



Connecting Older Adults with Community-based Resources and Options
The Area Agency on Aging of Suburban Cook County, since 1974



Fiscal Years 2025-2027 Area Plan on Aging Fiscal Year 2026 Public Information Document

At AgeOptions, we believe that:

- Quality of life is essential to everyone.
- Communities that care make a difference.
- Knowledge is powerful.
- Good choices depend on reliable resources.

That is why we connect aging with options for living well.

AgeOptions does not discriminate in admission to programs or activities or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with the Illinois Human Rights Act; the U.S. Civil Rights Act; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; the Age Discrimination Act; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act; and the U.S. and Illinois Constitutions. If you feel you have been discriminated against, you have a right to file a complaint with the Illinois Department on Aging. For information, call 1-800-252-8966, or contact the AgeOptions Civil Rights Coordinator at (800)699-9043.



AREA PLAN ON AGING

PUBLIC HEARINGS

AgeOptions will share its proposed Area Plan on Aging Public Information Document. The document outlines how state and federal funding will be used to serve and support older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers in suburban Cook County. Your contribution can help influence how services are provided at local, state, and national levels!

We Want to Hear from You!

- LEARN about services
- SHARE your ideas
- HELP us improve

[Learn More](#) 

Monday, April 21, 2025, 10:30 am - 12:00 pm
South Holland Public Library - Community Room
16250 Wausau Avenue
South Holland, IL 60472
Register at: <https://forms.office.com/r/QFPePjf9PQ>.



Monday, April 21, 2025, 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm
Virtual Public Hearing (Zoom)
Register at:
https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/SEro2KHGQciHYr7hgu_KpQ

Visit <https://connect.ageoptions.org/public-information-document-for-fy2026-ageoptions-area-plan> to read the FY2026 Area Plan Public Information Document, request accommodations for the hearings, or submit written comments. **Written comments are accepted until April 24, 2025.** AgeOptions is the agency designated by the Illinois Department on Aging to plan, coordinate, advocate, and fund services for people aged 60 and over in suburban Cook County.

Fiscal Year 2026 Public Information Document

AgeOptions publishes this Public Information Document as the official summary of its proposed Area Plan for Fiscal Year 2026. A summary of this document will be presented at Public Hearings (see schedule below). This Public Information Document summarizes the second year of the three-year AgeOptions Area Plan for Fiscal Years 2025-2027. This Public Information Document is intended to outline AgeOptions plan for service design, service delivery, and allocating funds so the public can review this plan and provide comments and questions at the Public Hearings.

Comments on the proposed Area Plan for Fiscal Year 2026, as referenced in this Public Information Document, may be sent by mail, email, or [online comment](https://forms.office.com/r/UcAAXgeb0h) form (<https://forms.office.com/r/UcAAXgeb0h>) to AgeOptions no later than April 25, 2025, to Eric Cho, Planning and Evaluation Specialist, AgeOptions, 1048 Lake Street, Suite 300, Oak Park, Illinois 60301 or E-mail: Eric.Cho@ageoptions.org.

Public Hearings

AgeOptions, the Area Agency on Aging for suburban Cook County, is conducting two Public Hearings on the suburban Cook County Area Plan on Aging for Fiscal Year 2026. The public is welcome and encouraged to discuss and comment on the Area Plan.

If you need special assistance, a translator, sign language, or other accommodation, contact Eric Cho at (708) 383-0258 or Eric.Cho@ageoptions.org at least two days before the hearing you plan to attend.

Date	Time	Location
Monday, April 21, 2025	10:30 am - Noon	South Holland Public Library – Community Room 16250 Wausau Avenue South Holland, IL 60473 Register at the following link: https://forms.office.com/r/QFPePj9PQ
Monday, April 21, 2025	3:00 – 4:30 pm	Virtual Public Hearing on Zoom Register at the following link: https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/SEro2KHGQciHYr7hgu_KpQ

Statement of Purpose of the Public Information Document and the Area Plan Public Hearings

The AgeOptions Area Plan on Aging is a planning, management, and grant award document. It encompasses service delivery plans and priority issues for FY 2026 for Planning and Service Area 13 (suburban Cook County).

This Public Information Document presents an outline of our plan to distribute federal and state funding to deliver services to older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers in suburban Cook County. AgeOptions reissues the Public Information Document in the spring of each year to provide detailed information for the upcoming fiscal year.

The Area Plan Public Hearings provide an open forum for the public to make recommendations and comments on this Public Information Document. AgeOptions is interested in receiving feedback about our plan, especially from the people we serve. Comments or questions received will be reviewed by AgeOptions' Advisory Council and Board of Directors who will consider changes to the Area Plan. AgeOptions prepares a summary of public hearing testimonies from all locations and identifies any actions, and this summary is available upon request.

Section 1 - AgeOptions The Area Agency on Aging of Suburban Cook County

Who We Are

AgeOptions is a not-for-profit organization committed to improving the quality of life and maintaining the dignity of older adults and those who care about them. Our purpose is to connect older adults, aged 60 and over, with resources and options for care so that they have a range of choices and the opportunity to live their lives to the fullest. AgeOptions is nationally recognized for its innovative programming, strong community partnerships, excellent service provision, and powerful advocacy.

**We are guided by
Our Vision:**
People thriving as they age.

AgeOptions has served older adults and their families throughout suburban Cook County since 1974 as part of a nationwide service network of Area Agencies on Aging. This nationwide network includes the Administration

We are guided by **our Mission** to innovate, partner and advocate to improve systems and services in order to strengthen communities so people thrive as they age.

Our Values:

Commitment
Integrity
Connectedness

AgeOptions Diversity Statement The diversity of our organization and communities is a rich asset that strengthens our mission and guides our decisions and direction

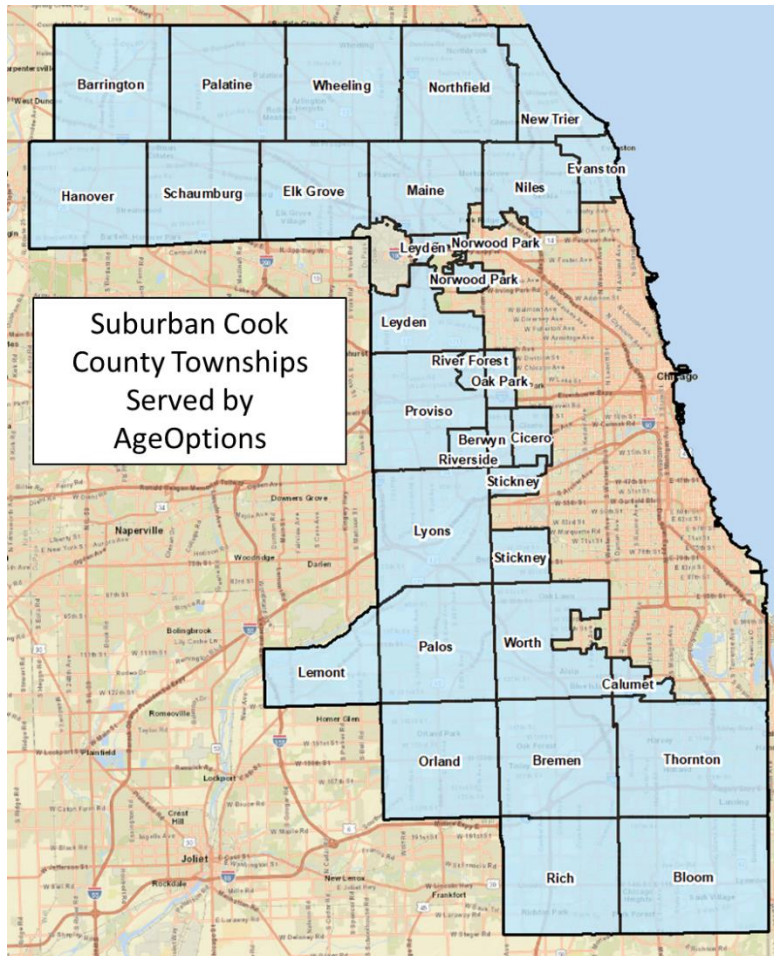
for Community Living¹ at the federal level, the Illinois Department on Aging which is the State Office on Aging at the state level, and approximately 622 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) nationwide. All of us working together to serve older adults.

AgeOptions is governed by a Board of Directors, whose responsibilities include setting direction, establishing policies, and allocating resources. Our Advisory Council is comprised of older adults and other professionals interested in aging from across suburban Cook County. The role of the Advisory Council is to advise AgeOptions on the development and implementation of the Area Plan and to serve as an advocate for older people. A list of our Board of Directors and Advisory Council members can be found at the end of this document

Who We Serve

AgeOptions is designated under the federal Older Americans Act and the Illinois Act on Aging as the Area Agency on Aging for the suburban Cook County Planning and Service Area (PSA)13. AgeOptions is one of 13 Area Agencies on Aging in Illinois. This region is home to more than 2.52 million people.

¹ The Administration for Community Living is a part of the federal Department of Health and Human Services



The older adult population in suburban Cook County is rapidly growing and becoming increasingly diverse. Based on the American Community Survey 2019-2023, there are 607,328 older adults in 130 communities. A 2022 AARP survey found that 47% of Illinois voters over the age of 50 have experience as a family caregiver. Services are available to all people over the age of 60 and family caregivers of all ages but are prioritized to low income, minority, and limited English-Speaking individuals. In FY 2024, AgeOptions and our community partners made a difference in the lives of 195,603 individuals.

What We Do

- **Planning:** AgeOptions assesses the needs of older adults and those who care for them, seeks input from the public in establishing service priorities, tests new service models, and develops new programs. AgeOptions helps people stay independent in their homes, supports their informal caregivers, maintains older adults' rights to age well, have proper nutrition, and access to services in their community.
- **Coordination:** AgeOptions coordinates services by working with community partners, many of which receive Older Americans Act grants from AgeOptions. We receive guidance from the community by listening to our Advisory Council, and our community partners in regularly scheduled meetings designed to assure effective services including Adult Protective Services, Caregiver Resource Centers, Aging and Disability Resource Centers, Nutrition, and Culturally and Linguistically

Accessible Services (CLAS) agency partners. While our programs are concentrated in suburban Cook County, AgeOptions also has direct responsibility for several programs that serve metropolitan Chicago and the entire state of Illinois.

