

Town Hall Meeting on Aging – Aging Best

Meeting Date: February 26, 2024

Sponsoring Agency: Aging Best

Location: Aging Best, Jefferson City, MO

Attendees: 93

Total Comments:

Main Topic	Comment Counts
Daily Life and Employment	181
Family Caregivers	165
Housing and Aging in Place	145
Long-Term Services and supports	161
Safety and Security	152
Transportation and Mobility	166
Whole Person Health	190
TOTAL:	1,160

Purpose:

The purpose of this town hall meeting hosted by the Aging Best Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) in Jefferson City, Missouri was to gather input from older adults, caregivers, and other stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities of aging in Missouri. The feedback will be used to inform the development of a state Master Plan for Aging (MPA), which aims to improve the quality of life for all generations of Missourians as they age.

The focus of discussions during the town hall centered on the overarching goal of Missouri's MPA that all Missourians, regardless of age or ability, will have access to person-centered programs and services necessary to help them age in their environment of choice in a safe and healthy manner.

Key Themes/Challenges/Identified Needs by Topic:

The town hall meetings consisted of a brief presentation on the Master Plan for Aging initiative, followed by facilitated discussions on seven main topics: daily life and employment, family caregivers, housing and aging in place, long-term services and supports, safety and security, transportation and mobility, and whole person health. The key themes, challenges, and identified needs from the discussions are summarized below:

- **Daily Life and Employment:** Participants expressed that maintaining a balanced daily life, employment discrimination, and mobility issues are key challenges. Some important current needs are timely transportation services, better communication between providers and patients/caregivers, accessibility, and navigating technology challenges. They highlighted as future needs more accurate communication methods, destigmatizing aging and older workers, improved employment programs for older adults.
- **Family Caregivers:** Participants discussed several challenges for caregivers, such as covering the cost of caregiving staff, lack of communication/knowledge about services, and caregiver burnout. They discussed respite care options, affordable long-term care plans, and education on tools for daily tasks. Participants identified a need for increased support and resources for family caregivers and better financial assistance options for caregiving.
- **Housing and Aging in Place:** Participants discussed the limited affordable housing options and lack of accessible housing features/modifications. They highlighted a current need for universal design/modification options for homes to support aging in place. They also discussed that more affordable and accessible housing for Missouri's aging should be a focus of the MPA with community involvement to share needs and find solutions.
- **Long-Term Services and Supports:** Participants recognized that affordability of long-term care plans/services and limited resources for paid caregiving staff are challenges affecting long-term services and supports. Current needs highlighted during the discussion were helping people needing different levels of care and education on eligibility criteria for long-term services/supports. Participants would like the MPA to address improved funding and sustainability of long-term care programs/services and expanded options/resources to meet the growing demand.
- **Safety and Security:** Challenges with neighborhood safety concerns/theft risks, scams targeting older adults (financial exploitation), and lack of awareness about safety resources/services were discussed by participants. Participants want education on scams/fraud prevention, improvements in neighborhood watch programs/community outreach efforts, and enhanced technology security measures/awareness. Some future needs that were identified are more community involvement in safety initiatives (neighborhood watch programs) and increased availability/accessibility of safety resources/services.

- **Transportation and Mobility:** Participants indicated a lack of transportation options in rural areas, limitations due to mobility issues/aging process, and unreliable public transportation systems/providers. Improved accessibility/options for transportation (including rideshare services), better coordination between transportation providers, and education on pedestrian safety/mobility aids/travel planning tools were emphasized as immediate needs. In the future, participants would like to see expanded availability/accessibility of transportation services/routes in rural areas and more flexible/sustainable funding models/support systems for transportation and mobility.
- **Whole Person Health:** Participants discussed challenges associated with the lack of awareness/accessibility to healthcare resources/services that prioritize whole person health (physical/mental/emotional well-being), health disparities among different populations, and sedentary lifestyles, social isolation. They recognized the need for more comprehensive healthcare approaches that address physical, mental, and emotional well-being, increased access to affordable healthcare services, and education on nutrition/exercise/mental health. Participants would also like the MPA to include expanded resources for mental health support and preventive care measures, and improved education on healthy lifestyle choices and disease prevention.

Next Steps:

The town hall meeting is one of several ways to provide input for Missouri's Master Plan for Aging. Other methods will include online surveys, focus groups, and written submissions. The feedback collected from various sources will be analyzed and synthesized by the Master Plan for Aging Advisory Council and Sub Committees, which consists of representatives from state agencies, local governments, and community organizations. The Advisory Council and Sub Committees will develop a draft Master Plan for Aging by the end of 2025. The goal is to create a 10-year framework that supports senior communities and empowers older adults and individuals with disabilities to live safely and independently in their chosen environment.

For more information on the Master Plan for Aging, please visit [the official website](#) or contact the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services at 573-526-4542 or MoStatePlanonAging@health.mo.gov.

Thank you for your participation and contribution to this important initiative.