

2015 WHITE HOUSE
CONFERENCE
on **AGING**

Iowa

Name of Event: Join the Conversation: Iowa White House Conference on Aging Dialogue

Date of Event: June 26, 2015

Location of Event: The following cities across Iowa:

- Des Moines
- Council Bluffs
- Cedar Rapids
- Waterloo
- Mason City
- Davenport
- Sioux City

Number of Persons Attending: 190

State: Iowa

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Summary

The Iowa Department on Aging, AARP Iowa, Alzheimer's Association – Greater Iowa Chapter, The Hale Group, Iowa Alliance for Retired Americans, Iowa Area Agencies on Aging, Iowa CareGivers, Jewish Family Services, Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman and Older Iowans Legislature are pleased to report the outcome of "Join the Conversation: Iowa White House Conference on Aging Dialogue."

The event, held on June 26, was attended by approximately 190 participants including consumers, caregivers, service providers, advocacy organizations, governmental entities, financial institutions, lawyers and law firms, hospitals, and universities, among others. The conversations took place in seven communities statewide to ensure regional participation and input.

The event provided a forum for participants to discuss long-term services and supports in their communities and cities and included a one-hour facilitated discussion at each of the seven locations ending in a live report-out detailing the issues, barriers and solutions identified.

Process

The participants were provided with a uniform definition of long-term services and supports and asked to examine long-term services and supports in the context of four questions:

- What's Working? (Current long-term services and supports that seem to be working well.)
- What Isn't Working? (Issues)
- Why Things Aren't Working? (Barriers)
- How Do We Fix It? (Solutions)

Participants were further asked to think of long-term services and supports in terms of accessibility, quality of life, and the resources available in their communities.

Outcomes

After discussion and a report-out from all locations, the following topics were identified as the issues, barriers, and solutions most often raised by participants:

Issues

- **Direct Care Workforce**: Iowa's direct care workforce was identified as an issue impacting long-term services and supports for older Iowans. Specific issues identified included not enough direct care workers to assist older Iowans, high rates of turnover in the direct care workforce industry, a lack of certified gerontologists, and inadequate background checks and screenings.
- **Transportation**: Transportation was identified as an issue of concern. High cost and lack of availability were cited as common issues related to transportation.
- **Family Caregiver Support**: Participants indicated overall concern regarding the lack of support provided to family caregivers in Iowa.
- **Home and Community-Based Services**: Home and community-based services were identified as an issue that should be addressed in Iowa. Specific issues related to home and community-based services that were consistently identified include lack of funding for services, difficulty in accessing and navigating the services, and lack of awareness of available resources.

Barriers:

- **Lack of Education / Access to Information:** Iowans indicated that lack of education and information constituted a barrier to accessing long-term services and supports in Iowa. The participants specifically noted that professionals and employers are among areas where additional education and information should be available.
- **Inadequate Funding:** Funding was cited as a barrier to receiving adequate long-term services and supports.
- **Consumer Refusal:** Participants indicated that the emotional state of the consumer was often a barrier to providing long-term services and supports. Refusal of assistance and feeling scared or embarrassed were the common emotions or actions that were cited as reasons for consumer denial of assistance.
- **Shifting Family Dynamics:** Shifting family dynamics identified as a barrier by participants were increasing geographic separation among family members and a lack of willingness to assist.
- **Legislative Priority:** Participants indicated that long-term services and supports were not recognized as a priority by the State Legislature or Congress. Participants felt that failure to prioritize long-term services and supports served as a barrier.
- **Direct Care Workforce:** The direct care workforce in Iowa was identified as a barrier to accessing long-term services and supports. High staff turnover, lack of workers, need for training, and need for career paths were cited as specific barriers.
- **Home and Community-Based Services:** Barriers to accessing home and community-based services were also identified as problematic in Iowa. Participants indicated that specific barriers included difficulty funding the services, consumer confusion in determining how to navigate the system, and a lack of “aging in place” forms of assistance.

Solutions:

- **Increased and Alternative Funding:** Additional appropriations for long-term services and supports and exploring alternative methods of funding for services. Some ideas included a local or state tax to support local long-term services and supports for Seniors and a tax credit for caregivers.
- **Education and Awareness:** Participants identified that consumers need to better understand resources that are available, how to access those resources and the processes associated with obtaining resources, and obtaining assistance to navigate the various resources. Education for younger age groups on the topics of retirement, long-term care services and supports, caring for parents, life span, and end-of-life is also needed.
- **Employer Support of Caregivers:** Opportunities exist to increase awareness among employers about the role employees’ face as caregivers and ways to support employees on the caregiver journey.
- **Direct Care Workforce:** Bolstering Iowa’s direct care workforce was cited as a potential solution. Specific suggestions included more training for geriatric professions, increasing minimum wage or otherwise providing better pay, changing the culture to place more value on geriatric professions, developing better retention strategies, and standardizing requirements, certifications, and licensures.
- **Coordination and Collaboration:** Participants at several locations cited increased collaboration and coordination among entities and organizations that provide long-term services and supports as a proposed solution.
- **Advocacy:** The continued need to share information with lawmakers to promote, advocate, and lobby for home and community-based services was cited as a way to increase awareness of and access to long-term services and supports in Iowa.
- **Planning:** Participants indicated that future planning by individuals and families was important to appropriately access long-term services and supports. Planning for future needs, particularly financial planning was cited at several locations.

Additional issues and concerns were raised by participants, however this report focuses on those indicated most frequently across all locations.

What's Next

The intent of the “Join the Conversation” event was to take a first step toward initiating statewide dialogue to determine the issues and barriers Iowans face in accessing long-term services and supports. The organizations leading the event will begin planning future conversations and events based on the input received.

