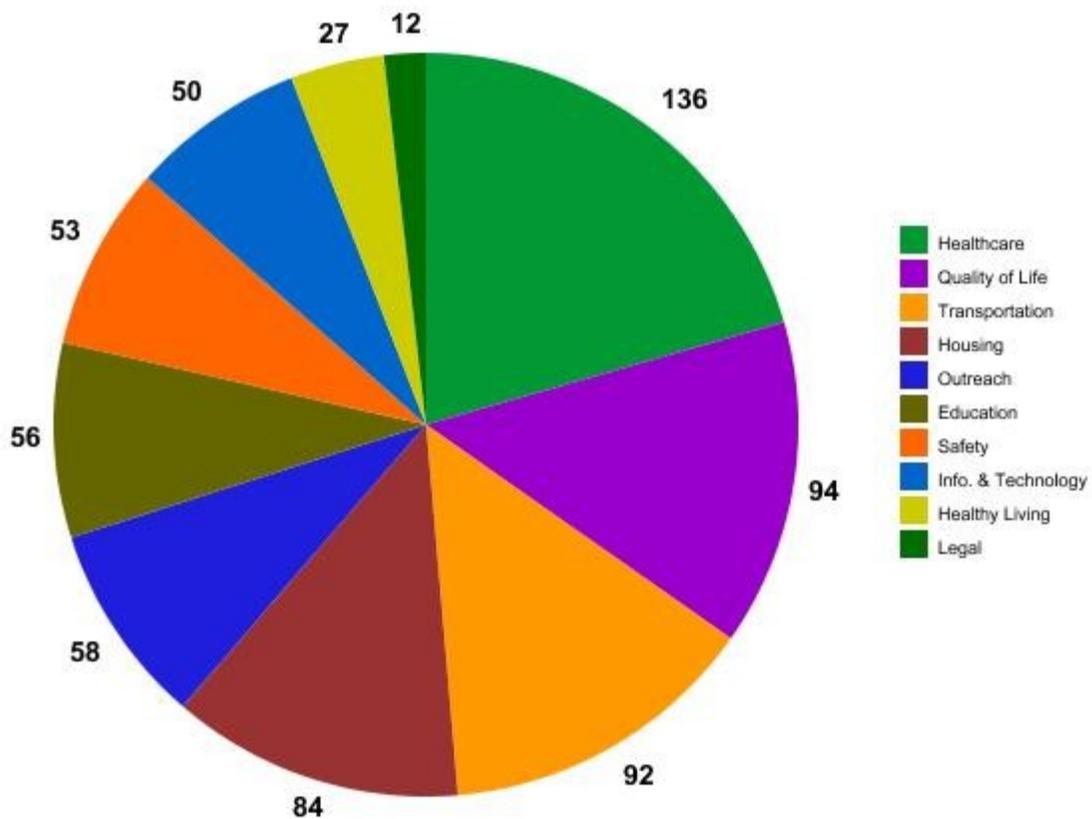
Healthcare
136 Mentions; 20% of feedback

It should come as no surprise that healthcare is the largest topic of discussion in a senior services needs assessment. This category covers everything from doctor's visits, to end of life issues, to caregiver support. Issues related to health will only continue as people live longer and the costs for adequate healthcare increases. The effects of ill health impact more than just the older adult; the strong mention of caregiver support speaks to the need to view the health of older individuals as a family or community issue.

Top Five Ideas

Healthcare Costs—32
Caregiver Support—19
Dementia Services—18
End of Life Care—12
Effects/Prevention of Falls—11

Potential Solutions

- Encourage community activism in favor of strong safety net for older adults that bring together government, non-profit, and individual partners.
- Expand existing caregiver respite and education programs that are available in the community such as the Office on Aging's Daily Living Center and Alzheimer's TN programs.
- Expansion of free or low cost clinics for healthcare.
- Increased funding for vision, hearing, and dental services.
- More collaboration among health partners to lower costs and find service alternatives.

Office on Aging Needs Assessment 2017

Quality of Life

94 mentions; 14% of feedback

"Quality of life" is a broad term that speaks to the varying issues that shape an older adult's well being. Having companionship, nearby resources such as grocery stores, and the tools necessary to age-in-place vastly increase the quality of life for older adults. A positive mental outlook can stave off a number of other health issues that affects their independence and happiness. Finances play a large role in this as well. If you find yourself having to spend more for the necessities of life, this leaves less money for entertainment and socialization. Participant responses show how the varying issues come together as quality of life.

Top Five Ideas

Increased cost of living—29
Aging-in-Place—22
Increase days/hours of Senior Centers—10
Store proximity to where older people live—10
More accessible senior discounts—5

Potential Solutions

- Encourage for-profit agencies to consider new ways of enticing older consumers—the fastest growing and overall wealthiest demographic in the community.
- Increase 2-1-1 awareness to help seniors fill the gaps.
- More collaboration among senior centers.
- Specifically document aging-in-place resources.
- Increase funding for seniors' pet services.