- **Advocacy:** AgeOptions advocates in many ways for older adults, those who care for them, and adults with disabilities. We advocate for benefit programs, services, and funding at the federal and state levels. We inform legislators of the impact of legislation on older adults and our service network. We lead an Advocacy Task Force for people interested in aging issues.
- **Program Development:** AgeOptions creates and sustains a variety of innovative programs that respond to the rich diversity of our communities such as our work with libraries, memory cafes and other programs listed in the Appendix.
- **Distributes Funds:** Using proven methods of research and planning, AgeOptions is entrusted with distributing funds to a network of local community service providers and agencies across the state who participate in our broader programming. We administer federal, state, and private funds. AgeOptions support services through grants and contracts to more than 100 community-based organizations such as private not-for-profits, municipalities and townships, libraries, organizations who work with specific Limited English Proficient elders, senior centers, and more.

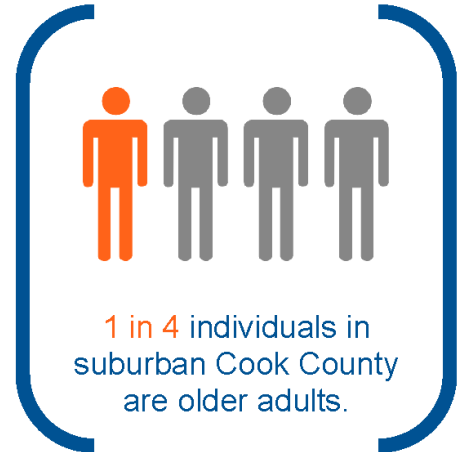
Suburban Cook County Demographics

Understanding the Growth in the 60+ Population

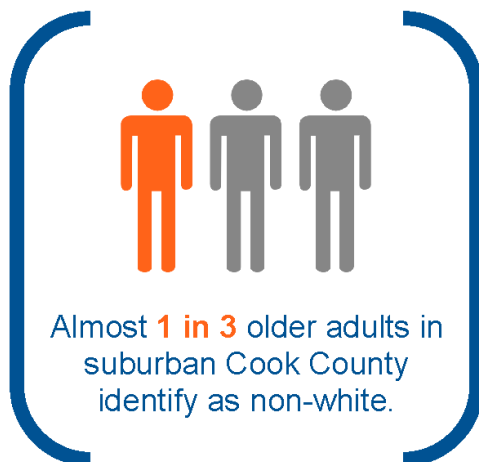
Based on the American Community Survey 2019-2023 5-year estimates, there are **607,328 older adults** in suburban Cook County.

Suburban Cook Facts! Did you Know?

- Older adults make up **25%** of the total suburban Cook County population, up from 22% in 2018.
- **Sixteen** states have smaller older adult populations than suburban Cook County.
- **41%** of suburban Cook older adults are householders that live alone.
- Today, **10.4%** of older adults in suburban Cook County are over the age of 85, up from 7% in 1990.
- Nearly **56,000** older adults in suburban Cook County live below the federal poverty level. In 2023, the federal poverty level was \$14,580 annually for a single person and \$19,720 for a household of two.
- **54.9%** of older renters and **30.3%** of older homeowners are cost-burdened, meaning that they spend over 30% of their income on housing.



Suburban Cook is Becoming More Diverse!



In 2023, **33%** of older adults in suburban Cook County identify as non-white. This is an increase from 29% of older adults identifying as non-white in 2018.

- Black or African American alone – 13.7%
- Hispanic or Latino alone – 9.6%
- Asian alone – 7.6%
- Two or more races – 4.3% (increased from 0.9% in 2018)

26% of older adults speak a language other than English at home.

15% of older adults speak English less than very well.

Section 2 - Area Plan Development

Planning Process

To develop the Area Plan on Aging, AgeOptions engages in a variety of activities to assess the needs of older adults in suburban Cook County, including active older adults, older adults with disabilities, caregivers of older adults, and older adult relatives raising children. We follow a 5-step process aimed at enhancing efficiency and effectiveness, identifying areas for improvement, and ensuring we are meeting the Older Americans Act requirements of reaching older people in greatest social need and greatest economic need (“priority populations”). The steps and activities of AgeOptions FY2026 planning process are outlined below.

Step 1: Assess Needs of the Priority Population in Suburban Cook County

AgeOptions begins by seeking feedback on the needs of older adults in our area. We accomplish this step by:

- Conducting comprehensive needs assessments. For our current area plan, this includes the following:
 - In 2023, AgeOptions worked with the University of Illinois Chicago, Department of Disability and Human Development to produce [*Aging in the Suburbs, A Comprehensive Needs Assessment of Cook County Suburbs 50+ Population*](#). The Comprehensive Needs Assessment included individual surveys of older adults, individual interviews, focus groups with caregivers and community service providers. Minority and limited English-Speaking Communities were over sampled.
 - AgeOptions also worked with [Rob Paral and Associates](#), a consulting group that provides demographic, social and economic information, that produced a [Demographic Analysis Website](#).
 - In 2024, AgeOptions worked with [Polco](#) to conduct an additional needs assessment which prioritized reaching ethnically diverse older adults in suburban Cook County. Polco strives to empower communities by providing leaders with reliable insights through civil and constructive civic participation, ultimately aiming to improve the quality of life in communities across the nation. Polco sent postcards and surveys to 59,786 households of which 26,000 Polco random and the remainder were sent to our priority groups whose primary languages are Spanish, Polish, Hindi, Tagalog, Arabic, Russian, Korean, and Chinese. The results of the survey were shared in a Virtual Town Hall in February 2025 and can be found [here](#) (*Scroll to the bottom of the website to submit a request for a copy of the Needs Assessment*). AgeOptions will use this data for current and future planning.
- Consulting with local experts and groups on the needs and service gaps of older adults including:
 - Adult Protective Services supervisors
 - AgeOptions Advocacy Task Force
 - AgeOptions Advisery partners
 - AgeOptions Board and Advisory Council
 - AgeOptions Caregiver Specialists agencies
 - AgeOptions Fatality Review Teams

- AgeOptions Funded Partners including agencies that target Limited English Proficient older adults
- AgeOptions Information and Assistance Team and funded Aging and Disability Resource Networks (ADRN)
- AgeOptions Nutrition Partners
- Alzheimer’s Association Greater Illinois Chapter
- Caring Together Living Better Partners
- Chicago LGBT Aging Network and AgeOptions Thrive with Pride Cafes
- Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
- Coalition for Limited English-Speaking Elderly (CLESE)
- Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) of Northeastern Illinois
- Disability Rights organizations and Centers for Independent Living
- Discharge Planners
- Employment organizations
- Health Care and Managed Care Organizations
- Housing assistance and Homelessness prevention organizations
- Illinois Financial Abuse Specialty Teams
- Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging (I4A)
- Illinois Pathways partners
- Local, state, and federal legislators at our annual Legislative Breakfasts
- Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and South Suburban Mayors and Managers
- Mental Health organizations as well as our HOPE staff
- Public Health Partners including Cook County Department of Public Health, Chicago Public Health – Health Alerts, Public Health Institute, and others
- Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) partners
- Gathering community and participant input from various sources, including:
 - Information and Assistance calls
 - Contact with Legislators and their aides
 - Meetings and discussions with funded partners
 - Focus Groups
 - AgeOptions Comprehensive Needs Assessment
 - Evaluations and surveys
- Analyzing Census Bureau data, including data from the American Community Survey 2019-23.
- Examining and consulting the latest research and reports from academic journals and local, state, and national organizations and initiatives to identify key factors influencing current conditions and which help to determine programmatic considerations.
- Reviewing and analyzing program data and comparing it to other data. For example, we look at demographic, unit, and client data by service from our National Aging Program Information System (NAPIS) data we send to the state. We compare the NAPIS data demographics of clients served to Census data for our area and determine if there are gaps in services to those in greatest social and economic need.

Step 2: Evaluate the Existing Service System

AgeOptions follows a process for analyzing and improving the current service system.

We do this through:

- Analyzing costs associated with each service, breaking down expenditures by units and service categories such as cost per person served, cost per unit, etc.
- Analyzing service delivery data (NAPIS) by service to assess service effectiveness in meeting the needs priority populations
- Reviewing routine summaries of collected information to identify strengths and service gaps
- Mapping service delivery data geographically and by service type to visualize service provided and identify underserved areas.
- Conducting focus groups of small groups of grantees, older people, and other stakeholders to gain insights into services, and learn needs and experiences with the AgeOptions Service system.
- Collaborating with our grantees and other partners to glean their perspective on service effectiveness and challenges,

Step 3: Determine Availability of Resources and Alternative Approaches Available to Meet Needs

Next, AgeOptions considers available resources and explores alternative approaches to best serve our community by:

- Determining the gaps between the needs of the older adult population and the current resources available.
- Piloting alternate approaches.
- Clarifying program standards.
- Improving coordination of services.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of services in reaching the priority populations:
 - Older adults with low incomes,
 - Older adults who are a member of a diverse population, (Black and Brown)
 - Older adults over the age of 75
 - Older adults with limited English proficiency or have language barriers,
 - Older adults who are at risk for institutional placement,
 - Older adults who are frail or have a physical or mental disability,
 - Older adults with dementia and related disorders as well as their caregivers,
 - Older adults who are isolated due to racial and ethnic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV status or other issues
- Assessing the ability of other partners or systems to meet these needs.

Step 4: Establish Priorities

Determining funding priorities is a critical process for ensuring that AgeOptions uses our resources effectively. We seek to fund programs that align with our Strategic goals and objectives and meet the gaps/needs identified in our Needs Assessment process. We do this by:

- Evaluating funding priorities to address disparities and ensure services are accessible to underserved or marginalized communities.
- Using data and performance metrics to provide the basis for funding priorities.
- Planning for different funding scenarios and ensuring that funding priorities are adaptable to changing financial conditions.
- Sharing this information with our Advisory Council and Board to obtain their input.

