

The National Aging Network

Congress passed the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1965 in response to concern by policymakers about a lack of community social services for older persons. The original legislation established authority for grants to states for community planning and social services, research and development projects, and personnel training in the field of aging. The law also established the Administration on Aging (AoA)* to administer the newly created grant programs and to serve as the federal focal point on matters concerning older persons.

Although older individuals may receive services under many other federal programs, today the OAA is considered to be a major vehicle for the organization and delivery of social and nutrition services to this group and their caregivers. It authorizes a wide array of service programs through a national network of 56 state agencies on aging, 618 area agencies on aging, nearly 20,000 service providers, 281 Tribal organizations, and 1 Native Hawaiian organization representing 400 Tribes. The OAA also includes community service employment for low-income older Americans; training, research, and demonstration activities in the field of aging; and vulnerable elder rights protection activities.

The OAA was reauthorized in 2016 and 2020. The 2016 OAA Act included provisions to protect vulnerable elders by strengthening the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program and elder abuse screening and prevention efforts. It also promotes the delivery of evidence-based programs, such as falls prevention and chronic disease self-management programs.

The Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020 reauthorizes programs for FY 2020 through FY 2024. It includes provisions that aim to remove barriers to the aging network increasing business acumen and capacity building, provide states and localities with the flexibility of deciding the allocation of National Family Caregiver Services between the populations served, and extends authorization of the RAISE Family Caregiver Act and the Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act by one additional year.



*In 2012, the Administration for Community Living was established, bringing together the Administration on Aging, the Office on Disability, and the Administration on Developmental Disabilities.

A Historical Evolution of Programs for Older Americans and further details on the OAA and its reauthorizations is available on the Administration for Community Living Website at <https://acl.gov/about-acl/authorizing-statutes/older-americans-act>

Older Americans Act

Title 1: Declaration of Objectives

The Congress hereby finds and declares that, in keeping with the traditional American concept of the inherent dignity of the individual in our democratic society, **the older people of our Nation are entitled to, and it is the joint and several duty and responsibility of the governments of the United States**, of the several States and their political subdivisions, and of Indian tribes **to assist our older people to secure equal opportunity to the full and free enjoyment of the following objectives**

- (1) An **adequate income** in retirement in accordance with the American standard of living.
- (2) The best possible **physical and mental health** which science can make available and without regard to economic status.
- (3) Obtaining and maintaining **suitable housing**, independently selected, designed and located with reference to special needs and available at costs which older citizens can afford.
- (4) **Full restorative services for those who require institutional care**, and a **comprehensive array of community-based, long-term care services** adequate to appropriately sustain older people in their communities and in their homes, including support to family members and other persons providing voluntary care to older individuals needing long-term care services.
- (5) Opportunity for **employment** with no discriminatory personnel practices because of age.
- (6) **Retirement in health, honor, dignity**—after years of contribution to the economy.
- (7) Participating in and contributing to **meaningful activity** within the widest range of **civic, cultural, educational and training and recreational** opportunities.
- (8) Efficient **community services**, including access to low cost transportation, which provide a choice in supported living arrangements and social assistance in a coordinated manner and which are readily available when needed, **with emphasis on maintaining a continuum of care for vulnerable older individuals**.
- (9) Immediate benefit from proven **research** knowledge which can sustain and improve health and happiness.
- (10) Freedom, independence, and the **free exercise of individual initiative** in planning and managing their own lives, full participation in the planning and operation of community based services and programs provided for their benefit, and **protection against abuse, neglect, and exploitation**.

Title II

established the Federal Administration on Aging to implement and oversee the OAA.

Title IV

supports training, research and demonstration projects in the field of aging.

Title V

established and supports the Senior Community Service Employment Program.

Title VI

provides grants to organizations serving older Native Americans.

Title VII

established the long-term care ombudsman program, which protects the rights of individuals residing in nursing homes and supports programs that work to prevent elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Older Americans Act

Title III

Funds programs providing in-home and community-based long-term care services*, including:

- Supportive Services (Title IIIB): examples include: transportation, information & assistance, outreach, case management, homemaker or chore services, legal service, adult day centers
- Nutrition Services (Title IIIC): congregate & home-delivered meals
- Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (Title IIID)
- Family Caregiver Support (Title IIIE)

***Priority Areas**

A fixed percentage of funding must be used to support priority areas that are established through the OAA, the Connecticut's State Plan on Aging and the local AAA's Area Plan.

The Administration on Aging (AoA) Strategic Action Plan has five strategic priority areas:

1. Empower older people, their families, and other consumers to make informed decisions, about, and to be able to easily access, existing health and long-term care options;
2. Enable seniors to remain in their own homes with high quality of life for as long as possible through the provision of home and community-based services, including supports for family caregivers;
3. Empower older adults to stay active and healthy through Older Americans Act services and the new preventive benefits under Medicare;
4. Ensure the rights of older people and prevent elder abuse, neglect and exploitation; and,
5. Maintain effective and responsive management.

Target Population

Services provided through Title III funding are available to all individuals over 60 years of age. However, the OAA prioritizes services to older adults with the greatest economic and social needs, with particular attention to:

- low income older individuals
- low-income minority older individuals
- older individuals with limited English proficiency
- older individuals residing in rural areas
- older adults with Alzheimer's or related disorders
- older adults with severe disabilities
- individuals at risk for institutional placement