

Town Hall Meeting on Aging – Care Connection

Meeting Date: February 27, 2024

Sponsoring Agency: Care Connection

Location: Warrensburg Community Center, 455 E Gay St Warrensburg

Attendees: 61

Total Comments:

Main Topic	Comment Counts
Daily Life and Employment	112
Family Caregivers	130
Housing and Aging in Place	117
Long-Term Services and supports	92
Safety and Security	96
Transportation and Mobility	112
Whole Person Health	100
TOTAL:	759

Purpose:

The purpose of this town hall meeting hosted by the Care Connection Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) in Warrensburg, 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 challenges related to employment for seniors, including age discrimination, transportation, and limited job options. They identified current needs for flexibility in work schedules to accommodate caregiving responsibilities. Participants also expressed concerns about retirement planning, financial strain, and maintaining social activities.
- **Family Caregivers:** Challenges identified by participants for family caregivers included the need for additional support and respite services. Financial burdens associated with caregiving and limitations in accessing affordable in-home services are current needs. Participants stressed the importance of training and education for caregivers to provide quality care.
- **Housing and Aging in Place:** Participants considered the lack of affordable housing options for older adults, especially in rural areas. The current need for universal design and modifications to homes to improve accessibility and safety is a concern of participants. Issues were also discussed related to housing maintenance, planning-ahead to age in place, and social isolation.
- **Long-Term Services and Supports:** Participants are concerned about cost issues associated with long-term care services, including difficulties for those who don't qualify for Medicaid programs but have low incomes. Staffing challenges in rural areas are leading to a lack of quality care in nursing homes or assisted living facilities. Participants call for improved regulations for safer facilities, training programs for healthcare workers, increased availability of facilities, and more comprehensive advocacy and planning resources.
- **Safety and Security:** Participants are concerned about scams targeting older adults and exploitation by family members or workers using their vehicles or finances. Accessible home safety devices like smart doorbells or medical alert systems are desired. There is a need for education on personal safety measures and partnerships with law enforcement and first responders to better serve aging.
- **Transportation and Mobility:** Participants discussed the limited public transportation options, especially in rural areas with inadequate transit routes or evening/weekend service availability. There were calls for more accessible transportation options such as volunteer driver programs or subsidizing private agencies like taxis or ride sharing services. Participants expressed urgency around improving transportation affordability and access due to challenges attending medical appointments and transport to get necessities like groceries.

- **Whole Person Health:** Importance of addressing mental health concerns among older adults alongside physical health needs was discussed by participants. There is a need for exercise programs, education about healthy nutrition, and access to preventative healthcare. Socialization opportunities were also highlighted by participants as a key factor contributing towards overall well-being. Participants would like more community level groups that share information and resources to promote positive attitudes within communities regarding aging and that foster healthy living.

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.