Step 5: Plan Modification and Refinement

In our final step of the planning process, we share our plan with the state and the public and seek feedback to refine and strengthen our plan and response to the needs of our communities. We accomplish this step by:

- Summarizing our Area Plan on Aging in a Public Information Document that is shared on our website and distributed widely.
- Conducting Public Hearings where we share our Area Plan and seek public feedback.
- Offering opportunities to provide feedback and comments on the Area Plan via email, mail or online comment.
- Modifying the plan as necessary based on the public input we have gathered.
- Revisiting our plan annually to make any necessary adjustments or refinements.

What we learned from our Planning Process -

Finding - Post COVID Programming: The concept of one-size fits all of service delivery regardless of the type of program and service may be a vestige of the past. A mix of virtual and in-person programming for social services, caregiver, and nutrition services are still needed, especially to reach people who are homebound. AgeOptions and our community partners are continually looking for methods to promote in person programming to combat social isolation.

In response to this finding, AgeOptions will continue to encourage both virtual and in-person programming, continue a limited percent of “to-go” meals from Congregate sites, and continue to work with Uniper. Uniper is a virtual senior center brought into older adult's homes via their television. By connecting and engaging people through Uniper, we hope to address and prevent isolation and loneliness.

Finding - Affordability of Housing/Home Preservation

Based on listening sessions, coalition meetings, as well as [reports](#) there is an increase in homelessness of older adults and housing insecurity. Rents have skyrocketed, which is especially difficult for those on a fixed income and there is a lack of more affordable housing.

In response to the challenges faced by older adults, AgeOptions utilized American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funding to launch our Home Preservation initiative. The primary objective was to support individuals in aging in place, prevent homelessness, help secure housing that aligns with older adults' needs, and enhance home safety. Data from FY24 revealed the following about the older adults served:

- 13.8% were at risk of eviction, with 4.5% already in the eviction process.
- 9.3% required repairs or modifications to their homes to age in place.
- 55.8% were living in housing they could no longer afford.

Referrals were made to the following services for those served:

- 7% for legal assistance
- 7% for case management
- 14% for homelessness services

- 7% for home modification or repairs
- 13% for rental or mortgage assistance
- 13% for public assistance or aid

Upon completing the Home Preservation programs, outcomes included:

- 21% were able to remain in their homes or apartments due to these efforts.
- 10% were placed on a housing waitlist, and an additional 5% secured new housing.

AgeOptions remains dedicated to Home Preservation. In our FY25-27 Request for Proposal, we invited applications for the updated “Housing Assistance” and “Home Repair” services. In FY25, ten agencies are participating in either Housing Assistance or Home Repair programs, and we will continue offering these services through FY26.

Finding – Older Adults vulnerable to Scams: According to the [Federal Trade Commission report](#), in 2023, older adults (aged 60 and above):

- Older adults lost over \$1.9 billion to fraud in 2023, a notable increase from \$1.6 billion in 2022 and \$1 billion in 2021, reflecting a 47% rise over two years. However, these figures are likely to represent only a small portion of the total financial losses, as many fraud incidents go unreported. The FTC estimates that the total cost of fraud for older consumers could reach as high as \$61.5 billion nationwide in 2023.
- Older adults were more than five times as likely as those aged 18 to 59 to report losing money to a tech support scam.
- They were nearly three times more likely to fall victim to prizes, lottery, or sweepstakes scams, and 53% more likely to report losing money to scams involving impersonations of friends or family.
- Investment scams led to the largest losses, totaling \$538 million (a 34% increase from 2022), followed by business impersonation scams at \$311 million (up 16% from 2022), and romance scams at \$277 million (also up 16% from 2022).
- Bank transfers and cryptocurrency were the payment methods through which older adults reported losing the most money. Cryptocurrency-related scams often involved Bitcoin ATMs. Gift cards remained the most common payment method for various fraud types, including tech support scams and scams impersonating friends or family.

From our Needs Assessment, we learned that older adults who have experienced fraud often feel confused about how to protect their credit and struggle to determine whether a credit protection service or resource (such as those offered by area agencies on aging) is legitimate or a scam.

In response, AgeOptions regularly shares the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s Money Smarts for Older Adults Resource Guide. Additionally, AgeOptions worked with Legal Aid Chicago to develop the [Elder Risk Detector](#) which is user-friendly and enables older adults to screen themselves for common legal issues such as consumer debt; Financial exploitation like fraud, scams, theft; Health Care including billing problems or scams; and Abuse and Neglect.

Finding - Culturally Competent Services:

Through focus groups and two Needs Assessments, AgeOptions gathered valuable insights from Black and Brown communities, revealing that older adults from minority backgrounds have distinct needs and preferences. Key findings include a strong demand for culturally competent services, effective information sharing, and a high level of trust in service providers.

In response to these needs, AgeOptions has allocated Title III-B Supportive Services funding to support Culturally and Linguistically Accessible Services (CLAS). This funding is available to agencies with diverse staff and leadership, ensuring they can provide effective referrals to services such as health, employment, housing, legal, consumer, and transportation, all tailored to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of older adults with limited English proficiency. Additionally, AgeOptions funds 21 nutrition programs that serve various priority populations, including Black, Brown, limited English-speaking, LGBTQ+, and older adults who prefer Kosher or Halal diets.

Finding - Need for Outreach and Visibility of Aging Services:

Our Needs Assessment findings show that people are unaware of aging services or do not know how to access services.

In response, AgeOptions is convening a workgroup discussion on May 23, 2025, to plan for Outreach and Visibility and create an action plan for next year (register at https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/xZdonm52RJGEolb_zbq6Lw). See also the section on our Visibility Initiative.

Finding - Need for a Central Place for Quality information:

The Needs Assessment highlighted the importance of having high-quality information available through a visible, central hub.

The Aging and Disability Resource Network (ADRN) serves as that central hub, offering introductory information and facilitating connections to more specialized support as needed. To ensure that services reach individuals in the most appropriate way, AgeOptions has worked to strengthen connections to the ADRN. Some examples of this work include:

- Funding CLAS (Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services) agencies, which provide culturally competent information to older adults and caregivers. These agencies will be part of the ADRN network and will participate in joint training sessions with other agencies.
- Requiring ADRN agencies to have a presence in each municipality they serve to network with other referral sources, share information about available resources, increase visibility, attract potential clients, and demonstrate the ADRN's value to the community.
- Using a variety of outreach strategies, such as print materials, social media, word of mouth, and community partnerships, to engage diverse groups. Outreach efforts are tailored to the preferences of different communities, and older adults are involved in the planning process to ensure their feedback is incorporated.
- Hosting the “Thrive with Pride” program, a central hub for information and services for LGBTQ+ older adults.
- Partnering with libraries through the Library CARES program, which equips librarians with the tools to make informed referrals to the aging network.

For more details, please refer to the Initiatives section on our Visibility Initiative and Quality Assurance.

Finding - Nutrition:

The needs assessment revealed that only 5% of older adults are meeting the recommended daily intake of fruits and vegetables, and over 25% reported being unable to afford their dietary needs.

In response, AgeOptions continues to provide the following services:

- A meal kit delivery program that provides older adults with three meals per day (21 meals per week), offering groceries and menus that meet 100% of daily food requirements. The meals are available in various cuisines, including general diet, Latine, African American, Korean, Halal, and Kosher options.
- Congregate meal cafes, along with a limited number of "to-go" meals from Congregate sites. Starting in late FY 2024, AgeOptions began limiting the availability of to-go meals, and this limitation will continue through FY 2026.
- The Home Delivered Meal program, which currently has no waiting list.
- Outreach and assistance with applying to the SNAP program.
- Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program Coupons.
- Shelf-stable meals for Home Delivered and Congregate participants, available in emergency situations when regular meals are unavailable.
- Ongoing advocacy to support the nutrition program and secure continued funding.

Finding - Social Connectedness:

The most valued services for older adults aged 60 and their caregivers include social gatherings or groups, health and exercise programs, emotional support groups, and assistance with medical insurance. Our Needs Assessments also revealed that loneliness can increase the likelihood of facing other challenges, such as depression, health issues, and difficulty accessing reliable information and resources.

In response to these findings, AgeOptions is continuing to offer our:

- Congregate meals program, which provides both a nutritious meal and opportunities for socialization.
- [Illinois Pathways to Health](#) which provides evidence-based and self-management of chronic health conditions, prevents falls, and fosters individual well-being. Classes are offered in person as well as virtually.
- Memory cafes; five are for limited English-speaking older adults and caregivers
- Our Thrive with Pride program to connect LGBT+ older adults to services, resources, and benefits available.
- Library CARES program for libraries to host social engagement activities.

AgeOptions is also planning a workgroup meeting to further explore the findings from our Needs Assessment on social isolation and loneliness. The meeting will focus on developing an action plan for the upcoming year to address these issues. Our first meeting is scheduled for June 27, 2025 (register at https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/puPPP_jNRB-rkJ0kkwzNBw).

Finding - Income:

Our Needs Assessment revealed that a significant number of older adults have incomes below \$24,999, with BIPOC older adults being more likely to fall into this low-income category.

In response, AgeOptions offers:

- A meal kit delivery service that provides enough healthy food to cover 21 meals per week for an individual.
- Funding for Congregate and Home Delivered Meals.
- Financial support for ADRN and CLAS agencies to assist with benefit applications, including SNAP, Seniors Ride Free, Medicare Savings Programs, Medicaid, Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and more.
- Funding for the Senior Health Assistance Program, which offers information and assistance with Medicare Part D Extra Help/Low Income Subsidy (LIS), Medicare Savings Programs, Medicaid, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- [Avisery](#) which provides education and technical assistance for professionals who counsel older adults and people with disabilities on health care insurance options, including Medicare and Medicaid.
- The [Benefits Enrollment Center](#) provides outreach and assist low-income older adults and people with disabilities to find and enroll in all the benefit programs for which they are eligible, for example, SNAP, Medicaid, Medicare Savings Programs, etc.
- Advocacy for income related programs such as increasing the Supplemental Security Income benefit.

