

Creating Community for a Lifetime Roadmap

Recommendations—Access to Affordable Health Care

Access

Goal 1

Increase collaboration and integration of health care and social services in order to improve access.

Objectives

- Create a work group led by network 180 and the Area Agency on Aging of West Michigan to:
 - Identify ways to increase knowledge and understanding among service providers in the aging, mental health and medical systems about currently available health care, aging, social services and mental health services.
 - Develop information materials on depression, grief and loss issues that are targeted to older adults and include clear service/payment information.
 - Create increased opportunities for collaboration, shared goals, and communication among the health care, aging, social services and mental health systems.
 - Initiate dialogue to identify ways of increasing integration of older adult mental health services into primary health care (including care for sensory impairment conditions) and the community-based services system.
- Increase the number of older adults being served in the community mental health system by expanding the service continuum and increasing home-based options.
- Participate in state and local initiatives to decrease fragmentation and improve access through records-sharing with client approval.
- Leverage existing programs such as the Kent Health Plan and the Area Agency on Aging Medication Assistance program to ensure that older people have access to needed medications.

Elder Care Expertise

Goal 2

Increase health care providers' expertise in elder care issues.

Objectives

- Train all health care personnel in the normative processes of aging.
- Identify and disseminate evidence-based and emerging best practices standards.
- Train health care and social services providers to identify and reduce disparities in older adult health outcomes.
- Support the west Michigan Alliance for Gerontology Education (wmAge).

Goal 3

Increase family and friend caregivers' knowledge, skills and support.

Objectives

- Offer family and friend caregivers information and training on caregiver issues including dementia, personal care, and self care.
- Increase the number of research-based caregiver support programs available.
- Increase minority involvement in caregiver support services design and outreach.
- Support the Caregiver Resource Network.

Advocacy

Goal 4

Increase community expertise and support advocacy efforts on issues related to health care and the expanding older population.

Objectives

- Provide community education on costs, benefits and effectiveness of various health delivery and payment systems, including cost saving mechanisms such as medication re-use.
- Advocate for
 - Parity in mental health coverage.
 - Universal health care which is equitable and maintains provider participation through adequate resources
 - Increased physical and mental health research targeting older adult needs, recognizing that investing in aging research will pay benefits in quality of life and savings.

Goal 5

Support efforts that educate and empower older adults to practice healthy behaviors.

Objectives

- Advocate for policies and programs which recognize that:
 - Factors related to poor health outcomes are embedded in poverty and the social and physical environments in which people live
 - Individual lifestyle choices impact health outcomes and resource needs
 - Environmental factors impact health in communities.

Work Group

Co-Chairs

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Members

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