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Connecting Seniors in Franklin County Vermont to Community Resources

Autumn Reilly
University of Vermont

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Connecting Seniors in Franklin County Vermont to Community Resources

Autumn Reilly

Rotation 7: February- March 2017

Project Mentor: Max Bayard MD

Problem Identification and Description of Need

What is Successful Aging?

- Successful aging for seniors is measured by²:
 - General health
 - Strong friendships
 - Ability to participate in activities (recreational, leisure, civic)
 - Good family relations

Vermont's Aging Population

- Vermont has the 2nd oldest population in country¹
 - 15.9% of Vermont's population was over age 65, ranking fourth in US for percent of population >65
 - 2.3% of population >85
 - By 2032 it is predicted that 23.8% of Vermont's population will be >65, ranking 1st in the US¹

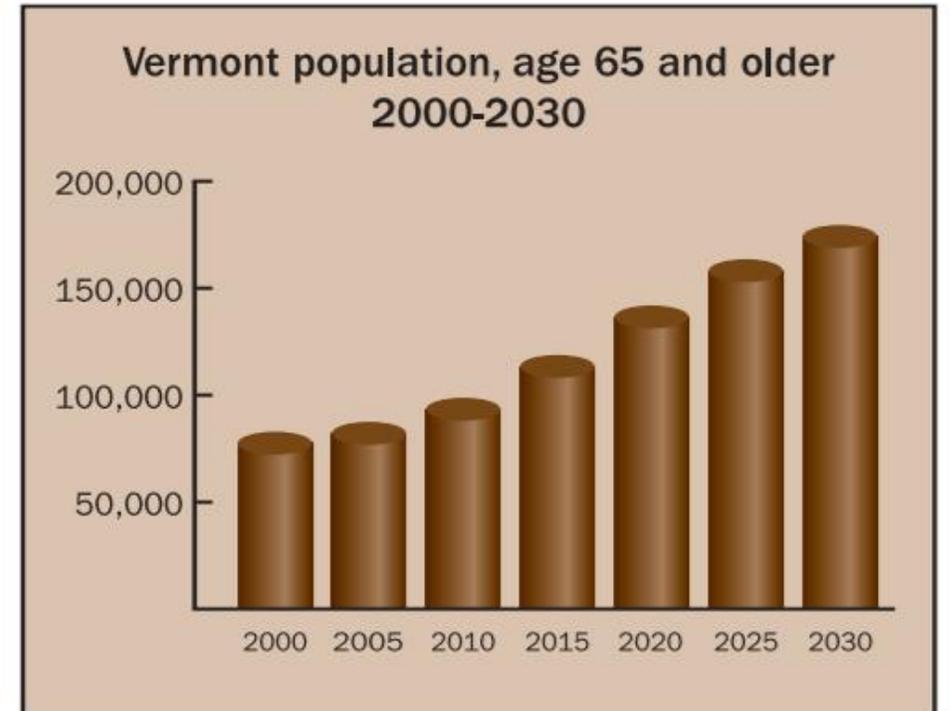


FIGURE 1 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, population division, interim state population projections, 2005

Problem Identification and Description of Need

Access to Resources in Franklin County

- Older adults living in rural areas have less access to health care and have to travel farther to access resources¹
- Services tend to be more costly in rural areas
 - 8.0% of Franklin County residents >60 are below federal poverty level¹

How do senior citizens meet goals for aging through connections to community resources?

- In a 2013 survey, older Vermonters and their caregivers identified that they didn't "know where to turn to and the complexity of the service system and application processes were barriers to accessing care"¹
- A pamphlet of community contacts provided by healthcare providers could be a starting point to help elderly patients navigate care

Public Health Costs

- Many state and national organizations are dedicated to our countries aging population.
 - In particular healthcare costs are high for seniors leaving them less money to spend on other expenses.⁴
 - Yearly Out-of-Pocket annual healthcare costs for a couple⁶ age 65 was \$6,999; while the average annual social security payment for a retired worker⁴ in Vermont was about \$12,000.
- Costs specific to Vermont in 2015⁵:
 - Nursing Home yearly rate- \$102,018
 - Assisted Living Facility yearly rate- \$48,240
 - Home Health Aide Services yearly rate- \$50,336
 - It is estimated that in 2030 that national average annual cost for a nursing home will be \$190,600
- With high healthcare and housing costs it is important to support Vermont's seniors living independently through community programs and outreach.

Community Perspective

- SASH Coordinator- Support and Services at Home

- SASH is a healthy aging program designed to keep Medicare patients healthy and support them living independently.
- The program originally started as a brainstorming project amongst senior citizens about what resources they would find beneficial.
- Before the development of SASH there was a need for a program that was designed to help seniors navigate community resources.
- Referrals for the program come through local physicians, friends and family members. The program is completely voluntary.
- Currently they have a full panel of clients and there is a waiting list for people to receive SASH services in Franklin County.

- Senior Community Member and Volunteer

- Volunteer involvement includes Meals on Wheels food preparation, Martha's Kitchen, Senior Center, Vermont Animal Cruelty Investigation Advisory Board
- He states that most resources and ways to get involved in the community are spread by word of mouth. He would have found a pamphlet or booklet of resources helpful, but he was not aware of anything like this existing.

“I could stay at home and do nothing, but I wanted to do something. Its good to remain active and give back to the community.”