Finding - Healthcare and Health Promotion:

Needs assessment respondents highlighted the following areas of need:

- Enhanced health and well-being services – Rates for breast cancer screening, prostate cancer screening, and vaccinations were lower among BIPOC populations.
- Falls prevention programs – 20% of all respondents reported experiencing a fall in the last three months.
- Pain management – Over two-thirds of respondents reported experiencing pain in the last month.

In response, AgeOptions provides:

- [Illinois Pathways to Health](#) which provides evidence-based and self-management of chronic health conditions, prevents falls, provides pain management classes, and fosters individual well-being. Classes are offered in person as well as virtually
- Community Health Workers to screen individuals for social drivers of health needs and resolve identified gaps.

Finding - Caregiver:

In our needs assessments, Caregivers requested training, specifically on behavioral management and communication techniques.

In response, AgeOptions provides an interactive eLearning platform, [Trualta](#) as well as support groups, Evidence Based Training and Education, counseling, and Memory Cafes.

Respondents shared that a significant proportion of caregivers experienced stress, depression, and problems with emotions in the prior 30 days, which impacted their daily activities. In response, AgeOptions promotes the regionwide availability of Tailored Care Assessment and Referral ([TCARE](#)), which is an evidenced based caregiver assessment tool that pinpoints a caregiver's unique areas of stress and develops personalized care plans and resources to support the caregiver.

More information on AgeOptions Caregiver work can be found in the Initiatives section.

Section 3 - Statewide and Local Area Plan Initiatives

For each Area Plan cycle, the Illinois Department on Aging (IDOA) and area agencies develop "Statewide Initiatives," which are part of each Area Agency on Aging's strategic priorities. For FY (Fiscal Year) 25-27, AgeOptions has three Statewide Initiatives:

1. Increased Visibility of the Aging Network
2. Quality Assurance
3. Public Awareness Campaign for Informal Caregivers

AgeOptions approach to these initiatives are described below:

Initiative #1: Increase statewide visibility of the Aging Network to connect Illinoisans with support and services that encourage independence, dignity, and quality of life as we age.

AgeOptions strategy to increase visibility of the Aging Network includes:

1. AgeOptions developed a Public Awareness Toolkit which includes customizable social media posts, brochures, posters, and messaging. We are sharing the materials with our network and will be coordinating an area wide effort in FY 2026.
2. AgeOptions added the following standard to all services: "**Increase Visibility of Service**": As part of AgeOptions and the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) Strategic Initiative for FY 25-27, "Grantee must work to increase the visibility of the service within their service area, including older adults and caregivers, the community provider network, and other stakeholders."

3. Through our Needs Assessment process, we heard from municipalities and townships that the Aging Network is confusing. To address this concern and increase visibility, AgeOptions will work with our Aging and Disability Resource Network (ADRN) agencies to develop and disseminate an “Aging Network” brochure which lists all the older adult services in the area and the agency contact information. In addition, we will include our [Service Search](#) link which allows people to enter their address to find the appropriate agency for the service they seek.
4. AgeOptions standards require ADRNs to outpost staff at strategic government and private business to share the “Aging Network” Brochure. We will require at least annual visits to the following:
 - Municipality and Township offices or mutually agreed-upon locations in their service areas.
 - Congregate meal sites.
 - Public libraries in their service areas.
5. AgeOptions is working with each ADRN to ensure they have an agency website that specifically references the Information and Assistance services available and phone number and email address such as information@[insert agency website].
6. AgeOptions is working with each ADRN to ensure services are provided in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner inclusive of ethnicity, race, language, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socioeconomic status.
7. AgeOptions requires grantees to refer older adults to other Aging Network services such as congregate meals, senior centers, libraries, Illinois Pathways for Evidence Based Programs, Thrive with Pride, and virtual programming.
8. In FY 2025, we developed an Aging Network Street Outreach effort as part of our visibility efforts. We are working with some of our Advisory Council members and others, if interested, to expand the outreach and distribution of materials to priority populations throughout suburban Cook County. As part of the outreach, they visit places such as grocery stores, laundromats, community centers, faith-based organizations, senior housing, barber and beauty salons, local businesses, law enforcement, local government, community health workers, as well as sharing information at health screenings and vaccination events.
9. AgeOptions participates in local community-based activities such as fairs and meetings and conducts presentations.
10. AgeOptions works with public libraries for recreation services and technology education. As part of the technology education, AgeOptions instructed librarians how to guide patrons, including caregivers and older adults, to access the AgeOptions website and how to enter their address to find local services near them.

11. AgeOptions outreach team will strive to have 50% of their outreach efforts in communities of color, limited English speaking, low income, LBTQ+, and other marginalized communities.
12. AgeOptions rebranded our Targeting to Culturally and Linguistically Isolated Persons (TCLIP) to Culturally and Linguistically Accessible services (CLAS). AgeOptions will continue to provide CLAS funding for Black or Brown and/or culturally aligned owned and operated agencies serving suburban Cook County. AgeOptions will share available translated materials with our partners.
13. AgeOptions will continue to seek input from people in marginalized communities to ensure their views are used in our planning. We believe the best decisions are made when the most voices are heard. We hope to identify trusted advisors and influencers in the communities.
14. AgeOptions is exploring the expansion of our media presence, such as YouTube videos and paid advertisements on social media.
15. AgeOptions continues to host advocacy events, connects with legislators and their aides, and provides legislative aide training.
16. AgeOptions will collect and analyze Information and Assistance data to ensure that we are increasing our reach to priority populations.
17. AgeOptions is strengthening our network's commitment to reaching older people who are members of the LGBT+ community. AgeOptions will work with Title III funded partners:
 - To complete either AgeOptions "Thrive with Pride" training or SAGE Care's certification process.
 - To ensure all staff and volunteers who may be asking questions related to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity complete one of the above training courses. Our goal is to include these questions by FY 2028 in AgeOptions.
 - To educate and train staff and volunteers to refer clients to Thrive with Pride programs when appropriate.
 - As a network, we will work to develop a baseline number of LGBTQ+ older people attending programs or services and as a network work to increase participation in our programs.
18. AgeOptions will continue to participate in coalitions and networks as part of our outreach and to amplify our voice.

Initiative #2: Drive continuous quality assurance and improvement activities that emphasize person-centered and trauma informed services while maximizing effectiveness of services delivered through the Aging Network.

As the lead agencies in the state and local areas, it is a duty of the State Agency on Aging (IDoA) and the AAAs (Area Agencies on Aging) to ensure the programs and services provided directly and through the community partner network are delivered utilizing person-centered and trauma informed methods. Over time, Illinois has experienced significant changes in population, including an unprecedented increase in the percentage of older adults in our population. There has also been a significant increase in the number of older adults within racial and ethnic minorities, sexual and gender minorities, and minority religious populations. Access to accurate, comprehensive, and timely data is vital to make informed decisions about community needs and service prioritization at the local, regional, and state levels. A focus on effectiveness and accuracy of information, services and programs will ensure maximization of the return on investment for funding and will ensure we are meeting the directives provided through the Older Americans Act and the Administration for Community Living's priorities.

AgeOptions' strategy to drive continuous quality assurance and improvement activities, with a focus on person-centered and trauma-informed services, includes the following initiatives:

1. Training on Person-Centered, Trauma-Informed Care:

In FY 2025, AgeOptions conduct training for all grantees on "Person-Centered, Trauma-Informed Care" to ensure that grantees:

- a. Take into account individuals' experiences, needs, strengths, preferences, and goals.
- b. Ensure that all staff, volunteers, and organizational levels have a basic understanding of trauma and its impacts on individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

2. Integration of Person-Centered, Trauma-Informed (PCTI) Care:

AgeOptions will assist grantees in integrating person-centered, trauma-informed care practices into their organizations, this has been a discussion item at our Aging Disability Resource Network meetings.

3. Ongoing Monitoring of Performance and Spending:

AgeOptions continuously monitors the productivity and spending of our funded partners through:

- a. Quarterly reviews of performance and spending to ensure grantees meet their targets and are on track to fully utilize their grant funding.
- b. Onsite programmatic monitoring every three years, with additional visits if quality concerns arise or staffing changes occur.
- c. Annual reviews of audit reports to ensure sound fiscal practices.

4. Quarterly Grantee Meetings:

AgeOptions convenes quarterly meetings for our funded partners, organized by topic. These meetings will include:

- Leadership and Social Service Directors
- Adult Protective Services (APS) staff
- Aging and Disability Resource Network (ADRN) staff
- Caregiver Resource Centers (CRC)
- Nutrition Grantees

CLAS agencies will also attend the ADRN and CRC meetings.

5. **Training: AgeOptions** staff have developed comprehensive training materials and resources to support grantees in ensuring accurate reporting and appropriate service delivery.
6. **Data Monitoring and Demographic Comparison:**
AgeOptions staff will work with grantees to ensure client demographics and program performance data are entered into the AgingIS database. On an annual basis, AgeOptions will compare the demographics of those served in the fiscal year with the incidence rate of priority populations from the American Community Survey data to ensure that we are serving priority populations at least in the same proportion as the Census data.
7. **Specific Training for APS, ADRN, and CRC Staff:**
AgeOptions will provide specific training requirements for Adult Protective Services (APS), ADRN, and Caregiver Resource Center staff to ensure high-quality service delivery.
8. **Certification Requirement for ADRN Staff:**
AgeOptions requires each ADRN grantee to have at least one staff member certified by Inform USA (formerly known as the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, or AIRS). This credentialing process ensures that Information and Assistance staff are skilled, knowledgeable, and capable of connecting clients with the appropriate services.
9. **Evaluation and Quality Improvement:**
AgeOptions has added a new standard for all services: "Grantees must have procedures for evaluating service delivery to assess the program's effectiveness." In addition, each grantee will participate in AgeOptions' standardized quality improvement efforts, as part of the required IDOA Statewide Initiative on Quality Improvement and Quality Assurance. AgeOptions will collaborate with grantees to develop standardized quality assurance questions for inclusion in their annual client surveys.

