

2015-
2019

Richland County
Commission on Aging

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[RICHLAND COUNTY AGING PLAN]

Every four years the Richland County Commission on Aging develops a strategic plan to help it achieve its goals and measure its effectiveness while fulfilling its mission. The RCCOA, through itself and corroborative efforts, is dedicated to enhancing the lives of seniors while helping them age in place with dignity for as long as possible.

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A Richland County Senior receiving health screening services at the Fox Lake Senior Center.

A Richland County Centenarian interacting with area youth during the Richland County Senior Coalition 2014 Color Race.



Introduction

The Richland County Commission on Aging (RCCOA), acting under the umbrella of the Area 1 Agency on Aging and Richland County, is an entity dedicated to helping safeguard and enhance the lives of older residents in Richland County. To help the RCCOA achieve its purpose, it has, along with several other organizations that focus on seniors, developed a strategic plan to guide the RCCOA over the next four years. Three sessions dedicated to seniors at the Richland County-wide conference ensured the inclusion of public input, concerns and ideas. The 2015--2019 Richland County Aging Plan can be characterized by three strategic directions:

- Quality and access to aging services throughout Richland County
- Development and maintenance of needed senior programs
- Developing collaborative efforts between senior organizations to eliminate duplication of services while using resources to develop new services

This plan will expand on each of the strategic directions to include the challenges and opportunities related to meeting the needs of an aging population. It will also lay out specific goals in each of the directions along with attainable and measurable steps to achieve each goal. Through use of this plan, the RCCOA will set to align itself with Richland County's vision (as a whole) for the year 2020 as well as directly address the Area 1 Agency on Aging's focus areas of the Older Americans Act Core Programs.

Demographics

Richland County is a rural county encompassing a landmass of more than 2,000 square miles. According to the US Census Bureau, the County had a population of 11,214 people in 2013; more than half are centered in the County Seat of Sidney. 14.8% of Sidney's population and 13.2% of the County's population is over the age of 65.

For the past several years, Richland County has seen increased numbers (nearly 2,000 people in three years) due in large part to an influx of oil activity associated with "The Bakken". In response to the increase in population, prices have risen on everything from groceries to rent. For the elderly living on a fixed income, this situation has brought some unique challenges and has made it difficult for many seniors to continue purchasing nutritious meals or needed medication as they meet the rising expense of daily living.

Current Programs

Richland County already has a number of programs in place to help seniors live independently and age with dignity. Maintenance of the current programs will play an integral role as RCCOA seeks to achieve its mission and the goals set forth in this plan. The current and continued programs include:

- Transportation: Richland County Transportation is a public transit service which helps seniors meet their mobility needs

- Congregate Meals: There are a total of 6 congregate meals served throughout Richland County each week
- Senior Centers: There are four Senior Centers throughout Richland County; each of them meeting for congregate meals and socialization a minimum of one time per week
- Home Delivered Meals: Meals are available to be delivered in Sidney and Fairview five days per week
- Homemaker: Light housekeeping services which focus on keeping the home healthy are available to all seniors throughout Richland County
- Health Screens: Vital statistics are taken at all four Senior Centers and at a senior independent living complex at least one time per month
- Footcare: Care is currently available in Fairview, Sidney, and Savage
- Respite Care: Temporary support for local seniors to give caregivers a brief period of rest; provided through the Action for Eastern Montana Senior Companion program and the Golden Bridges program at Sidney Health Center
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program: CSFP helps seniors supplemental their diet with healthy, nutritious food
- Arthritis Foundation Exercise Programs: Seniors are taught simple movements to help manage arthritis pain without additional medications
- Skilled Nursing: Sidney Health Center's Visiting Nurse program can provide medication set-ups, wound care, and a variety of other in-home services
- Legal Clinics: Seniors can have a variety of legal documents completed through the RCCOA's partnership with The State of Montana's Aging Services Legal Division

Richland County Aging Plan Goals

Over the next four years, the RCCOA has committed to using its resources and developing partnerships to maintain its existing programs while focusing on the following four goals:

Goal 1: Reduce nutritionally related illnesses and complications among Richland County's senior population.

Goal 2: Ensure care of the elderly and their needs are not compromised due to lack of caregiver support.

Goal 3: Promote wellbeing and the prevention and maintenance of chronic disease for older adults.

Goal 4: Reduce the number of service gaps that deter seniors from obtaining proper medical care, needed prescriptions and other *central items* that afford them the opportunity to lead a full and healthy life.

The goals build on the success of programs that are already in place in Richland County as well as address service gaps that were identified during the Countywide Conference. In order to reach these goals and implement the Aging Plan, the RCCOA has charted a course with specific objectives, strategies, and performance measures.

