

2004

Needs Assessment Report

Condensed Placer County Edition

I. Introduction

Every four years, Area 4 Agency on Aging (A4AA) is required to conduct an assessment in order to determine what services are most needed by older adults in our seven county planning and service area. The results of this needs assessment are the foundation upon which the four-year Area Plan is built. A4AA's planning and service area (PSA) includes the counties of Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Sierra, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba.

Several different techniques were used to collect first-hand information on the needs of older adults throughout the service area, including surveys, interviews, focus groups and public hearings. Each of these data gathering methods are described below.

When setting priorities and making funding decisions, A4AA considers a number of factors, including the area's most pressing needs, gaps in the service system, and service impact. Emphasis is placed on serving those with the greatest economic or social need; i.e., those who are homebound, ethnically diverse, geographically isolated, non-English speaking and/or those with disabilities.

A4AA is one of 33 Area Agencies on Aging in the state responsible for administering Older Americans Act and Older Californians Act programs. Though monitored by the California Department of Aging (CDA), A4AA is a non-profit, joint powers authority. The 17 member Governing Board is composed of county boards of supervisors or their appointees. A4AA also benefits from an independent 35 member Advisory Council which advises the Board and participates in regional, state and federal advocacy activities.

II. Methodology

Research Design

The 2004 Needs Assessment included several different data-gathering methods. The following section briefly explains how these methods were carried out.

The 2004 Senior Survey. The foundation of A4AA's needs assessment is, and has been, the senior survey. This year, the standard survey provided by CDA was expanded and reformatted as an 8-page booklet, with an introduction on the cover page and return instructions on the back. In addition, each county commission on aging was invited to help customize the last page of the survey and to help distribute the final product. In every county a workgroup was established to help with this effort. In all, the survey workgroup members included 34 people.

The distribution plan was multi-faceted. It involved using an extended network of connections to get surveys in the hands of seniors at programs, events, faires, senior centers, housing complexes and community meetings such as rotary clubs, veterans groups, etc. Also, a total of 81 survey "drop boxes" were placed at public locations including libraries, grocery stores, post offices and community centers. These drop boxes were used as collection points (as an alternative to mailing the finished survey), but were also places where people could get blank surveys. The number of surveys distributed was carefully controlled to prevent over-sampling, particularly with respect to geography, ethnicity, income and clients of A4AA-funded services.

Distribution of surveys took place from October through Christmas Day 2004. Data entry was done by A4AA support staff, with the exception of Nevada and Yolo Counties. A4AA wants to express its sincere appreciation to FREED in Nevada County and to Supervisor Mariko Yamada in Yolo County for not only securing volunteers to perform data entry but also for coordinating the entire survey project in their counties. Survey results were entered into a customized Microsoft Access database and were compiled by the A4AA Planner. A total of 3,316 surveys were collected, representing 1.0% of the senior population of PSA 4.

Service Provider Survey. In order to allow each of our current service providers to give direct input into our planning process, a brief questionnaire was developed. A4AA issued a program memo to all providers, encouraging their participation. The results were compiled by the Planner, then forwarded to the appropriate A4AA Program Manager for review. A total of 21 service provider surveys were collected.

Key Informant Interviews. If meaningful changes are to be made in local service systems, community leaders must be involved. For that reason, A4AA sought input from key individuals in every county. All A4AA Governing Board and Advisory Council members were asked to help identify potential informants in their respective counties. We also utilized staff contacts. The goal was to arrive at an assortment of key people from the public sector (elected officials or social service administrators), from the private sector and from senior advocacy groups (local commissions on aging, AARP, Gray

Panthers, etc.). A4AA program staff members conducted telephone interviews using a pre-established questionnaire (see Appendix C). A total of 54 key informants were interviewed. Informants received the questions in advance, and the interviews averaged 30 minutes in length.

Secondary Analysis. A4AA also considers research done by other agencies; this approach is called secondary analysis. In May of 2004, TTSC mailed a survey very similar to A4AA's 2004 Senior Survey to the homes of 3,101 people aged 55 or older in the Truckee-Tahoe area. TTSC received 243 completed surveys from people 60 or older living in Nevada County and 179 from Placer County. A brief discussion of the results for each county can be found below.

Public Hearings. Once preliminary results from the aforementioned methods were available, A4AA held one public hearing in each of the seven counties in PSA 4. These were completed in January and February of 2005. Each meeting was 90 minutes in length. During the first half of the meeting A4AA staff presented information on three topics: projected spending in the county for state fiscal year 2005-06, preliminary needs assessment results for the county, and proposed goals and objectives for the 2005-09 Area Plan. During the second half of the meeting, members of the public gave their input on these and other topics. A total of 260 people attended the public hearings.