Initiative #3: Increase public awareness and knowledge of caregiver needs, as well as resources and services available throughout the state of Illinois to

promote increased caregiver engagement in person-centered, trauma informed, and evidence-based programs and services.

Throughout 2023, IDoA partnered with the AAA (Area Agencies on Aging) network to facilitate twenty in-person Caregiver Roundtables across the state of Illinois, along with three virtual roundtables to hear from informal family caregivers about the needs and challenges they face, both met and unmet, and explore additional support that can enhance the caregiving journey. Conversations both articulated the need for these services and the need to increase visibility for these resources. Across sessions, attendees discussed caregiving from a holistic lens cutting across systems including healthcare, transportation, community supportive services, and individual (both caregiver and care receiver) needs, values, and preferences. Training and education across the domains that fall in the scope of caregiving are also needed for family caregivers and paid caregivers, including better understanding of chronic and terminal diseases, navigating healthcare systems including palliative care and hospice, physical caregiving (how to lift, transfer, bathe, groom, etc.), available caregiver resources, available resources for older adults, and caring for the caregiver.

In FY25-FY27, AgeOptions will adopt the Statewide Initiative as its Local Initiative to support caregiver outreach efforts through our Public Information Campaign. The Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) has selected increasing public visibility as a Statewide Initiative, focusing on raising awareness and sharing information about the availability of aging services and supports. Considering the COVID-19 pandemic and the changing ways people consume media and communicate, reaching priority populations who would benefit from aging network programs has become more challenging. A dedicated statewide initiative to increase visibility will help boost both awareness and utilization of essential services.

AgeOptions' strategy includes the following key actions:

1. FY 24 and FY 25 Outreach Efforts:

AgeOptions received a \$1 million grant to enhance outreach and engagement, with a focus on increasing awareness of caregiver services. Our primary audiences include individuals over the age of 60 and unpaid informal caregivers in suburban Cook County, particularly low-income, limited-English-speaking, and racial and ethnic minority groups in the West and South suburbs. In collaboration with Beaman Incorporated Public Relations, AgeOptions developed the following:

- A **Toolkit** with a resource guide for outreach, shared within our partner network of aging service providers and other Area Agencies on Aging. The toolkit includes social media engagement assets, creative elements, and imagery.
- **Radio and print advertisements** to reach a wide audience.
- **Posters, postcards, brochures, social media posts, press releases, and ads** for broad distribution.
- **Earned media** to amplify our message.
- A **community event** celebrating older adults and caregivers, connecting them with local resources.
- **Street teams** promote AgeOptions resources at places where older adults work, socialize, and worship.

In FY 26, AgeOptions will continue to work with our Caregiver Resource Network to utilize these materials and activities.

2. **Promote Tailored Care Assessment and Referral (TCARE):**
AgeOptions will promote the regionwide availability of TCARE, an evidence-based caregiver assessment tool that identifies a caregiver’s unique stressors and creates personalized care plans with tools and resources to support them.
3. **Promote Trualta:**
AgeOptions will also highlight the availability of **Trualta**, an interactive eLearning platform designed to help support caregivers by providing valuable resources and training.
4. **Caregiver Resource Centers’ Evidence-Based Trainings:**
AgeOptions Caregiver Resource Centers will offer the following evidence-based trainings, available both virtually and in person:
 - **The Savvy Caregiver® Program** and **Unidos** (the Spanish version), for caregivers of individuals with dementia.
 - **Stress-Busting Programs** in English and Spanish for caregivers of people with dementia or chronic illness.
 - **Powerful Tools for Caregivers** to help caregivers develop practical skills and strategies.
5. **Collaboration with the Illinois Family Caregiver Coalition (IFCC):**
AgeOptions will continue to collaborate with the Illinois Family Caregiver Coalition (IFCC), a growing network of over 400 organizational members across Illinois. AgeOptions takes a leadership role in supporting the IFCC, serving as the fiscal agent and providing supervision and guidance for the Coalition’s efforts.
6. **Expanded Respite Options:**
Starting in FY 2025, Caregiver Resource Centers will have the flexibility to use respite vendors and facilities not listed on AgeOptions’ “Respite Registry.” This will enable a more person-centered approach, allowing caregivers to choose respite services from familiar vendors or nursing facilities.
7. **New Standard for Caregiver Resource Centers:**
AgeOptions has added a new standard for Caregiver Resource Centers: “**Help Caregivers Self-Identify**”. As part of AgeOptions and IDoA Strategic Initiatives for FY 25-27, grantees must work to increase awareness of caregiver needs, as well as the resources and services available in the service area, to encourage greater caregiver engagement.

Section 4 Area Agency on Aging Programs and Services

Supportive Services

Funded by Title III-B of the Older Americans Act and Illinois General Revenue Fund

The following services provide older adults with the support they need to remain at home and in their communities as long as possible and prevent premature institutionalization. Supportive services listed below are provided by community service partners and delivered with AgeOptions direction and leadership except for Information and Assistance, which is provided by both AgeOptions and community service partners.

- **Aging and Disability Resource Centers funded for Information and Assistance, Options Counseling, Senior Health Assistance Program:**

Provides answers to questions and connects older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers to programs and services.

- **Counseling:** Personal counsel to help individuals and families cope with personal problems and/or develop and strengthen capacities for more adequate social and personal adjustments.
- **Education:** provide individuals with opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills suited to their interests and capabilities through formally structured, group-oriented lectures or classes. Subject areas for adult education may include nutrition, health, mental health, personal care, consumerism, crime prevention, legal rights/entitlement benefits, home maintenance and repair, retirement orientation and life enrichment, etc.
- **Friendly Visiting:** Regular visits to socially and/or geographically isolated individuals for the purpose of providing companionship and social contact with the community.
- **Home Repair:** Minor modifications to allow older adults to remain safely in the community.
- **Home Preservation/Housing Assistance:** are person centered services related to preserving an older adult's housing, preventing homelessness, and assisting in relocating or obtaining more suitable housing which the client can afford. (Excludes direct financial assistance).
- **Legal Assistance:** Assistance in settling non-criminal legal matters, protection of legal rights, advocacy, and education.
- **Recreation:** Activities which foster the health and social well-being of individuals through social interaction and constructive use of time.
- **Respite Care:** In-home or out-of-home care to allow family and friends who care for older adults to take some time away from caregiving.
- **Multipurpose Senior Centers:** Community and virtual facilities where older adults gather to enjoy social and recreational activities, dine, attend classes, and take part in health and wellness programs.
- **Senior Opportunity and Services:** This program is specially designed to identify and meet the needs of older individuals belonging to low-income, racially/ethnically diverse populations, and limited English proficient groups through referral to existing services. Activities may include translation, personal escort, telephone reassurance, and other programs to remedy gaps and provide inclusive services.
- **Culturally and Linguistically Accessible Services (CLAS)** – Identifies and connects older adults who speak little to no English with culturally competent services and programs through translation, referrals, and assistance in applying for services and benefits. AgeOptions funds CLAS agencies under the Senior Opportunities and Services (SOS) program, Memory Cafes, and under the Title III-C Nutrition program.

- **Transportation:** include arranging transportation or providing transport to assist people unable to use conventional means of transportation to reach services, reduce isolation, or encourage independent living.

Emergency Preparedness

AgeOptions continues to review and revise our Disaster Operations Plan on a regular basis. AgeOptions and the community agencies we fund will use a Continuity of Operations Plan to be able to serve older adults during an emergency when offices may be closed due to a disaster or emergency order. AgeOptions developed a webpage to provide tools and information for the community agencies that we fund, as well as tips and resources for various emergency situations: [AgeOptions Emergency Preparedness Resources](#). AgeOptions works to increase capacity building among the aging and disability networks when it comes to emergency planning.

Senior Health Assistance Program (SHAP) and Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA)

Funded by Illinois General Revenue Fund, Tobacco Settlement Funds, Administration for Community Living (ACL) and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

AgeOptions coordinates an area-wide campaign with local agencies to reach older adults and people with disabilities with information about programs that assist with the cost of prescription medications. These programs include Medicare Part D, Low Income Subsidy (“Extra Help”), Patient Assistance Programs and Medicare Savings Programs. SHAP also includes assistance with enrollment into the Benefit Access Program that assists with transportation costs such as Seniors Ride Free, People with Disabilities Ride Free and the license plate sticker discount. Staff at AgeOptions and local community partner agencies conduct outreach, community education and provide one-on-one assistance to older adults applying for all the above-mentioned programs. SHAP is a mainstay of consumer assistance to identify the best prescription plan possible, to meet deadlines for applying and to assure annual confirmation that a person’s plan will cover their prescription.

SHAP is integrated into the Aging and Disability Resource Network (ADRN). All agencies that serve under the Aging and Disability Resource Network (ADRN) designation are Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) sites. Funding through the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) will allow AgeOptions and the Aging and Disability Resource Network (ADRN) sites that provide SHAP services to promote Medicare Part B Prevention and Wellness benefits to consumers, caregivers, and professionals in suburban Cook County by conducting presentations and disseminating written materials.

