

Town Hall Meeting on Aging – Aging Matters

Meeting Date: March 6, 2024

Sponsoring Agency: Aging Matters

Location: Show Me Center, 133 N Sprigg St Cape Girardeau

Attendees: 448

Total Comments:

Main Topic	Comment Counts
Daily Life and Employment	486
Family Caregivers	438
Housing and Aging in Place	398
Long-Term Services and supports	380
Safety and Security	413
Transportation and Mobility	365
Whole Person Health	372
TOTAL:	2,852

Purpose:

The purpose of this town hall meeting hosted by the Aging Matters Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) in Cape Girardeau, 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 discussed some challenges related to work employment, income guidelines, transportation, access to benefits if employed, balancing work and caregiving responsibilities, frustrations with technology and digital literacy, socialization if working from home, and maintaining independence on a fixed income. Participants are concerned about ageism in the workplace but it's difficult to prove. Some retired participants have returned to work to have simple needs met. Access to more flexible work options is a priority to help older adults in their transition into retirement.
- **Family Caregivers:** Participants reflected on how family caregiving gives a sense of fulfillment and purpose. However, there are challenges faced by family caregivers in terms of support services, respite care, training and education, financial assistance, burnout prevention, coordination of care with healthcare providers, and the need for more affordable in-home care options. Participants also discussed both the emotional and physical strain experienced by family caregivers. Participants are concerned about financial burdens for caregivers when there's a lack of financial assistance for the extra expenses. Balancing caregiving with personal life, work, and other responsibilities is not sustainable.
- **Housing and Aging in Place:** There is a need for affordable and accessible housing options for older adults to age in place safely and comfortably. Participants discussed concerns about home repairs/modifications, property taxes on homes, maintenance costs, availability of senior housing units or apartments that meet specific needs. Affordability of housing options for seniors with diminishing income was a concern of participants. Participants mentioned how universal design is needed for future home building and to modify existing homes to provide greater accessibility and to accommodate aging needs. Some participants experience social isolation due to housing located in rural areas or lack of community support. Also, participants would like funding available for additional home safety features for older adults to address risks for aging in place.
- **Long-Term Services and Supports:** Participants discussed the challenges related to accessing long-term care services such as nursing homes or assisted living facilities due to high costs or lack of availability. Participants would like more affordable long-term care insurance options and insurance that covers more expenses. Participants are also concerned about the lack of funding/supports for home-based services like in-home health care or adult day programs. Participants talked about how there are not enough

staff for senior services and how some staff are inadequately trained to work in nursing homes and provide quality home care services.

- **Safety and Security:** Participants have concerns about elder abuse/neglect/exploitation that prey on seniors, the importance of safety measures within homes (such as alarm systems), emergency preparedness/plans for natural disasters, and the need for reliable security measures in senior housing or assisted living facilities to protect against community threats. Safety and security should also consider how to prevent falls and accidents in the home, while residing in senior communities, and in the community. Participants stressed the importance of protecting seniors against scams, fraud, or financial exploitation through actions such as informational resources, training, and laws that enforce scam/fraud protections with stiff punishments.
- **Transportation and Mobility:** Participants reported that older adults face challenges in accessing transportation services, especially in rural areas. This includes concerns about affordability, availability of accessible transportation options, and the need for assistance with getting to medical appointments or running errands. Participants would like more accessible transportation options for seniors with limited mobility and affordable transportation solutions for aging individuals. Participants expressed the need for car pools or ridesharing services tailored to older adults' needs and without having to give too much notice when needing a ride. They also discussed how navigating public transportation systems can be challenging for older adults with physical limitations.
- **Whole Person Health:** Participants emphasized the importance of addressing the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of older adults through comprehensive healthcare services. This includes access to preventive care, coordination of healthcare services across providers, mental health support, nutrition programs, and promoting overall healthy aging. Participants would like Missouri to expand the availability and affordability of preventive health services and to ensure people are taking advantage of them. Participants discussed how many older adults are managing chronic conditions and declining health. Holistic approaches to healthcare and resources for helping older adults should emphasize the whole person's health.

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.