

Sudbury Council on Aging

40 Fairbank Road

Sudbury, MA 01776

OUTREACH TO THE OLDEST

Report on Findings

2011

To: Heather Lacasse, LCSW
Assistant Director
Area Agency on Aging
Baypath Elder Services
Older Americans Act
Title III-B, Elder Support Services

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The Sudbury Council on Aging received a unique Title III-B grant from BayPath Elder Services for FY 2011. This grant enabled us to interview all our residents age 85 or older.

The goal, as stated in the proposal, was:

To improve the Senior Center's understanding of its oldest residents, their situations, needs and preferences in order to plan more accurately for supportive services, and to inform Sudbury residents age 85 and older of the many services available through the Senior Center and collaborating agencies.

And the two objectives were:

- *To contact every senior aged 85 and older in Sudbury to conduct an in-depth survey of their unmet needs, supports and living situations.*
- *And, to provide senior volunteers an opportunity to be involved in a meaningful project to benefit community elders.*

The objectives have been met, and this report to BayPath Elder Services and the Sudbury Community shares our findings.

Summary

Overall, the 85+ survey was a success, meeting the objectives of reaching out to and learning about our oldest citizens and engaging older adults as volunteers for the interview process.

The participants in the survey overwhelmingly indicated that they appreciated the telephone calls (and in some cases, in person interviews). The volunteers who did the interviews enjoyed the process and felt that it was valuable. Areas of need were identified and at the same time, the independence and strength of this population was also noted.

There were many positive findings: the majority of those surveyed are doing well. They get out of the house regularly, are physically active in some way, do not have transportation problems and do not need financial assistance.

That said, a small number of respondents indicated that they have some needs that are not being met. A good number of these would use the services of a podiatrist if available. And a smaller number would like more social contact and some do not get out of the house on a regular basis.

The following are some of the very positive responses:
(All these are based on 104 persons interviewed)

- 96 are living in private residences without public financial support
- 72 have lived in Sudbury 40 years or more, some *much* more.
- 100 plan to stay in Sudbury

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- 89 get out regularly
- 98 enjoy “mingling”
- 88 report that someone checks on them regularly
- 53 use a computer
- 42 have email accounts
- 81 participate in Town Elections
- 46, when asked what services they needed to help them remain in their residence reported “none”
- 41, when asked what would make it possible for them to participate at the Senior Center replied either “active”, “nothing”.
- 91 stated that transportation is not an issue for them.
- 42 answered “none” to “Do you have any major health issues?”
- 87 do not need assistance managing daily activities
- 55 either walk or use equipment to exercise, and almost all the other participants listed other activities
- 70 reported that finances are not an issue.

General Findings

While the census identified 295 persons in Sudbury over age 85, our actual target population was smaller. After eliminating persons residing in Sudbury’s two nursing homes and one assisted living facility, we found 159 persons to interview.

We were able to interview 104 persons, and the remainder of this report is based on those interviews. Of the 55 “missing”, we identified:

- 5 deceased
- 6 declined to be interviewed
- 3 too ill to be interviewed
- 6 moved to nursing home or out of town
- 5 duplicate name, etc.
- 30 Unable to contact

It is acknowledged that the results of the survey are limited by the missing data of the persons who declined to be interviewed, who were too ill to be interviewed or who had moved from town. Therefore, it is not accurate to draw broad conclusions about the population of persons 85 and older. However, the data from persons who are 85 and older who did participate is useful for knowing the needs of real people who live here and were able to participate.

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Who were the 104 interviewees?

More Men than might be expected

Females	63
Males	41

Although the popular press suggests that men are a small minority in most elder populations, the percentage of men among the participants was a generous 40%. Typical participation of all age groups at the Senior Center is about 30% male to 70% female.

Age pattern

Age 85-89	70
Age 90-101	34

Living Arrangements

Live Alone	45
Live with Spouse	40
Live with Family	16

Nearly half of respondents to the survey reported that they live alone.

Housing

Houses	81
Condominiums	12
Frost Farm condos	3
Musketahquid Village Apts.	8
Longfellow Glen Apts.	0
Total	104

Most of the respondents live in single family homes.

Years living in Sudbury

80 or more	5
70-79	2
60-69	9
50-59	40(!)
40-49	16
30-39	8
20-29	4
0-19	14
Total	98

*72 of our interviewees have lived in Sudbury 40 years or longer, some **much** longer!*

Are you planning to stay?

Yes	100
No	3

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Questions about Health and Activity

“What is your greatest concern?”

Health	53
Mobility	9
Others, <i>blank or scattered responses</i>	

Do you get out regularly?

Yes	89
No	14

Do you enjoy mingling?

Yes	98
No	4

Does someone check on you regularly?

Yes	88
No	9
No Response	11

Are you interested in more social contact?

Yes	14
No	79

Of the 14, 3 also do not get out regularly

Would you enjoy a telephone chat or visitor?

Yes, Daily	2
Yes, Weekly	7
No	90

A total of 9 persons indicated interest in a chat or visit.