Nutrition Services

Funded by Title III-C of the Older Americans Act, Nutrition Services Incentive Program and Illinois General Revenue Fund for Home Delivered Meals

- **Congregate Nutrition Services:** AgeOptions funds community dining options, often referred to as “congregate meals,” at a variety of locations throughout suburban Cook County. Of these congregate sites, 11 offer “ethnic” meals to serve a specific cultural community. All sites offer freshly served, balanced hot meals, education and information on benefits, plus social engagement, and activities.
- **To-go Meals or “Grab and Go” meals:** AgeOptions funds a limited amount of “to-go” meals to clients who would benefit from the flexibility the meal provides. The meals are for participants who may still feel anxiety about attending a Congregate meal site, have scheduling conflicts with the mealtimes due to employment, caregiver duties or doctor appointments. We will continue to support To-Go meals for these clients in greatest need.
- **Home Delivered Meals Services:** Provide nutritious meals to older adults who are homebound and unable to shop for groceries or prepare meals on their own. At most home delivered meal programs, volunteers deliver lunchtime meals daily and conduct wellness checks to ensure client safety. We now offer therapeutic diets such as diabetic, gluten-free, and renal meals throughout our service area. In addition, two programs offer “ethnic” home delivered meals to serve a specific cultural community. [Note that AgeOptions funds Home Delivered Meals in all townships of suburban Cook County except for Barrington; the Barrington Area Council on Aging provides the “Barrington Area Meals with Wheels” program without Title III funding.] Currently, there are no waiting lists or unmet needs for home delivered meals.
- **Emergency Shelf-Stable Meals:** These are provided to all congregate and home-delivered meal clients to ensure each participant has a minimum of seven days of shelf stable meals in the event of emergencies, weather-related conditions, pandemics, or civil unrest that would prevent the delivery of their home delivered meals or attendance at congregate meal sites. These meals meet 1/3 of the current Dietary reference Intakes (DRIs). These meals have a six-month shelf life and will be distributed to participants twice a year. Grantees will communicate to participants as to when they should consume an emergency meal. When a Grantee has called for three days’ worth of meals to be consumed, Grantee will communicate to AgeOptions so that the meals may be replenished.
- **Meal Kit Program:** AgeOptions developed a culturally inclusive meal box delivery program. These are available to eligible older adults who are challenged with grocery shopping and transportation, have limited access to support, and have the ability and desire to cook. Eligible older adults may also have a homecare worker with a robust service plan who can cook for them. Meal box recipients receive weekly deliveries of fresh, frozen, and shelf-stable foods to prepare 21 meals a week. The meal boxes also contain menus and recipes that, when followed, meet the same standards as a home delivered or congregate meal.
- **Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program Coupons:** AgeOptions works with the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) and community organizations to distribute Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons during the summer

months. The coupons can be redeemed by older adults for \$50 worth of fresh produce and fruit at participating local farmers markets.

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

Funded by Title III-D of the Older Americans Act

AgeOptions will continue to fund a Countywide Health Promotion Coordinator agency which will deliver evidence-based self-management programming, such as A Matter of Balance, AEA Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, Fit and Strong! Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention, Walk with Ease, Diabetes Self-Management Program, and more.

The Countywide Health Promotion staff will work with AgeOptions direct service waiver program which provides information and self-management skills for older adults with ongoing conditions and their caregivers using the evidence-based Chronic Disease Self-Management model created by Stanford University.

Caregiver Support Program / Relatives Raising Children

Funded by Title III-E of the Older Americans Act and General Revenue Funds

The National Family Caregiver Support Program serves family and friends who care for people aged 60 and over or people with Alzheimer's disease (or a related disorder with neurological or organic brain dysfunction) at any age. The program also supports grandparents and other non-parent relatives over 55 who are caring for children under 19 or adults 19-59 years old with a disability. The Caregiver Support Program encompasses the following:

- AgeOptions supports and coordinates counseling, outreach, respite, education and training, support groups, gap-filling services, and legal assistance.
- Expands use of funds to provide respite services.
- AgeOptions mandates that all designated Caregiver Resource Centers utilize the Tailored Caregiver Assessment and Referral (TCARE) tool as the standardized assessment for all caregiver clients.
- The AgeOptions Caregiver Programs Specialists assist Caregiver Specialists at designated Caregiver Resource Centers (CRCs) countywide and reach out to the community to increase awareness of caregiver programs.
- The Caregiver Resource Centers also use Trualta, an e-learning platform that provides caregivers with personalized, easy-to-use, skills-based training to help care for someone at home.
- Evidence Based Training and Education

Special note regarding caregiver services: AgeOptions has spearheaded and plans in FY2026 to continue to promote and complete caregiver assessments using TCARE, a proven tool to assess the needs of the caregiver rather than focus on the care receiver. Through a series of questions, the TCARE assessment tool identifies the specific drivers of the caregiver's distress. With the stressors identified, an individualized care plan is created to help the caregiver feel more equipped to manage their role as a caregiver. Interventions such as counseling, support groups and respite

are put in place to manage stressors and prevent caregiver burnout. These services are offered through our current 9 Caregiver Resource Centers.

Adult Protective Services Program ***Funded by Title VII of the Older Americans Act***

The Adult Protective Services Act (APS) went into effect on July 1st, 2013. It expanded the Elder Abuse and Neglect program to include investigation of reported cases of abuse, neglect and exploitation for individuals with disabilities ages 18-59. In addition, the APS Act was amended on July 1, 2024, to update the procedures for self-neglect cases and remove the Fatality Review Team from the Open Meetings Act.

Specially trained case managers at local Adult Protective Services Provider Agencies:

- Receive and respond to reports of adult protective services abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and financial exploitation.
- Provide investigation, intervention and follow up services to victims through partnerships with local law enforcement and service agencies.
- Help resolve problems between victims and their substantiated abusers, including appropriate service plans to aid individuals in need.
- Provide short-term financial assistance for immediate needs such as guardianship proceedings, waste clean-up, or past due utility bills through Early Intervention Service (EIS) funds.
- Organize, conduct, and participate in four Multidisciplinary Team (M-Team) meetings per calendar year.
- Receive and respond to Suspicious Death Reports.

AgeOptions is the Regional Administrative Agency (RAA) for the Illinois Adult Protective Services program in suburban Cook County under an Illinois Department on Aging (IDOA) grant. AgeOptions supports APS agencies who investigate reports of alleged abuse, neglect, financial exploitation, and self-neglect for adults over the age of sixty and people with a disability from the ages of 18-59. AgeOptions assists IDOA with quality assurance and compliance activities and provides technical support to APS agencies. AgeOptions grants funds to APS agencies for Multidisciplinary teams.

AgeOptions and IDOA designate 7 APS agencies in suburban Cook County.

Adult Protective Services includes the following:

- **24/7 Adult Protective Services:** APS agencies provide 24/7 coverage. Each designated Adult Protective Services Agency created a plan to receive and respond to reports of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect in which an eligible adult is at risk for injury or death, at any time such a report is received, including after normal business hours and on weekends and holidays.
- **Fatality Review Team:** The Suburban Cook Adult Fatality Review Team examines deaths associated with suspected abuse and or neglect of adults with disabilities (ages 18-59) and older adults (ages 60+) residing in Suburban Cook. The new legislation calls for meetings to be held no less than 2 times per year (320 ILCS 20/15). Meetings are coordinated by AgeOptions. The new APS Act also exempts the Fatality Review Team from the Open Meetings Act (5 ILCS 120/1.02) Term

appointed professionals from many disciplines collaborate to review cases and then give detailed recommendations to the Department on Aging. This approach incorporates system-level changes to improve the public response for victims of abuse and or neglect and prevent similar outcomes in the future.

Members include the representatives from the following agencies: Cook County Medical Examiner's Office, Cook County State's Attorney Office, Cook County Office of Public Guardian, Cook County Sheriff Department, Loyola University School of Nursing, , Illinois Department on Aging, Suburban Access, Inc., Kenneth Young Center, Accent Home Care, , Metropolitan Family Services, Pathlights, Equip for Equality, Legal Aid Chicago, Hines VA, Addus Homecare and AgeOptions.

Community Care Program (CCP) / Comprehensive Care Coordination

CCP provides in-house and community-based services to eligible Illinois seniors, aged 60 and over with limited assets and assessed need for long term care. The services under CCP are aimed at assisting seniors to maintain their independence, provide cost effective alternatives to nursing home placement, and support the ability to age-in-place. Services include Adult Day Care, Automated Medication Dispensers, Emergency Home Response, and In-home services provided by home care workers.

Section 5 Budgeting

National and State Issues Impacting Fiscal Year 2026 initial Funding (for services starting October 1, 2025)

There are several components impacting FY 2026 funding:

- **Federal:** As of the publication date, Congress has yet to pass a FY 2025 budget and is currently operating under a Continuing Resolution, which will remain in effect until September 30, 2025. As a result, FY 2025 funding levels are based on those of the FY 2024 budget. In addition, for FY 2022-2024, AgeOptions received almost \$10m in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding which we used for new and expansion of existing programming.
- **State:** On February 19, 2025, Governor Pritzker unveiled his proposed budget for FY 2026. This proposal includes an \$8 million increase in state funding for home-delivered meals and \$2 million for state Planning and Services Grants which are assigned to Supportive Services.

Since final funding levels have not been established, AgeOptions is proposing three potential options for FY 2026 funding for services beginning October 1st, 2025:

1. **Scenario One – Based on IDOA Letter 26AP1:** On December 18, 2024, the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) issued the Federal Fiscal Year 2026 Initial Planning Allocations through Area Agency Letter 26AP1. These funding levels were determined based on the final FFY 2024 grant awards from the Administration for Community Living for various programs, including Title III-B Ombudsman, III-B Community-Based, Title III-C-1 (Congregate Meals), Title III-C-2 (Home Delivered Meals), Title III-D (Health Promotion and Disease Prevention), Title III-E (Caregiver), Title VII Elder Abuse, Title VII Ombudsman, and the NSIP (Nutrition Services Incentive Program). The State Fund allocations were derived from the Governor’s actual FFY 2025 allocation for IDoA.
2. **Scenario Two** – Based on the IDoA Letter 26AP1 for federal allocations, the State Fund allocation has been adjusted to reflect the Governor’s proposed FY 2026 budget, which includes increases in State funding for Home Delivered Meals and Planning and Service Grants for Title III-B.
3. **Scenario Three** – This scenario estimates a 10% cut in federal funding from IDoA Letter 26AP1 while incorporating the Governor’s proposed FY 2026 budget, which includes increases for Home Delivered Meals and Planning and Service Grants for Title III-B.

Note: All three scenarios make the following assumptions:

- NSIP funding will remain unchanged across all scenarios, based on the 26AP1 funding letter.
- **Title Transfers:** AgeOptions is permitted to transfer funds among three federal Older Americans Act Programs: Title III-B (Supportive Services), Title III-C1 (Congregate Meals), and Title III-C2 (Home Delivered Meals). These transfers do not alter the total funding available for suburban Cook County but provide flexibility in planning programs and help AgeOptions maintain historical service levels.