Office on Aging Needs Assessment 2017

Transportation

90 mentions; 14% of feedback

Older adults have several transportation options in Knoxville, but gaps still exist—especially in the county. In response to a previous needs assessment, the Volunteer Assisted Transportation program was born at CAC. This program offers a low cost way for seniors and people with disabilities to get door-through-door assistance to doctor's appointments, grocery visits, and social events. This program has increased capacity year after year, but it is completely dependent on volunteer availability. Increased volunteer help would allow this program to continue to grow and serve.

Top Five Ideas

Transportation (Overall)—24
Gaps in transportation—22
More volunteers for Volunteer Assisted Transportation—19
Medical/bed-bound transportation—9
Bus stops exposed to elements—4

Potential Solutions

- Conduct massive PR campaign to attract more volunteers for Volunteer Assisted Transportation.
- Pass these results on to city and county governments for their own review of transportation needs.
- Increase transportation options in rural areas of county.
- Increase discounts or free travel opportunities for those 65+.
- Increase existing KAT routes with focus on bus stop placement for seniors.

Housing

84 mentions; 13% of feedback

Housing is another major issue for older adults in Knox County. Affordability continues to be a top concern as the affordable housing stock has shrunk in the past few years. The lack of available, affordable housing has put a strain on service providers trying to find housing for homeless seniors or those at risk of being homeless. Issues related to senior independence crop up in the housing conversation as assessment participants identified needs for more home maintenance help and support services for seniors in low income housing, such as case management.

Top Five Ideas

Affordable housing—36
Housing (overall)—11
Emergency housing until permanent housing is found—10
House Maintenance Help—10
Low income housing support services for seniors (such as case management)—9

Potential Solutions

- Mayor Rogero's $2 million affordable housing fund is a good starting point for affordability issues.
- Continue landlord summits to help show importance of having affordable housing.
- Encourage efforts for the expansion of emergency housing in Knox County (KARM, Samaritan Place, Helen Ross McNabb Family Crisis Center).
- Foster program for older adults.
- Empower more volunteers to help with maintenance projects.

Office on Aging Needs Assessment 2017

Outreach

58 mentions; 9% of feedback

Resources are only as good as the number of potential clients who know about them. Outreach is necessary to continue educating seniors, their families, caregivers, and community partners about what services are available for older adults in Knox County. Outreach can help bring more seniors into the fold, decreasing loneliness and increasing the level of connectivity felt between older adults and their community.

Top Five Ideas

Loneliness/isolation—17
Streamlining of community services to assist navigation of those services—13
Acknowledge and reach out to diverse seniors (LGBT; veterans; religious people; people with disabilities, etc.)—10
Community Support (between police, schools, churches, etc.)—9
Welcome program for seniors new to senior services such as senior centers—4

Potential Solutions

- Do more to reach homebound seniors by promoting and growing existing programs like Mobile Meals, Contact Care Line, etc.
- Seek out opportunities to discuss senior services with diverse population groups.
- Create a "Welcome to Knoxville Senior Programs" class for those new to the area or newly senior.
- Increased partnerships with secondary and post-secondary institutions to provide intergenerational volunteer opportunities.
- County-wide commission on rural issues for seniors.

Office on Aging Needs Assessment 2017

Education

56 mentions; 8% of feedback

There is always a need to continuously educate seniors and the community on various issues related to aging. The entire aging network and community as a whole has a role to play in continuing this education. Participants identified some specific topics, such as education on what resources exist for people with disabilities and how for-profit companies need education on the rapidly aging population and their consumer interests.

Top Five Ideas

Education on services available (from social services to doctors' offices)—16
Education/Assistance on forms for services navigation—11
Education on resources for people with disabilities—9
Community education on ageism/aging process—7
Education on need for larger selection of items for
aging/disabled consumers in retail stores—6

Potential Solutions

- More coordination between aging social services and medical field.
- Involve Chamber of Commerce in discussions of the consumer needs of older adults.
- Share the findings of Knoxville's Council on Disability Issues (CODI).
- Offer communication based on person's need for interpreters, advocates, tools to help with disability, better understanding of needs of people with disabilities.
- Positive aging education (promotion/education, active living, involvement with livability issues, change the image of aging through advertisement, etc., encourage lifelong learning).

Safety

53 mentions; 8% of feedback

People are becoming increasingly aware about seniors' safety, especially in regard to elder abuse. Elder abuse can take many forms but is most commonly financial exploitation, neglect, or physical abuse against an older adult. Scams and financial exploitation of older adults have been dramatically increasing in the last few years. These, along with concerns about safety in their neighborhoods, can increase isolation and self neglect among our community's most vulnerable members.

