



MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF
AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

2025 ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

Senior Meals

One in two older adults is at risk for malnutrition. In 2023, the State of Minnesota made historic one-time investments in the Senior Nutrition program. This funding has helped to decrease food insecurity that disproportionately affects older Minnesotans from lower-income and rural communities who may live in food deserts, have limited English proficiency, or lack access to transportation. Inadequate nutrition impacts health, erodes quality of life, and contributes to rising health care costs.

m4a supports:

- Increasing the one-time \$11M investment in the Senior Nutrition Program to \$20M for an ongoing biennial appropriation that helps meet the basic need for food among a growing older adult population at risk of malnutrition.
- Utilizing administrative funding for this program to develop innovative models, increase program efficiencies and ensure compliance with federal and state laws and regulations.
- Upgrading program technology to more efficiently track participant demographics and ensure accurate and timely utilization reporting.
- Flexibility to utilize funding for home-delivered meals, group meals or related services based on population profiles and an assessment of need.

Transportation and Senior Support Services

According to AARP, older adults on average give up driving at age 75. This places them at risk of isolation and of not receiving needed health care. m4a advocates for new state funding for services, including transportation, that help older adults remain at home in their communities. Funding would be limited to non-medical supports including high priority services such as assisted transportation, homemaker services, outdoor chore, minor home repair, isolation reduction, and other services identified by AAAs as important in their service areas to fill gaps in care.

m4a supports:

- Creating a Senior Support Services Program of the Minnesota Board on Aging and providing a \$4M biennial appropriation with 50% of funds dedicated to transportation.
- Allocating new funds to local service provider organizations via AAAs using the MBA's established Intrastate Funding Formula and administrative infrastructure.
- Utilizing administrative funding to develop efficient models, coordinate with other state funded programs, and ensure accurate and timely reporting of utilization.

Enhanced Adult Protection Services – County/AAA Partnership

County Adult Protection programs are limited in the services and support they can provide to vulnerable adults who are victims of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Individuals served by counties are often in dire economic poverty due to self-neglect related to physical illness and cognitive impairment as well as financial exploitation by others that allows no way to obtain new funds or to recover money and assets taken from individuals by theft and scams.

A collaboration of counties and AAAs began in 2024 with time limited federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to address immediate challenges to health and safety experienced by vulnerable adults. The program, WRAPS Resources, provides “wraparound” services to vulnerable adults served by county APS programs in the northwest, southeast and metro regions of Minnesota. The purpose is to meet urgent needs of vulnerable adults that are not otherwise covered by another source of payment.

AAAs accept referrals from county APS staff through a secure technology platform, provide short term service coordination and purchase recommended services and consumables. This pilot is demonstrating promising results. For example, the program has prevented housing evictions by paying back rent, assisted clients in making their spenddowns to maintain waived services, and facilitated deep cleaning and minor repair of some homes to allow continuing the resident's rental lease.

Eligible expenditures include consumable supplies such as food, clothing, medical equipment, cell phones, and personal hygiene and cleaning supplies. Emergency services can include rental and utility assistance, deep cleaning of homes, trash removal, emergency housing, and pest control. Purchased services have included home modifications, transportation for essential needs, yard cleanup, snow removal, wheelchair ramps, life alert monitors, and moving services. Each client recipient of services has a budget of up to \$2,500. Average expenses to date are \$1,250 per person served.

m4a supports:

- Establishing WRAPS Resources as a pilot program of MN DHS Aging and Adult Services Division.
- Expanding the program to all 6 regional AAAs and 87 counties on an opt-in basis.
- Providing \$5M in pilot program funding for SFY 25 and 26.
- Evaluating the results of a pilot program to determine its value.

Comprehensive Plans on Aging

There is momentum in Minnesota and across the nation to raise the visibility of both the needs and contributions of older adults as we age in our communities. The Age-Friendly Minnesota Council established by Governor Walz in 2019 will release a Multi-Sector Blueprint on Aging in December. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, via the Administration for Community Living (ACL), is in the process of developing a National Plan on Aging. m4a will work with the appropriate entities to provide feedback, monitor progress and engage with community organizations relating to the Multi-Sector Blueprint on Aging, the National Plan on Aging, and similar initiatives.

m4a supports:

- Partnering with the Minnesota Board on Aging to provide input on the Multi-Sector Blueprint on Aging and inform communities across the state about plan goals and opportunities for engagement. This includes raising awareness of the plan with community organizations, local elected officials, public employees and media outlets, older adults and caregivers, service providers and others.
- Monitoring and engaging in national planning efforts to align Minnesota's work at the local level with national initiatives and innovations.
- Implementing one or more of the Own Your Future recommendations in the [LTSS Funding and Services Initiative Study](#) released by the MN Dept. of Human Services in October 2023. Older adults with incomes between \$25,000 to \$124,999, or those identified in the report as being in the "redbox" comprise two-thirds of the state's population over the age of 65 of which 50% will be unable to pay for their future costs of long-term services and supports. Creating upstream support and new insurance mechanisms should be a part of our state's strategy to address critical budget pressures and help older adults thrive at home.

Federal Policy Change

The federal Older Americans Act (OAA) provides funding for states to serve older adults and family caregivers through AAAs and community providers. Eligible older adults and family caregivers in greatest social and economic need receive important, albeit resource limited services. The Act was due for reauthorization in 2024, and this process has lagged.

m4a supports:

- Re-authorizing the Older Americans Act no later than September 30, 2025.
- Significantly increasing authorized funding levels to meet the present and urgent needs of a rapidly growing older adult population and the rising costs of service delivery.
- Ensuring AAAs can meet their missions by securing health care and other private funding to serve more older adults.
- Unifying nutrition funding streams and programs to reflect recent innovations, the changing needs of consumers, and the goal of local decision making inherent in the Act.
- Expanding Title VI—Grants for Native American Aging Programs—to include a dedicated supportive services funding stream.
- Increasing the administrative funding ceiling by two percent to ensure quality program oversight, development and coordination amid rising costs and eroding OAA funding.

Volunteer drivers provide a valuable service contributing their time and vehicles to provide rides for older adults and other nondrivers to give them access to health care and other essential community services. Organizations with volunteer driver programs face challenges when volunteers are reluctant to provide rides due to liability for federal income tax. We should not penalize volunteers for helping their neighbors.

m4a supports:

- Addressing the shortage of volunteer drivers by increasing the charitable mileage reimbursement rate to the business travel rate set by the Internal Revenue Service as defined in the Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act (H.R. 3032 and S. 3020). Representative Pete Stauber and Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith introduced the bill, and it currently has bipartisan support from 22 members of Congress and over 100 national, state-wide and local organizations.