Since the consolidation of Supportive and Nutrition Services in 1978, AgeOptions has consistently transferred funds from Congregate Nutrition Services to Supportive Services and Home Delivered Meals. We are requesting a waiver of the 20% transfer cap between Title III-C1 and Title III-B from the Illinois Department on Aging. The requested transfer for FY 2025 is \$913,557 from Congregate Nutrition Services (C1) to Supportive Services (III-B), which is the same transfer level as in previous fiscal years.

- The Continuing Resolution will fund FY 2025 at the FY 2024 funding levels.

The projected percent changes for each Program and scenario are outlined below:

Program	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
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	IDOA FY 26 funding letter which reflects the following increase or decrease from FY25 funding levels	IDOA FY 26 Funding letter PLUS Governor's proposed increase for HDM and Social Services - % change from Scenario 1	IDOA FY 26 Funding letter estimating 10% cuts to Federal PLUS Governor's proposed increase for HDM and Social Services - % change from Scenario 1
Social Services - B	0.53%	7.75%	2.79%
LTC Ombudsman (B & VII)	0.17%	0.17%	-1.96%
Congregate (C1)	-7.00%	-7.00%	-16.26%
Home delivered Meals (C2)	-13.68%	-2.90%	-4.72%
Health Promotion (D)	-14.72%	-14.72%	-29.67%
Caregiver (E)	-7.48%	-7.48%	-12.14%
APS Interdisciplinary Teams (VII)	0.76%	0.76%	-11.24%

Funding Scenario- Scenario One – Scenarios two and three will be based on the percentage changes outlined in the table above. If funding levels differ from those in any of our scenarios, we will develop alternative funding scenarios. Please refer to the section titled "How AgeOptions will Administer Increased or Decreased Funding", page 37, for more details.

AgeOptions Funding (Federal & State) Scenario One <u>Draft Funding for Grantees</u>	Projected FY 26 units	Projected Clients for FY 26	Estimated AgeOptions Funding
Social Services			
ADRN/Information & Assistance	150,857	77,023	\$1,519,117
ADRN/Options Counseling - one-on-one	5,483	1013	\$201,267
Chore Housekeeping	25,000	1,208	\$900,000
Counseling	620	108	\$17,800
Education	520	352	\$124,894
Friendly Visiting	1,820	35	\$15,000
Housing Assistance	3,000	400	\$442,966
Legal Assistance	5,000	625	\$401,000
Home Repair	176	176	\$127,211
Recreation	4,000	400	\$316,610
Respite	2,160	78	\$65,775
Senior Center		4,460	\$39,892

Senior Opportunity & Services	2000	200	\$85,426
Culturally and Linguistically Accessible Services - CLAS	20,381	4,512	\$510,675
Senior Health Assistance Program			\$395,147
Transportation	30,952	1,385	\$142,670
Long Term Care Ombudsman Service			
Long Term Care Ombudsman	Data is reported directly to Illinois Department on Aging		\$1,427,323
Nutrition Services			
Congregate Meals	389,002	6,593	\$3,219,169
Home Delivered Meals	1,019,550	12,744	\$8,443,259
Meal kits delivered to homes	917,326	1,248	\$3,596,027
Caregiver Support Services (currently in a procurement process)			
CRC ADRD Gap Filling	280	252	\$64,379
CRC ADRD Training	236	76	\$126,451
CRC Case Management including TCARE	7,780	1,776	\$509,884
CRC Counseling	3,426	951	\$392,000
CRC Gap Filling	152	86	\$99,116
CRC Group Training and Education	236	236	\$169,654
CRC Information and Assistance	4,258	1,673	\$171,427
CRC One-on-One Outreach	1,500	1,200	\$150,812
CRC Respite	15,632	1,100	\$531,493
CRC Support Groups/Memory Cafes	2,526	314	\$179,863
GRG Counseling	2,108	240	\$39,327
GRG Gap Filling	52	40	\$37,466
GRG Group Training	152	52	\$17,405
GRG Information and Assistance	652	176	\$16,346
GRG Support Groups	576	188	\$46,975
Legal Assistance Relatives Raising Children	24	16	\$40,365
Health Promotion/Disease Prevention currently in a procurement process			
Evidence Based Health Promotion	12,452	1,268	\$109,869
Title VII I-Team			Title VII I-Team
APS Interdisciplinary teams			\$34,867

AgeOptions proposed changes to service design from FY25:

Currently, AgeOptions does not expect any changes to the service design between FY 25 and FY 26. While funding for each service may vary—either increasing or decreasing—we will collaborate with funded partners to ensure that resources are allocated to services that benefit the highest-priority groups and have the greatest impact.

Section 6

AgeOptions Administrative Funds

Administrative Direct Service Activities

The Older Americans Act restricts Agency administration costs to 10% of the Title III allocation and permits Area Agencies on Aging to provide “administratively related direct services” of Advocacy, Coordination, and Program Development. For FY26, the Illinois Department on Aging caps AgeOptions use of “Administratively related direct services” at \$3,689,189.

Given the uncertainty of funding, AgeOptions will continue our administratively related direct services at FY 2025 levels: \$1,618,935 and is 44% of the maximum cap for FY26 set by the Illinois Department on Aging for administratively direct services.

For FY26, AgeOptions allocated for Title III-B Administrative Related Direct Service, which includes Advocacy \$415,524; Coordination \$310,771; and Program Development \$892,640.

Advocacy

- AgeOptions holds monthly Advocacy Task Force meetings.
- Diane Slezak, CEO of AgeOptions, serves as the i4a President and is actively involved in i4a’s Advocacy efforts.
- Diane Slezak also sits on USAging’s Board, regularly attending Board meetings, USAging Policy Briefings, the Hill Reception, and meetings with legislators. She participates in legislative meetings, Legislative Aid Training, and events hosted by legislators.
- AgeOptions issues regular Advocacy Alerts, making it easier for people to contact their legislators on issues affecting older adults and caregivers. We also use social media to raise awareness and amplify our messaging.
- Additionally, AgeOptions is involved in collaborative advocacy efforts, including monthly CEO meetings with AARP and the Alzheimer’s Association.
- We maintain the AgeOptions website and social media channels to provide ongoing advocacy information and updates.
- AgeOptions offers individual client advocacy and serves as a resource for legislative aides.
- Our systems advocacy work includes collaborations such as with Avisery.
- Above all, we are dedicated to representing the interests of older adults in everything we do.

Coordination

- AgeOptions organizes quarterly meetings with each of our service partners, including Funded Agencies, Adult Protective Services Agencies, Caregiver Resource Centers, ADRN, Nutrition Providers, and Home Preservation Providers. These meetings will focus on staff development, system improvements, and providing technical support.
- Coordinates with the Community Care Alliance on the Illinois Pathways to Health initiative, Community Care Hub.
- Collaborate with 211 to enhance service delivery.
- Hold regular meetings with the Cook County Sheriff's Office, the Suburban Alliance for Homelessness, and other housing coalitions to address housing issues.
- AgeOptions will continue to collaborate with the Illinois Family Caregiver Coalition (IFCC), a growing network of over 400 organizational members across Illinois. AgeOptions takes a leadership role in supporting the IFCC, serving as the fiscal agent and providing supervision and guidance for the Coalition's efforts.
- Provide training and support to funded partners and other interested agencies.
- Foster new collaborations with healthcare providers, Managed Care organizations, the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, and Public Health entities.
- Conduct extensive outreach to raise awareness and engage the community.
- Maintain and provide access to the ICarol Resource Inventory.
- AgeOptions hosts a [Provider Search](#) on our website to aid older adults, caregivers, and professionals to find the appropriate provider of services.

Program Development

- AgeOptions conducts assessments to identify areas of opportunity and improvement.
- AgeOptions develops new initiatives by funding our partners in areas such as Memory Cafes, Libraries and Technology, and Home Preservation.
- We actively pursue outside funding for programs that benefit the Aging Network, including Illinois Pathways to Health, SMP, and Benefits Enrollment Centers.
- We test new service models, such as centralizing Caregiver Training and Education and expanding Respite care options.
- Our Dementia Friendly Communities Initiative is a key priority.
- We have relaunched the Savvy Caregiver Program, focusing on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders training.
- We introduced and advertise Trualta, a digital eLearning platform that offers interactive support groups, webinars, educational content, and toolkits to equip and empower caregivers.
- AgeOptions is also focused on developing new outreach and visibility efforts to engage the community.
- Our Grants Management system and Provider Referral link facilitate streamlined service delivery and support.

- We collaborate with community leaders, elected officials, townships, municipalities, and behavioral health organizations to improve services for older adults.
- AgeOptions received a grant from USAging’s Center of Excellence to Align Health and Social Care. More information is included in our Programs section.

Administration includes addressing the needs and concerns of older people and those who care for them, conducting local planning to reflect local needs and preferences, developing a service delivery system and providing procurement process for those services, Funding and implementing services including quality assurance through audit review and monitoring.

Direct Services

Information and Assistance: AgeOptions provides Title III-B and E Information and Assistance responding to the necessity for a central access point to services in suburban Cook County. Negotiating the service system in an area comprised of 30 townships, 130 municipalities and hundreds of providers can be very confusing for an older person or a concerned loved one. The direct service funding for Information and Assistance supports staff at AgeOptions in responding to callers and walk-in clients and through email; maintaining and distributing a wide variety of informational and educational materials; providing technical support to funded partners. AgeOptions maintains a staff person who is a certified Information and Assistance Specialist for Aging and Disabilities (CIRS A/D).

The funding also supports part of the cost of maintaining a computerized resource inventory, ICarol.

Given the uncertainty of funding, AgeOptions will continue our Information and Assistance Direct Service waiver at FY 2025 levels: \$258,021 for Title III-B Information and Assistance and \$34,433 for Title III-E Information and Assistance. We project providing 4,700 units of service to 3,800 clients for III-B and III-E Information and Assistance. AgeOptions uses I Carol, to house our information and assistance resource directory. The ICarol system includes a public resource directory that will be available on our website, and we have added the ability to chat with Internet inquiries. In recognition that consumers are increasingly searching online to locate resources, this feature will increase ability to self-serve while also ensuring the information they are receiving has been maintained by a trusted source. We will be adopting new ways to draw in consumers to speak with information & assistance specialists to ensure they are connected to the full range of services available. For example, our updated website increased the visibility on each page to connect help seekers with information and assistance services.