Collaborative Partnerships

In reaching the goals outlined in the Richland County Aging Plan, the RCCOA will cultivate and/or continue working relationships with other organizations that have similar goals or are instrumental in the achievement of RCCOA's goals. Current partnerships that meet this definition include:

- Area 1 Agency on Aging
- Action for Eastern Montana Senior Companion Program
- Richland County Retired and Senior Volunteer Program
- Richland County Senior Coalition
- Richland County Health Department
- Salvation Army
- MSU Extension Service
- The Lodge
- The Crestwood
- Foundation for Community Care
- Adult Protective Services

Partnerships that would be beneficial in reaching current and future goals include:

- Richland Health Network
- Sidney Health Center
- Working relationships with individual medical providers/nutritionists
- Sidney Health Center Extended Care
- Health Works
- Office of Public Assistance

Objectives and Strategies

To achieve each of the above defined goals, the RCCOA has charted a map which will help steer them in a direction which will result in an improvement of existing services or the creation of new services. The objectives and strategies for each goal will provide a clear expectation for each area addressed within the Aging Plan.

1. Reduce nutritionally related illnesses and complications among Richland County's senior population.

Objective 1.1: Expand the Home Delivered Meal Program;

Strategy 1.1.1: Educate medical providers including dentists, chiropractors and nutritionists about the availability of the program.

Strategy 1.1.2: Raise awareness of the program through use of the Richland County Senior Newsletter and literature available at medical offices, senior centers, and high traffic areas such as the produce section of the supermarket.

Objective 1.2: Increase the number of seniors at Congregate Meals

Strategy 1.2.1: Implement a “Meal Buddy” system to make newcomers feel comfortable and welcome. Under the system, seniors could call RCCOA and tell them what center they are interested in. The RCCOA staff would contact a Meal Buddy for that site and the Buddy would call to invite the senior to lunch, sit with them at the center, and introduce them to their peers.

Strategy 1.2.2: Advertise Congregate meals, activities, and menus in the Richland County Senior Newsletter.

Strategy 1.2.3: Develop contests that improve daily congregate attendance at each center and encourage seniors to visit their neighboring centers.

Strategy 1.2.4: Plan and hold an annual barbeque and game day for all centers; hosted by a different center each year.

2. Ensure the needs and care of the elderly are not compromised due to a lack of caregiver support.

Objective 2.1: Improve the availability of respite services throughout Richland County.

Strategy 2.1.1: Work with the Senior Companion program to recruit new companions to increase the number of seniors they can serve.

Strategy 2.1.2: Revitalize the “Golden Bridges” program to allow caregivers to take advantage of Adult Day Programs for their elderly charges.

Objective 2.2: Create awareness among organizations and the public detailing where to find needed assistance.

Strategy 2.2.1: Assist in organizing other senior groups to develop a comprehensive resource guide to outline all services available to seniors throughout the County.

Strategy 2.2.2: Organize and hold semi-annual presentations about available services and distribute needed information to seniors and those who are about to enter senior status.

3. Promote wellbeing and the prevention and maintenance of chronic disease for older adults.

Objective 3.1: Increase visibility and frequency of performance based programs such as the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program and Walking to Wellness Exercise Program.

Strategy 3.1.1: Expand classes into Fairview, Savage, and Lambert (currently held in Sidney only) by adding an additional trainer.

Strategy 3.1.2: Broaden awareness and interest in the programs by publishing actual experiences and outcomes from willing participants who have completed the course.

Objective 3.2: Assist in the formation of Support Groups for common but life-altering illnesses or conditions; i.e. stroke, rheumatoid arthritis and auto-immune disorders.

Strategy 3.2.1: Work with local health care providers who feel their patients would benefit from the support of others who are dealing with similar circumstances.

Strategy 3.2.2: Raise awareness of the availability of support groups through presentations at the Senior Centers and articles in the Richland County Senior Newsletter.

4. Reduce the number of service gaps that deter seniors from obtaining proper medical care, needed prescriptions and the other necessities of leading a full and healthy life.

Objective 4.1: Provide alternatives to seniors who don't qualify for any other programs for medically related needs.

Strategy 4.1.1: Continue working with the Senior Coalition to develop funds that allow flexibility in their distribution for needs such as medication set-ups, emergency medication refills, personal care assistance, medically related travel expenses and durable medical equipment.

Strategy 4.1.2: Collaborate with the Richland Public Health Department to secure funding to raise awareness and develop services to support the mental health of Richland County seniors.

Conclusion

Richland County's population is aging and the importance of senior services will only continue to grow in the years ahead. The Richland County Aging Plan seeks to safeguard and expand current services that for our seniors and allow them to age in place while protecting their dignity. The goals and objectives listed in this plan represent Richland County's vision as a community which respects its elders and values their continued contributions to society.