Own a Pet?

Yes	26
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Need help with your pet?

Yes	0
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Do you use a computer?

Yes	53
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Do you use email?

Yes	42
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Participate in Town Elections?

Yes 81

What services would help you to remain in your current residence?

(Yard maintenance, shopping, cooking, cleaning)

None	46
Blank	6
Yard	24
Cleaning	15
Van, transportation	2
Total	97

Family helps 11

Cleaning Service/Aide 5

Services listed as important to help seniors stay in their homes, included: help with the yard work and cleaning.

What would make it possible to participate at Senior Center?

Active at Senior Center	27
Nothing needed	14
Works	1
Transportation	6
Health	4
Caregiver	1
Not Interested	12
Other	4
Blank	35
Total	104

Many participants in the survey reported that they are active at the Senior Center (27) or there is nothing needed to help them participate at the Senior Center (14). Of those who indicated that there are barriers to their attendance at the Senior Center, 6 indicated transportation, 4 indicated health issues and 1 reported that being a caregiver makes it difficult. A significant number (35) did not answer this question and 12 participants reported that they are not interested in participating at the Senior Center.

Have you had a recent safety check of your residence?

Yes 55

No 41

If no, would you like a safety check?

Yes 10

No 30

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What concerns you most about staying in your home?

Taxes/financial	15
Health	14
House maintenance	7
Stairs	5
Loneliness	4
Caring for husband	3
Transportation/ not being able to drive	3
Yard maintenance	2
Staying active	1
Safety	1
Falling	1
Cold weather	1
Boredom	1
Insurance company	1
Is moving	1
None	37
Blank	10
Total	107

Please note: 3 respondents had two answers to the above question.

The top two concerns about staying in their homes were: Taxes/financial concerns (15) and health issues (14). Other concerns of note: house maintenance and yard care (9); stairs (5); loneliness (4); caring for husband (3); and transportation/not being able to drive (3).

Do you have a lockbox?

Yes	20
No	73

If NO, would you like more information about a lockbox?

Yes	27
No	36

Questions about Transportation

Is transportation an issue for you?

Yes	14
No	91

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What transportation needs do you have?

Uses Van	5
Shopping	1
Church	1
Medical	3
Boston	1
Hairdresser	1
Housebound, "all," visit friends, Getting out, etc	8
Total	20

Would you use transportation if it were available nights and weekends?

Yes	23
No	47

Would you use it if it required a fee?

Yes	20
No	7

Questions about Health and Safety

Do you have a call (Life alert) monitor in case of emergency?

Yes	32
No	71

If "no" would you like more information on a monitor system?

Yes	13
No	38

If podiatry services were available, would you use this service?

Yes	37
No	57

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Do you have any major health issues?

None	42
Heart	9
Stroke, Mini-Stroke	3
Arthritis	3
Blood Pressure	3
Cancer	4
Hearing loss	3
Eyes, glaucoma, macular	7
Spouse's health	2
Asthmatic	2
Walking, walker	2
Hip	2
One each of other causes	15
Total	55

Nine respondents indicated a heart problem, 7 indicated a vision problem.

Do you need assistance managing daily activities?

Yes	12*
No	87

**includes "has an aide", "daughter helps", "opening jars"*

What do you do for exercise?

Walking	38
Exercise machines (bikes, treadmill, etc)	17
Yard/housework	7
Garden	6
"yes"	6
Nothing	7
Tennis, Golf, Fishing	6
Lift weights	3
Yoga	2
Runs	2
Stairs	2
Total	96

One each of the following: Fit for Future, trail cleaning, works, hike, bike, ski, physical therapy (p.t.), "a little", "needs help", farming, "avoids exercise", "uses walker", shopping, active, classes, "not much", "a bit", dancing, stretches, exercise. Many reported more than one activity.

The total number who indicated that they do some form of exercise is 84 survey participants (about 81%).

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General

Some services might require a payment. Would you be willing to pay for services?

Yes	58
No	9

Are finances an issue?

Yes	12
No	70

Follow Up

Specific Requests for Information

Several respondents indicated an interest in more information about our programs. Those interested in program information received a special mailing listing all of the Senior Center's programs.

Twenty-six respondents indicated that they were interested in more information about lockboxes. A lockbox is a key safe outside the home accessible only to the Fire Department. The Senior Center Volunteer Coordinator called the persons interested in the lockbox information. Of the 26, the Coordinator reached 22 individuals. Five of these individuals decided that they wanted a lockbox installed outside their homes. All five persons had lockboxes placed outside their homes.

Follow Up to Survey

Request	# of Individuals Who Requested/ Were Interested	Individuals Contacted	Senior Center Staff Action
Lifeline	14	11	contacted by Information Specialist and information mailed, was unable to contact 3 people
Safety Check	8	8	contacted by Information Specialist and information mailed
Friendly Visit or Phone chat	3	2	contacted by Information Specialist and shared information with client, 1 individual was not able to reached
Lockbox	26	22	5 people received a lockbox, 4 we were not able to contact, 5 said they would think about it; 9 said they were not interested, 3 live at housing that already has something similar

All persons indicating an interest in information about emergency response systems, safety checks and friendly visitor were contacted by the Information Specialist. The Information Specialist provided information about the service and offered to help connect them to it. Those respondents interested in a visit or phone chat were offered a home visit by the Information Specialist.