Limitations of the Study

A4AA lacks sufficient resources to perform true scientific research projects. With respect to the 2004 Senior Survey, a much more costly sampling method (such as purchasing address lists and mailing surveys to thousands of households) would have been required to assure a random, and therefore statistically valid sample. Instead, a much more practical and inexpensive method called quota-sampling was used. Quota sampling is a technique that does not use a random selection of subjects, but is considered to provide a reasonable estimation of the study population when done properly.

Efforts were made to mirror the true senior population with respect to five key variables: sex, ethnicity, age, income and place of residence. While results varied from county to county, it is fair to say that across the board, men were under-represented, seniors of color were somewhat under-represented, people in their 60s were under-represented, low-income seniors were somewhat over-represented, and seniors living in rural areas were somewhat under-represented. It is important to note that these variations occurred not from a lack of effort but from different return rates among these demographic groups. Rural areas, for example, received an appropriate number of surveys, but surveys were not returned at the same rate as they were from urban and suburban areas.

The goal for total completed surveys was 1% of the study population (N=322,827). This goal was achieved. In Placer County, 1.1% of the senior population was sampled, representing a 3.9% margin of error. A 5% margin of error is commonly sought by social science researchers.

A survey return rate indicates what percentage of the people who received a survey (often in the mail) actually completed and returned it. In this case, it is impossible to determine a precise return rate because personnel at many of the drop sites, where a large portion of the surveys were sent, discarded their supplies of unused surveys when the project ended. Given the fact that there were nearly 100 such drop sites, it simply wasn't practical to follow-up with each of them. The best estimate is that 15,000 surveys went out into the community and 3,316 were returned, equaling a return rate of 22%. For purposes of comparison, the Truckee-Tahoe Survey, done during the same time period and of similar length, had a return rate of 13%.

Social scientists consider the best-designed research projects to be those that use a variety of methods, and they consider the most reliable findings to be those that emerge from all of the methods used. This is known as the principle of convergence, and it is the principle that was used in this 2004 Needs Assessment. For that reason, A4AA is confident that the major issues identified in this report are a good estimation of the true top concerns of older adults in the seven county service area.

Presentation of the Data

The needs assessment results for Placer County are presented in table format. The "Senior Needs Chart" shows the top issues that were identified from: 1) input at the public hearings, 2) Senior Information & Assistance data, 3) what service providers said were the most critical unmet needs, 4) what key informants said were the most critical unmet needs, 5) what senior survey respondents said they needed help with, and 6) senior survey respondents' written responses to what concerns them most.

For each data-gathering method, the most frequently mentioned issues are indicated in rank order. For example, if transportation was the issue most talked about by attendees at a public hearing, there would be a "1" in the public hearing column across from Transportation. If knowing about services was the second most frequently cited issue, then there would be a "2" in the public hearing column across from "Knowing about/accessing Senior Services." If an equal number of people raised concerns about two different issues, each item would be assigned the same rank number.

This ranking technique was used because it is fairly easy to apply and fairly easy to understand; no complex statistical method or knowledge is required. In order to show a total score or rank for each county, a simple reverse point system was used; issues with high point totals are those that were cited the most often, and those with low point totals were cited least often.

Regarding the listing of issues itself, some topics were lumped together and others were not. Related topics were kept separate in cases where the skills or services required are different. Regarding in-home assistance, for example, an unskilled worker could do yard work; however, personal care involves some degree of professional training, up to and including nursing care. In contrast, when you consider transportation, the same driver could theoretically be used to take some passengers to doctor appointments and others to the grocery store; the skills required are the same. Each reader may certainly draw their own conclusions as to the importance of a particular issue or service by adding the point totals for related items together.

Placer County

Projected 2004 Senior Population:	54,305
Projected 2004 Ethnic Population:	11%
2000 Population at or below Poverty:	4%
2000 Population in Rural Areas:	19%

<u>SENIOR NEEDS CHART</u> <i>FOR EACH DATA-GATHERING METHOD, THE MOST FREQUENTLY CITED NEEDS/CONCERNS ARE INDICATED IN RANK ORDER, BEGINNING WITH "1" (duplicate numbers appearing in the same column represent a tie)</i>	Clients Unmet Needs are... (Provider Surveys)	Our Community Needs... Key Informant Interviews	I Need Help With... (2004 Senior Survey)	I'm Most Concerned About... (2004 Senior Survey)	Service Gaps (Information & Assistance Data)	Input from the Public Hearing	TOTAL POINTS*
Affordable Housing		3		3	1		11
Being able to continue Driving			5	1			6
Depression and/or Isolation	2						4
Falls in the home							
Getting Legal Advice							
Having enough Money to live on	2			4	3		9
Having or getting Health Problems				2			4
Home Repair/Maintenance/Modification	2		2	4		3	13
In-Home Assistance (homemaker/yard)	1		1				10
In-Home Assistance (personal care)	2	4			2		10
Knowing about/accessing Senior Services		1	3			2	12
Paying for Dental Care							
Paying for/ Accessing Health Care		5		4			3
Paying for Medicines				5			1
Planning for Future Care Needs			4	5			3
Proper Nutrition (in or out of home)							
Respite for Caregivers (in or out of home)							
Stopping/preventing Crime							
Stopping/preventing Elder Abuse						3	3
Transportation (medical and/or errands)	2	2		3		1	16
OTHER: Affordable LTC Options		5			4		3
OTHER: Preventative Health/Wellness		4					2
OTHER: Money Management						3	3

*A rank of 1 = five points, 2 = four points, 3 = three points, 4 = two points and 5 = one point.