Top Five Ideas

Elder abuse—20
Scams—20
Safety (fear of break-ins)—7
Exploitation by insurance companies/medical billers—1
Need for more visible security presence—1

Potential Solutions

- Increase capacity of Office on Aging's Elder Abuse Coordinated Community Response by obtaining new funding.
- Increase community awareness on identifying, reporting, and responding to elder abuse.
- Increase social services in high crime areas.
- Encourage increase of "community eyes" on older citizens.
- Address issues with petitions, attend community meetings, communicate with politicians to raise the profile of this issue in public consciousness.

Office on Aging Needs Assessment 2017

Information and Technology

50 mentions; 8% of feedback

CAC Executive Director Barbara Kelly once said, "Knowledge is power and information is a part of that." The more information you have, the more knowledgeable you are and therefore the more powerful you are in an information -centric world. This fact is especially true for older adults. Information and technology go hand in hand. It is important for everyone—including older adults—to have a grasp of both. This will help connect older adults with resources and people, which will ultimately increase their health, well being, and connectivity with those who can help safeguard them against abuse and other safety issues. As technology becomes an increasing part of our daily lives, we cannot afford to let older adults fall behind.

Top Five Ideas

Technology access and affordability—17
Help with navigating tech issues and options—9
Increased communication through technology—6
Technology (overall)—5
Distributing information to seniors more effectively through technology—5

Potential Solutions

- Expand CHIP program through partnership with East Tennessee Technology Access Center.
- Increase technology volunteers who can help seniors with tech issues and questions.
- Create Facebook group for Knox County seniors.
- Expand computer education for seniors in the workplace.
- Walk-in technology help at senior centers.

Office on Aging Needs Assessment 2017

Healthy Living

27 mentions; 4% of feedback

Better nutrition and exercise increase healthy living for any population, but especially for older adults. Programs like the Office on Aging's Mobile Meals have a big impact on senior health and wellness. Over 1,000 seniors receive meals during the work week with options for frozen meals to help them through the weekend. The O'Connor Senior Center and other local senior centers offers numerous opportunities for physical activity including aerobics, hikes, and even belly dancing! Healthy living is key to the longevity and quality of a senior's golden years.

Top Five Ideas

On site or nearby access to fresh, nutritious food—11
Food access and security—7
Nutrition (overall)—5
Exercise opportunities – 3
Food—1

Potential Solutions

- Increase SNAP outreach/benefits for seniors.
- Increase size or availability of community gardens.
- More food pantries that deliver.
- Combination of food and healthy living education (such as new program in congregate meal sites funded by a Humana Foundation grant).
- Increase social opportunities through exercise events.

Legal Assistance

12 mentions; 2% of feedback

Legal assistance is not always something people realize they need. As we age, it is important to have legal documents such as powers of attorney and advanced medical directives in place early to ensure your wishes are carried out when you are no longer able to decide. These results suggest the underutilization and under appreciation of senior legal services is a barrier we face moving forward.

Top Four Ideas

Legal access for those just above poverty line—6
Assistance with aging-specific legal documents—4
Grandparents as parents legal issues—1
Legal assistance for ageism issues—1

Potential solutions

- More older adult legal clinics with UTK law students.
- More funding for outreach and education about free legal services and civil rights.
- Increased funding for non-profit attorneys.
- Need funding to bridge income on who qualifies for free legal assistance.
- More education on the limits of Powers of Attorney and other legal documents often used by older adults.

Moving Forward

Using the information from the 2017 Needs Assessment, the CAC Office on Aging plans to share results with partner agencies and create new or expand existing programs to meet these needs. If you have any comments or feedback, please contact us at 865-524-2786 or email knoxooa@knoxseniors.org.

**MISSION STATEMENT OF THE
KNOXVILLE-KNOX COUNTY
COMMUNITY ACTION COMMITTEE (CAC)
OFFICE ON AGING**

The CAC Office on Aging is a public nonprofit agency that serves all seniors, regardless of life situation, but we are passionate about helping those for whom aging often presents the greatest hardship: those who are poor, in frail health, or alone.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE OFFICE ON AGING AT KNOXSENIORS.ORG

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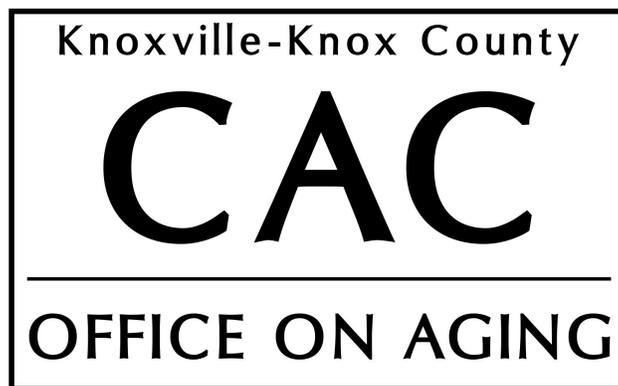
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