

# **Old Colony Planning Council – Area Agency on Aging**

## **FFY 2001 Elder Needs Assessment – Provider Agencies**

### **Overview:**

The Old Colony Planning Council is the designated Area Agency on Aging serving a 23-community region in Southeastern Massachusetts. As part of our responsibility to develop a comprehensive and coordinated system of community-based elder supportive services, the OCPC-AAA develops a four-year Area Plan on elder services. The Plan seeks to identify the greatest unmet needs of elders in our region, prioritize these needs, and utilize Older Americans Act funding to address these needs.

Identifying the greatest unmet needs of the elders of the region is accomplished in a variety of ways. This includes a statewide survey of elders from Massachusetts, a survey of provider agencies, a review of past Title III funded programs and services, and an assessment of the duplication of existing types of services and programs.

In preparation of the FFY 2002-2005 OCPC-AAA Area Plan, the AAA has conducted a survey of service provider agencies in an effort to gain a clear understanding of what service provider agencies in the region are identifying as the greatest unmet needs of elders that they have served over the past 12 to 15 months.

### **Methodology:**

The AAA developed a single-page survey questionnaire to be distributed to agencies throughout the region. The survey tool consisted of a listing of twenty-seven (27) different service categories. Respondents were instructed to identify and prioritize the ten greatest service category needs of elders and their caregivers. Respondents were instructed to prioritize only the ten greatest needs of the elders they have served over the past 12 to 15 months.

The survey was sent to sixty-two (62) different agencies (14 Housing Authorities, 24 Councils on Aging, 5 Visiting Nurse Associations, and 19 general supportive service provider agencies {Catholic Charities, SelfHelp, HelpLine, South Shore Community Action, Jewish Family and Children's Service}). In an attached cover letter, agencies were instructed to distribute the survey to as many staff people as they felt would be appropriate.

Respondents were instructed to

“prioritize the ten most needed and unmet services or service areas facing the elders (and their caregivers) that you have served over the past 12 to 15 months. Please rank only ten specific service categories (1=most needed and unmet, 10=least needed and unmet).”

Once the surveys were returned, the responses were reverse coded; 1=10, 2=9, etc. This gave the AAA a numerical value for each service category. The higher the numerical value, the greater the unmet need.

The OCPC-AAA received a total of 84 responses from a total of 25 different agencies. The breakdown is as follows: 16 responses from 13 Councils on Aging; 7 responses from 2 Visiting Nurse Associations; 39 responses from Old Colony Elderly Services Case Managers; and 22 responses from 9 general supportive service agencies.

### **Summary of Findings:**

Survey results indicate that Transportation continues to be the greatest unmet need for elders in the region. Transportation has been a major service need of elders in the OCPC region for more than twenty years. Although there are various public transportation services available throughout the region, many elders are in need of transportation service that provides a more direct and assistive type of service (out-of town medical, on demand, door-to-door, escort, etc.). Most public transportation systems are not able to provide this type of transportation.

Affordable Housing is ranked as the second greatest unmet need for elders in our region. This finding is particularly distressing considering that many elders are living on fixed incomes, and are already likely spending a good deal of their total income on rent. The lack of affordable housing with supportive services continues to be a major unmet need for the low-to moderate income elders of our region.

Of equal concern is the finding that Friendly Visiting and Mental Health Care are ranked in the top 5 categories of unmet needs. This finding reflects an ongoing shortage of services and programs to address the very real and harmful effects of loneliness and mental anguish suffered by isolated elders in our region. This finding is in keeping with national survey data that indicates anywhere from 10% to 30% of all persons over the age of 60 are suffering from some form of mental/emotional difficulties, and are not receiving the assistance necessary to address these needs. Homemaker services and Personal Care are also included in the top ten greatest needs of elders in our region. This likely reflects a gap in the amount of funding available for public programs (Aging Service Access

Point Programs, Medicare, Private Insurance), and the actual demand and need for such care.

The overall findings of the survey indicate that there are very critical areas of need for elders in our region that continue to be underserved. Nevertheless, these data should be interpreted carefully as they reflect overall perceptions and subjective evaluations of service need in the region.

FFY 2001 Elder Needs Assessment - Provider Survey

<b>Ranking:</b>	<b>Service Category:</b>	<b>Raw Score:</b>
#1	Transportation	536
#2	Affordable Housing	389
#3	Friendly Visiting	268
#4	Personal Care	265
#5	Mental Health Services	242
#6	Homemaker Services	235
#7	Financial Assistance	234
#8	Home Repairs	230
#9	Outreach	206
#10	Case Management	170

**Findings by Sub-Categories of Respondents:**

Councils on Aging (N=13/R=16)

<b>Ranking:</b>	<b>Service Category:</b>	<b>Raw Score:</b>
#1	Transportation	121
#2	Affordable Housing	103
#3	Outreach	86
#4	Personal Care	60
#5	Home Repairs	52
#6	Mental Health Service	47
#7	Adult Day Programs	40
#8	Home Delivered Meals	34
#9	Financial Assistance	33
#10	Homemaker Service	32

Visiting Nurse Associations (N=2/R=7)

<b>Ranking:</b>	<b>Service Category:</b>	<b>Raw Score:</b>
#1	Homemaker Service	49
#2	Transportation	42
#3	Shopping	36
#4	Chore Services	31
#4 (tie)	Personal Care	31
#6	Home Repairs	29
#7	Affordable Housing	20
#8	Friendly Visiting	17
#9	Protective Services	16
#10	Financial Assistance	15
#10 (tie)	Information & Assistance	15
#10 (tie)	Bill Paying Services	15
#10 (tie)	Home Modification	15

Old Colony Elderly Services-Case Managers (N=1/R=39)

<b>Ranking:</b>	<b>Service Category:</b>	<b>Raw Score:</b>
#1	Transportation	279
#2	Friendly Visiting	180
#3	Affordable Housing	150
#4	Financial Assistance	123
#5	Home Repairs	119
#6	Personal Care	114
#7	Mental Health Services	112
#8	Homemaker Service	107
#9	Information & Assistance	94
#10	Adult Day Programs	92

General Supportive Service Providers (N=9/R=22)

<b>Ranking:</b>	<b>Service Category:</b>	<b>Raw Score:</b>
#1	Affordable Housing	116
#2	Transportation	111
#3	Mental Health Service	83
#4	Outreach	71
#5	Case Management	70
#6	Personal Care	67
#7	Financial Assistance	63
#8	Information & Assistance	59
#9	Friendly Visiting	53
#9 (tie)	Chore Services	53