



## Creating Age- and Disability-Friendly Communities

Good news! Aging and Disability Services filed its final draft [Area Plan for 2016-2019 for Seattle-King County](#) with the State Unit on Aging, part of the DSHS Aging and Long-Term Support Administration, on Oct. 5, 2015. State approval is expected in early 2016.

Every four years, each of the 650-plus Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) around the country develops an Area Plan, as mandated by the Older Americans Act of 1965. Aging and Disability Services is the Area Agency on Aging for King County. The plans are updated in two years.

“Our mission is to develop a community that promotes quality of life, independence and choice for older people and adults with disabilities,” said Aging and Disability Services director Maureen Linehan. “The Area Plan is full of information about the needs of older adults and people with disabilities throughout King County, including relevant demographic trends, and it sets goals and objectives that will help us create age- and disability-friendly communities.”

In King County:

- Seventeen percent of the population is age 60 and older. This represents a 43 percent increase since the year 2000.
- The fastest-growing segment of the total population is the “oldest old”—age 85 and older.
- About 23 percent (78,504) of residents age 60 and older are people of color—up four percent from 2011.
- Among residents age 65 and older, 19 percent (41,899) speak a language other than English at home and three percent (7,431) do not speak any English.
- As the older adult population becomes more diverse, the number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) older adults is also expected to grow.
- The poverty rate among the age 65 and older population is highest in Seattle and south urban King County sub-regions.

Aging and Disability Services receives \$38 million in federal, state and local resources to help meet the needs of King County’s aging population. Some of the services are provided directly by Aging and Disability Services while others are subcontracted.

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## Local priorities for age-friendly communities

Before developing the new plan, Aging and Disability Services conducted extensive community engagement, collaborated with local experts, and researched the needs of older adults and adults with disabilities. The greatest areas of concern were:

- Health and health care
- Housing
- Safety
- Socialization
- Transportation

The State of Washington required four of the five issue areas named in the Area Plan, so Aging and Disability Services incorporated a number of the community's concerns into a fifth area that focuses on livable communities.

"We need to prepare both consumers and local governments for an aging population," said Linehan. "Local governments as well as private entities need to collaborate to create age-friendly communities—build affordable, accessible housing and "complete streets" that support community mobility; ensure reliable transportation; and provide access to health and human services that make life better, with access to information and resources before services are needed. Increasingly, we're working on these issues at a regional level."

Aging and Disability Services is already implementing one objective—development of [Community Living Connections](#), a network of advocates for adults facing aging or disability issues. Community Living Connections provides anyone who calls a caring, highly-trained specialist who will give them easy access to information, individual consultation and service options. Calls to the Community Living Connections line (206-962-8467 or toll-free 1-844-348-KING (5464)) are free and confidential.

### Area Plan goals

1. Maximize current program, funding and staff capacity to meet the needs of complex Long-Term Services and Supports clients.
2. Delay Medicaid-funded long-term services and supports by encouraging health promotion and disease prevention; increasing awareness about Alzheimer's disease, memory care and wellness for older adults and adults with disabilities; and reducing the incidence of falls.
3. Integrate Aging and Disability Network services with other health and human services systems for better health and better care at a lower cost.
4. Ensure greater success for Native American elders in King County.
5. Promote/develop a regional framework to increase awareness about the aging population; influence municipalities, stakeholders, policy and decision makers, and consumers to prepare their communities for the aging population; and encourage people of all ages to keep moving and stay connected.

The final draft Area Plan 2016–2019 is available online at [www.agingkingcounty.org/area\\_plan.htm](http://www.agingkingcounty.org/area_plan.htm). For questions regarding the plan, e-mail Aging and Disability Services planner Karen Winston at [karen.winston@seattle.gov](mailto:karen.winston@seattle.gov).

[www.agingkingcounty.org](http://www.agingkingcounty.org)