An evaluation form was distributed following the event and 100% of participants indicated they would like to attend future conversations to establish an aging agenda for Iowa.

Participants attending the event were provided with resources and tips to use immediately to access resources. A copy of the resources is attached to the report.

The organizers of this event are thankful to the White House Conference on Aging for the opportunity to begin this dialogue in Iowa and look forward to a continuing conversation.

Continue the Conversation: LONG-TERM SERVICES & SUPPORTS

Resource Guide for Iowans

www.lifelonglinks.org

This website helps connect older adults, adults with disabilities, veterans and caregivers with local long-term services and supports to help them maintain their independence, at home or in the community of their choice.

www.iheartcaregivers.org

AARP sponsors this site for caregivers, which includes an online support community and a resource center with articles and tip sheets on a number of topics, including stress management and juggling caregiving and work.

<http://nihseniorhealth.gov>

This site offers a variety of health and wellness information for older adults from the National Institutes of Health. Browse through health topics, read personal health stories, watch videos and sign up for daily healthy aging tips.

www.alz.org/greateriowa

The website for the Alzheimer's Association – Greater Iowa Chapter offers an online directory of local resources for individuals with Alzheimer's and related dementias and their caregivers, as well as a 24-hour Helpline and tips for maintaining brain health.

<http://states.aarp.org/region/iowa>

The AARP Iowa site provides news, information and resources on issues that matter to Iowans aged 50 and older. Locate experts, find helpful tools and stay connected through newsletters and blogs.

www.iowaaging.gov/long-term-care-ombudsman

The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman works to advocate for the rights and wishes of residents and tenants in long-term care, including those living in nursing facilities, residential care facilities, assisted living programs and elder group homes. This website provides resources for family members and long-term care professionals, alike.

www.i4a.org

The Iowa Association of Area Agencies on Aging is the statewide association for Iowa's six Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). The site can help you locate your local AAA and offers information and education about care options for older Iowans, persons with disabilities and their caregivers.

www.olderiowans.org

The mission of the Older Iowans Legislature is to pursue quality of life for older Iowans by voicing their needs to the general public, all governmental bodies and service providers. This site provides opportunities for older Iowans to learn and participate in governmental processes to help solve problems facing Iowa's seniors.

hale_johnd@msn.com

The Hale Group is a consulting firm focused on aging and caregiving issues. It works collaboratively with government agencies, non-profit groups and others to promote ideas and activities that enhance the independence and quality of life among aging Iowans.

www.iowacaregivers.org

Iowa CareGivers exists to ensure that all Iowans receive services and supports when and where they need them by helping to ensure a stable direct care workforce. This site includes information about various educational conferences, forums, listening sessions and other events that are also open to family caregivers.

Continue the Conversation: 10 ACTION STEPS *you can take today!*

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LEARN THE SIGNS OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Alzheimer's disease affects 13 percent of all Iowa seniors. Visit www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_know_the_10_signs.asp to learn how to recognize signs and symptoms. Early diagnosis gives you a change to seek support and treatment and plan for the future.

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SET UP YOUR POWERS OF ATTORNEY

Having a durable power of attorney for health care or a financial power of attorney document in place helps guarantee your wishes will be followed when you can no longer make decisions for yourself. Visit https://www.dropbox.com/s/jmleav5qiifvhr2/AARP_POA_brochure_FINAL3_4Web.pdf?dl=0 for a brochure.

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SEE HOW IOWA RANKS

Check out Iowa's "Scorecard on Long-Term Services and Supports for Older Adults, People with Physical Disabilities and Family Caregivers" and see how Iowa compares to other states. The AARP updates the scorecard annually and posts it at <http://www.longtermscorecard.org/databystate/state?state=IA>.

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VOLUNTEER TO BE AN ADVOCATE

If you have an interest in protecting the rights of older adults and adults with disabilities, consider donating your time to the Volunteer Ombudsman Program (VOP) and serving in one of Iowa's nursing facilities, residential care facilities or elder group homes. More information is available at www.iowaaging.gov/vop.

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SPEAK UP

Join the Older Iowans Legislature and let your voice be heard. Attend the legislative session in the House Chambers in the State Capitol on Sept. 28-29, 2015, and help determine which bills should be presented to the next Iowa General Assembly. Visit <http://www.olderiowans.org/membership.htm> for more information.

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EVALUATE YOUR HOME

Take a look around your home and decide what modifications you may need to make in order to "age in place" in a safe environment. Check out AARP's "Home Fit Guide" at <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/info-2014/aarp-home-fit-guide-aging-in-place.html>.

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REVIEW YOUR FINANCIAL PLAN

One fear many older adults have is outliving their savings. Absent major health conditions, you should expect to live well into your 90s. If you don't have a financial planner, visit www.fpanet.org to get a list of professionals in your area who can help you learn how to best manage your assets.

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PROVIDE RESPITE CARE

If you are able, consider providing respite care for a neighbor, friend or family member who needs a temporary break from their caregiving duties. Taking care of someone while his or her caregiver runs errands, goes to an appointment or rests is one of the most valuable gifts you can give.

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TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

Learn about your health conditions and the best way to manage them. Discuss what to expect and what can occur. Understanding your health and future health care needs will help you decide where you want to live and assist you when it comes to planning for long-term services and supports.

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FIND OUT WHICH LONG-TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS ARE AVAILABLE NEAR YOU

Contact LifeLong Links at 866-468-7887 or www.lifelonglinks.org to talk to an information and referral specialist about the services available in your area or to work with an options counselor to develop a person-centered action plan to help you achieve your goals for long-term independence.