Placer County (continued)

Needs Data Details:

Provider Surveys. Two provider surveys were received. Getting someone to do household chores and/or yard work was the top unmet need expressed (see Appendix B for a listing of the agencies).

Key Informants. A total of 8 community members were interviewed (see Appendix C for a listing of their names). Seven of the eight cited a lack of awareness of services that are available for seniors; several mentioned the need for better publicity of the Senior Information and Assistance (I&A) program.

Senior Surveys. A total of 612 surveys were collected. This represents 1.1% of the entire senior population in Placer County. Getting someone to do household chores and/or yard work was what respondents most often needed help with (6% said this); however, the biggest concern was over paying for dental care (16% said this was a “big issue” for them). When asked to write down what concerned them most, respondents cited being able to continue driving.

I&A Provider Data. Information gathered from fiscal year 2003-04 shows the top unmet need in Placer County to be affordable housing.

Truckee-Tahoe Survey. Among the 179 seniors who returned the survey, the two issues that concerned them most were financial security, protecting themselves from crime, elder abuse or neglect and knowing about available service. Fifteen percent of respondents said financial security was a “serious concern;” 12% said protecting themselves from crime was a “serious concern;” 15% said knowing about services was a “serious concern.” When asked what resources are needed to meet the needs of seniors over the next 10 years, Placer County respondents most often said better access to transportation services, financial assistance and more affordable, independent senior housing.

Public Hearing. Fifty-two people attended a public hearing held in Auburn on January 26th, 2005. Attendees discussed the need for better transportation services, better awareness of available services and the need for home repairs and minor maintenance.

Summary:

When all data gathering methods are considered together, the top need in Placer County is for improved transportation services. Specifically, there is a need for service in rural areas and for door-to-door services for medical appointments and/or errands. Getting someone to do home repairs and/or maintenance ranks as the second highest need. In the third spot is the need to raise seniors’ awareness about the many services that are available to them. A lack of affordable housing and in-home assistance also ranked high.

III. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The goal of this project was to determine the needs of older adults as a whole. This is different from assessing individual senior needs. From the perspective of an older person whose son is taking advantage of them financially, for example, elder abuse is clearly their greatest need. Yet, elder abuse barely registered on the list of senior needs because a small percentage of seniors are in abusive situations. So, the reader should note that this report measures frequency of need not necessarily the severity or importance of those needs.

The reader should also note that there are sometimes differences between perceived need and actual need – between what a person *says* they need and what they may *really* need. Such differences were apparent in Part 4 of the 2004 Senior Surveys when the topics people identified as “big issues” for them did not coincide with the topics they needed help with.

In Placer County, the top areas of concern are: 1) paying for dental care, 2) being able to continue driving, 3) planning for future care needs, 4) stopping or preventing crime, and 5) stopping or preventing elder abuse. None of these topics made the top five list of needs.

Whatever the reasons that older adults may not express all of their needs and concerns directly, providers of senior services need to be aware of issues that may exist and should be trained to handle them appropriately. This is an important step in building an integrated care system in which clients’ needs are recognized the first time they enter the service network and they are referred to the agencies that can best help them earlier rather than later.

Recommendations

A4AA is responsible for persons 60 and older in a seven county area. The scope of need is enormous; no one organization working alone can make a significant difference. Therefore, A4AA continually works toward improving and enhancing the varied combination of public and private agencies that make up the service system for older adults. We seek to avoid duplication. We endeavor to fill gaps in the service network. We welcome opportunities to partner with counties, cities, and community-based, faith-based, non-profit, and for-profit organizations to gain a better understanding of current and future needs and of how services can better meet those needs, particularly with respect to those who are difficult to serve for geographic, social, economic and psychological reasons. We also welcome opportunities for collaboration in supporting vital services, expanding promising services and developing new ones.

The information gathered from A4AA’s 2004 Needs Assessment will provide guidance to our agency in determining future funding priorities and will hopefully assist other organizations in their efforts to better serve seniors.

Acknowledgements

A4AA wishes to thank the many individuals and organizations who helped make the 2004 Needs Assessment possible.

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Maidu Community Center

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