Intervention and Methodology

- Information on a variety of community resources was collected including:
 - Purpose of the organization
 - Resources available to elderly patients
 - Contact information or ways to get involved
- The goal was to create a pamphlet that provided a variety of community resources available to senior citizens and contact information for these resources.
- The pamphlets will then be distributed to NOTCH Health Centers in Franklin County, and available for providers to give to patients or in waiting areas for patients to take as they would like.
- Following is a list of organizations/resources included in the pamphlet:
 - Age Well
 - Volunteer Opportunities: Tri-County Foster Grandparents, Retired Senior Volunteer Program, Northwestern Medical Center
 - Franklin County Senior Center
 - Green Mountain Transit
 - SASH – Support and Services at Home
- It is hoped that the information provided will not only help senior citizens navigate various resources, but also increase community involvement and improve quality of life.

Intervention and Methodology: Tri-fold Pamphlet



“In the end, its not the years in your life that count. It’s the life in your years.”

- Abraham Lincoln

Additional Resources:

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE
1-800-273-8255

Vermont Crisis Text Line
In Crisis? Text VT to 741741
CRISIS TEXT LINE | Free, 24/7, Confidential

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Community Resources for Seniors in Franklin County

Ways to connect with community organizations

- SASH- Support and Services at Home
 - Assist with coordination of resources to support those who live independently at home
 - Contact Information for St. Albans Area:
 145 North Elm Street
 St. Albans, VT 05478
 802-859-8850
 866-522-1943
 www.sashvt.org

Activities and Wellness:

- Franklin County Senior Center
 - Various opportunities for involvement including exercise groups, crafts, bridge, cribbage, and line dancing.
 - Membership is \$12/year; >82 membership is free
 - Contact Information:
 75 Messenger St.
 St. Albans, VT 05478
 802-524-6616
 www.fcscvt.org
- Northwestern Medical Center
 - Healthy living workshops, tobacco cessation, Alzheimer’s support group, Tai Chi, Yoga and much more
 - Call 802-524-5911 or visit <https://www.northwesternmedicalcenter.org/events/>

Transportation:

- Green Mountain Transit
 - Transportation for individuals who are 60 years of age or older and/or individuals with disabilities
 - For more information and eligibility call: 802-527-2181



Volunteer Opportunities:

- Tri-County Foster Grandparents
 - Opportunity for adults >55 to earn supplemental income. Volunteers serve as tutors, mentors, and friends to school age children.
 - Through the United Way of Northwest Vermont
 - Call 802-524-6337 or email fgp@unitedwaynwvt.org
- Retired Senior Volunteer Program
 - Remain active and meet new friends in the community
 - Contact: 802-524-6337
- Northwestern Medical Center
 - Call 802-524-1055

Resources Available through Age Well

Age Well is an organization of experts and advocates for the aging population of Northwestern Vermont.

Senior Helpline: Toll-free, confidential call answered by certified staff that can understand the problem and offer real-time solutions.

HELPLINE: 1-800-642-5119

Services provided include:

- Assistance with making it possibly for seniors to stay at home including, in-home visits and help with household tasks through volunteers
- Guidance with care transitions when coming home from the hospital or rehabilitation
- Meals on Wheels
- Wellness and Fitness Classes
- Volunteer Opportunities

For questions related to Age Well services contact the helpline.

Results/Response

- Members of the NOTCH Health Centers reviewed the pamphlet.
- The goal is that the pamphlet will be printed and distributed amongst the NOTCH Health Centers, and used by social workers and other providers as a reference for community contacts.
- Response from providers for the distribution of the pamphlet was positive. One of the social workers in the office remarked that this would be an easy and quick resource to provide to patients looking for ways to get involved in the community.

Effectiveness and Limitations

Effectiveness

- Pamphlet provides list of community resources and contacts in a single easy to read location which can be distributed to patients at their office visit
- Helps elderly patients navigate the system rather than them having to access information on the internet.
- Increase in awareness of these resources to primary care providers and other office staff
- Resource to provide to patients without involvement of wellness coordinator saving time and further appointments
- Possible benefits from patient involvement in these community resources include:
 - Improvement in senior citizens quality of life and involvement in the community
 - Increased awareness and use of resources available in terms of housing, mental health, wellness, volunteering, transportation, and health care

Limitations

- Difficult to include all resources that cover a variety of needs in the format of a pamphlet
- Did not have sufficient time to evaluate the implementation and use of the pamphlet in the office setting
- Patient involvement or use of these community resources was not able to be assessed
- With resources and contact information changing frequently this pamphlet will need yearly updates.
- Resources are limited to and only applicable for Franklin County
- Some resources require an application process or service fee which can be barriers for senior citizen involvement

Recommendations for Future Interventions/Projects

Ideas for future projects:

- Creating a survey for elderly patients assessing:
 - Resources that they are familiar with
 - Areas of need or resources that would be of benefit to them
 - Previous experiences with use of community resources
- Assess primary care providers awareness of community resources for elderly population, their likelihood of referral, and their perspectives on the importance of community involvement for elderly patients
- Data collection on the use of various resources throughout the county

Finding additional ways to connect with senior citizens and provide information on community resources including:

- Creating an updated yearly newspaper spread containing similar information as the pamphlet
- Advertising resources through local news and broadcast stations
- Distributing pamphlets through meals on wheels delivery system
- Providing pamphlets to community senior centers and local restaurants for distribution

References

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