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A Subset in Need

While the majority indicated that they are doing quite well, a smaller proportion reported that they have some needs that are not being met. Socialization was one of the identified needs of this group. In addition, a small number reported that they have the need of a podiatrist.

Of the 14 participants who indicated a need for more socialization, it was heartening to know that 11 reported that they do get out regularly. Three participants who need more socialization also reported that they did not get out regularly.

Of those who do get out regularly, perhaps the Senior Center can provide some type of program, class or group that would interest them and provide them an opportunity to meet other people. It is unclear what program would be best, however, the Senior Center will continue to offer new and different program and classes in order to explore what piques the interest of the older adult population of Sudbury.

The three respondents who indicated a desire for more socialization also reported an interest in weekly calls or visits. Of these three, two were men and one was a woman. The two men live with their spouses and the woman lives with family. (Of the men, one gentleman did not answer the questions himself, his wife did.) All three indicated a need for transportation. None of these three use a computer or have email. The Senior Center continues to explore methods for offering socialization opportunities for isolated seniors. Follow up to this population will continue.

A total of nine reported an interest in chat or visit. All of these participants were contacted by the Information Specialist, offered a home visit and informed about the Friendly Visitor program.

Transportation

All participants in the survey were made aware of the Senior Center van and the FISH volunteer medical transportation program. Five respondents indicated that they already use our van.

It is recognized by staff that the Senior Center van service and FISH do not fulfill all the needs of seniors who do not have transportation. Fourteen individuals reported that they need help with transportation.

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Of respondents indicating a need for help with transportation, the following needs were identified:

Transportation Needs	No.
medical appointments	4
shopping	2
all/everywhere	2
church	1
get out during day	1
housebound	1
hairdresser	1
visiting friends	1
transportation	1
to Boston	1
library	1
uses van	5
None	59
blanks	24
Total	104

When asked if they need transportation help on nights and weekends, the number reporting a need for help increased to 23 respondents. Significantly, of those interested in weekend or night transportation, 20 would be willing to pay a fee.

Transportation Need on nights/weekends	No.
Yes	23
No	47
Blanks	34
	104
Willing to pay a fee?	No.
Yes	20
No	7

Podiatrist

The need for a podiatrist was indicated by a total of 37 people. It is not clear if the need is for a podiatry clinic at the Senior Center, for home visits or some other alternative. Unfortunately, the Senior Center staff have not been able to find a podiatrist who will do home visits. It is probable that many people could get out to the Senior Center for a podiatry visit if it was offered here.

This is a service that the Senior Center offered several years ago. It is possible the Senior Center could host a podiatrist at the Senior Center. However, it will be a challenge, due to the lack of an appropriate space at the Senior Center for this service. In order to provide a space, a key staff person will need to vacate her office. In addition, her office is not well suited to the needs of a podiatry clinic, being small, having her desk and files nearby, and cleanliness was an issue in the

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past. The other potential challenge is the dearth of podiatrists who offer this service in the community. However, the Senior Center staff will consider this as a potential goal for the future.

Helping Seniors Stay in Sudbury

When asked what services would help them to remain in their current residences, 24 participants in the survey reported that they could use help with yard work; 15 participants listed help with cleaning as a service that would help them to stay.

The Senior Center Volunteer Coordinator currently operates a small yard clean-up program in the fall and spring. Volunteers from various groups are assigned to do a one-time yard raking and clean-up at senior's homes. The Senior Center Information Specialist maintains a list of homemaking and cleaning agencies to share with seniors who need a referral. Seniors are also referred to BayPath Elder Services where they can get assistance on a sliding fee scale, if they are clinically eligible for services.

The Senior Center will explore opportunities to further assist older adults in the community who need help with yard work and cleaning by making sure they are aware of our current services and finding new avenues for assistance.

Concluding Thoughts

All our practices take into consideration seniors' hesitancy to reach out for help. Among the elders this is even more notable; a cry for help is often seen as a threat to one's independence.

For the population we are discussing, the Senior Center plans to continue its outreach. Persons who received information by mail, for example, will be contacted again by phone to perhaps make it easier for them to accept the service described. Persons who indicated a need for more social contact will also receive follow up telephone calls.

The Senior Center also plans to explore possible expansion or enhancement of services to meet the needs of those who are isolated, need podiatry services, need help with yard work and cleaning, and need more transportation options.

In general, we consider this activity to have been concluded, and to have been valuable and successful. We reached our goals and accomplished our objectives. We not only identified unmet needs that we can fulfill, but we also identified an active and vibrant group of neighbors who are enjoying a fruitful life in our community.