



# Advancing Social Connection and Equity for Older Adults

## The Greater Syracuse Aging Services Coalition's Vision To Create A One-Stop Shop

### Who Are We?

The Greater Syracuse Aging Services Coalition works to increase social connectedness and advance racial equity and economic justice for older adults in Onondaga County. Together with aging service providers, community members, and anyone who cares about aging, we develop initiatives that change the lives of people most impacted by ageism, racism, and economic inequality.

### What is Social Connectedness?

Social connectedness means having enough social networks, which reduces loneliness and improves access to the information and resources people need to age well.

### What prevents older people from being socially connected?

- Our families are smaller than in the past
- We lose people we love
- We become less mobile
- We lack transportation
- We lose our vision or hearing
- We experience racism
- We are LGBTQ+
- We do not speak English
- We live in poverty
- We live in rural or inaccessible neighborhoods
- Our finances are limited
- We don't want to be around "old people"



Seventeen percent of adults aged 65 and older are isolated ([connect2affect.org](http://connect2affect.org))



Older African Americans are twice as likely to live in poverty than all other older adults in Onondaga County (US Census)



The health risks of prolonged isolation are equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day ([connect2affect.org](http://connect2affect.org))



Ninety percent of older adults in Central New York are concerned their communities do not have the resources and services to help them age at home<sup>1</sup>

## What Will We Do?

The Greater Syracuse Aging Services Coalition plans to open a One-Stop Shop for older adults. The One-Stop Shop will be a place for older adults to be active and access services that help them age well and stay socially connected. It will be open during times that are most convenient for older adults, with staff who are ready to meet people's needs directly, which will help minimize referrals and multiple appointments with different providers.



At a vibrant One-Stop Shop, older adults are greeted by culturally sensitive staff, volunteers, and neighbors. They might arrange transportation for an upcoming doctor's visit, fill out SNAP paperwork, update their health insurance, and get help with a computer. They can connect with friends and neighbors, share a cup of coffee, join an exercise class, and work on a project with their grandkids. The One-Stop Shop is warm and inviting, filled with the sounds of togetherness and the smells of home. Older adults are treated with respect, feel connected, and know they belong.

## Why Will We Do This?

The Greater Syracuse Aging Services Coalition held a series of Community Convenings in March 2021 that were attended by over 70 older adults, caregivers, service providers, and community leaders throughout Onondaga County. Participants talked about the barriers and challenges they face as they age and the strategies they believe would help them stay socially connected and age well.

Three prominent themes emerged. First, people want better access to services in locations and hours convenient to them. Second, they want to feel valued, welcomed and respected, and able to connect with people of different ages. Third, they want providers who are culturally sensitive, speak their languages, and share their life experiences.

Our vision for the One-Stop Shop addresses these needs by creating a single, easy-to-access, reliable place for older adults and caregivers to get the help they need and stay socially connected.

## Where Will We Do This?

The One-Stop Shop will be designed to benefit older residents in Onondaga County who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing isolation. We will focus our attention on populations most impacted by isolation, including older adults experiencing racism and economic injustice, who live in urban, suburban, and rural areas. The One-Stop Shop location(s) will be identified during the Design Phase.

## Successful Models

The **Brentwood Senior Center** in Brentwood, California, is a successful One-Stop Shop with a simple work plan: a robust schedule of social and recreational activities; a team of in-house service professionals who help older adults with healthcare, housing, care management, taxes, budgeting, and other social services; and an active organization of members who are directly involved in planning activities and services. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the center has taken their services on the road, using recreational halls and community centers around the county to provide services and spark social interaction among smaller communities.



The **Eastmont Town Center** in Oakland, California, converted a declining shopping center into a thriving hub for social services. The town center includes affordable senior housing and a range of county offices, including adult and aging services, bus hub, the Oakland Police Department, social security department, public library, public medical center, general assistance (211), and WIC. The entire space is age-friendly and handicapped accessible, creating an inviting and easy-to-access atmosphere for clients.

## When Will We Do This?

The One-Stop Shop will be developed with two phases:

### **Design Phase (January–June 2022):**

Engage key partners and community members, outline core services, identify potential location(s), define the project timeline, and apply for funding.

### **Implementation Phase (July 2022–December 2023):**

Test and strengthen key design features, attract new partners, identify additional community needs, and develop a sustainability plan.

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## We Need Your Help

**If you're interested in being a part of this exciting initiative, contact us at:**

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<sup>1</sup>Health Foundation for Western and Central New York: "Aging by Design: What Matters Most to Older Adults (Infographic)" The Health Foundation for Western and Central New York (October 24, 2017)