United Way 211 launched Metro Chicago 211, an information and referral hotline serving Cook and Suburban Cook County in January 2023. AgeOptions aims to provide training to Metro Chicago 211 staff on aging services to ensure awareness about access to aging specific resources through our ADRN information and Assistance

service. Our goal is to partner with 211 to provide the most direct referral path for callers to local assistance for older adults and people with disabilities.

AgeOptions Advisery team and will provide information for people about Medicare and Medicaid and will serve as a subject matter expert for SHIP, SHAP and Information and Assistance Staff.

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention: AgeOptions is requesting a direct service waiver to provide Title III-D Health Promotion and Disease Prevention services through our Illinois Pathways to Health Initiative which includes Take Charge of Your Health (CDSMP), Take Charge of your Diabetes (DSMP), Take Charge of your Pain (CPSMP) and falls prevention programming to include Fit & Strong!, A Matter of Balance (MOB), Tai Chi for Arthritis and Bingocize. For 20 years, AgeOptions has taken a lead on providing the evidence-based Chronic Disease and Diabetes Self-Management program as well as the Spanish-language Tomando Control de su Salud and Tomando Control de se Diabetes throughout suburban Cook County. In 2017, AgeOptions received an ACL grant to add fall prevention programming to our suite of offerings and 2021 received another ACL grant to expand our programming and build the infrastructure for the Illinois Pathways to Health Initiative. This leadership role has allowed AgeOptions to bring in additional funding to support the growth of evidence-based health promotion programming including recent funding from the Cook County Department of Public Health to train and fund CLAS organizations to offer health promotion programming in the languages of their community.

As evidenced above, AgeOptions is a leader in the delivery of evidence-based programs. AgeOptions work has been highlighted in conference presentations and national calls for our work in direct service and as a community care hub focused on health promotion programming.

Our website, [for Illinois Pathways to Health](#), has become the go-to location to highlight statewide evidence-based programming including the Self-Management program in the Take Charge series, fall prevention interventions and evidence-based caregiver support programs.

As a result of prior grants and activities, AgeOptions has trained a network of workshop facilitators who implement the “Take Charge” series of programs to include Take Charge of Your Health (CDSMP) Take Charge of Your Diabetes (DSMP), Take Charge of Your Pain (CPSMP) and Cancer Thriving and Surviving (CTS) throughout suburban Cook County and beyond. AgeOptions works with this network of facilitators (comprised of volunteers and professionals) to ensure fidelity is maintained at each workshop. Each facilitator is also provided with technical assistance regarding marketing and outreach to maximize recruitment of participants.

The direct service funding for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention supports staff at AgeOptions to coordinate a variety of programs which includes the “Take Charge” series of programs and fall prevention interventions such as Fit & Strong! A Matter of Balance, Bingocize and Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention. Coordination includes maintaining and managing program licenses, assurance that AgeOptions and our partners maintain license compliance and program fidelity, provide expert training and technical assistance to workshop facilitators; collaborate with local partners; facilitate

Take Charge of Your Health/Diabetes and falls prevention workshops and expand outreach efforts to engage diverse groups of older adults throughout suburban Cook County. AgeOptions will leverage the Title III-D funds to increase program offerings and expand partnerships with organizations that serve traditionally underserved communities such as black and brown communities and limited English speakers.

Title III-D is slated for a decrease in funding. For this direct service, we will cut funding to distributive and direct services proportionally. AgeOptions is requesting a direct service waiver of \$70,500, a decrease of \$6,501 from FY 25 from Title III-D to support evidence-based health promotion and falls prevention programs as well as to provide coordination and publicity of all Title III-D activities in suburban Cook County. We project providing 1400 units of service to 150 clients for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention.

Section 7 - How AgeOptions will administer changes in funding

How AgeOptions will Administer Increased or Decreased

Funding The following section outlines how AgeOptions proposes to administer increases and decreases in funding for:

1. **Title III-C1 Congregate Meals and Title III-C2 Home Delivered Meals including Meal kit delivery.**
 - a. **Increased Funding:** AgeOptions will determine the amount of funds to be made available for Congregate and Home Delivered Meals either by service area, by demand and/or for targeted populations, using the following in awarding funds.
 - Expand medically tailored, ethnic, shelf stable, weekend/and or second meals.
 - Develop new Congregate Meal sites focusing on limited English proficient older adults, Black and Brown communities, and/or low-income areas.
 - Provide specific demonstration funding or infrastructure support.
 - Develop new Congregate Meal sites in unserved regions of suburban Cook County.
 - Allow Grantees to submit formal requests and rationale to expand current services within the amounts determined available by AgeOptions. Decisions regarding increases shall be made after considering the rationale, overall performance and support provided to the community by the Grantee and/or
 - Develop a Request for Proposal for distribution of increased funds.
 - b. **Decreased Funding:** If funding to the suburban Cook County region is reduced, and it is necessary to reduce Grantee award levels, AgeOptions will:

- Review each grant based on service levels and/or other performance factors to assure that there will be cost effective service provision that best meets the needs of older adults.
- Review clients who have second or weekend meals to determine if other options are available to them.
- Request funded partners and assessment agencies to prioritize clients based on need and focusing on factors such as low income, limited English speaking, living alone and/or minority.
- Reduce meals in the following order: second meals, weekend meals, Monday through Friday meals, Meal Kit, and medically tailored meals.

2. Title III-B – Supportive Services, Title III-D – Health Promotion, Title III-E – Caregiver, General Revenue Funds for Community-based Services

- a. Increased Funding: If there is an increase in available funding, based on the level of increase, AgeOptions will determine the amount of funds to be made available either by area, by service and/or for targeted populations and will use one of the following options in awarding those funds:
- Provide funding for a specific service or need based on feedback from funded partners
 - Provide demonstration funding for new programming.
 - Provide proportional increases for grantees.
 - Allow grantee to submit formal requests and rationale to expand current services and/or for unit rate increases within the amounts determined available by AgeOptions. Decisions regarding increases shall be made after considering the overall performance and support provided to the community by the grantee/contractor.
 - Develop a Request for Proposal for distribution of increased funds.
- b. Decreased Funding: If funding is reduced to the suburban Cook County region during a grant or contract year, and it is necessary to reduce grantee award levels, AgeOptions will determine a reduction strategy that may reduce funding to each area on a straight percentage basis or reduce or eliminate services that are deemed to not be effectively delivered upon such a reduction of funds. AgeOptions reserves the right to establish new criteria for reductions for each extension year.

3. Title VII - Adult Protective Services, Title VII- Long Term Care Ombudsman:

- a. Increased Funding: If there is an increase in available funding, AgeOptions may carry the funding into the next fiscal year and provide proportional increases for grantees. If there is a substantial increase, AgeOptions may provide proportional increases to grantees.
- b. Decreased Funding: If funding is reduced to the suburban Cook County region during a grant or contract year, and it is necessary to reduce grantee award levels, AgeOptions will apply proportional decreases to grantees. AgeOptions reserves the right to establish new criteria for reductions for each extension year.

4. AgeOptions Administration is set by IDOA at 10% of the Title III funding. Therefore, if federal funding changes, administration would have a proportional cut.

5. **AgeOptions Direct Services:** All three scenarios indicate a slight overall increase of approximately 1% for PSA 13. However, due to the uncertainty surrounding funding, AgeOptions will maintain direct services at FY 2025 levels for administratively related direct services, including program development, coordination, advocacy, and Information and Assistance services. Title III-D funding for FY 2026 is lower, and we will apply the same reduction to our 3d Direct Services as the distributive funding for these services.

Minimum Percentage Waiver Request

IDOA requires that a minimum percentage of Federal Title III-B funds be set aside for the following types of services:

- Access Services – 33.1%
- In-Home Services - .04%
- Legal Assistance- 3.2%

Area Agencies on Aging that are unable to meet these minimum requirements are required to submit a waiver request.

This Public Hearing Document does **not** include a waiver request for the IDOA minimum percentage requirements. AgeOptions FY 26 funding plan exceeds the requirements for these services and therefore does not request a waiver from this requirement.

Section 8 - Description of Funding

There are three components to AgeOptions grantee’s funding:

1. **Funds provided by AgeOptions:**
 - Federal Older Americans Act
 - State General Revenue Funds
2. **Funds “matched” by the Grantee:**

Local Cash: includes funding from non-federal sources such as organizations, municipalities, townships, United Ways, etc., that provide direct support for service costs.

In-kind: includes the value of property or services that benefit a grant-supported service and are contributed by non-federal parties.

3. **Funds provided by the Clients** include voluntary client contributions that are made toward the cost of the service received. Clients are not denied services due to inability or unwillingness to contribute.

How AgeOptions Receives Funds

AgeOptions receives allocations of both state and federal funding through the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA). Funds for programs under Titles III-B Supportive Services, III-C1 Congregate Meals, III-C2 Home Delivered Meals, III-E Caregiver, and Illinois General Revenue Funding for community-based services and home delivered meals are allocated to the Area Agencies on Aging by the Illinois Department on Aging using a weighted, population-based formula. The Department reviews the formula every three

years before submitting a new State Plan on Aging. These funding levels are subject to change.

Specific factors used in the IDoA formula include the number of people in each Planning and Service Area (PSA) represented by each Area Agency:

- Over the age of 60 (41% of funding)
- Over the age of 75 (7.5% of funding)
- 60 + racially/ethnically diverse (10% of funding)
- 60 + in poverty (25% of funding)
- 60 + living alone (7.5%)
- 60 + rural (9% of funding)

Other programs are funded using these factors:

- Ombudsman Program (number of licensed long term care beds and facilities)
- Title III-D Health Promotion (the percent of the 60+ population is of the total population and the share of 60+ population in poverty)
- Title VII Elder Abuse and Neglect (number of assigned Multi-Disciplinary Teams)
- Community-Based Services General Revenue Fund (fixed and weighted allocations)
- Senior Health Assistance Program (base plus Medicare recipients)
- Nutrition Services Incentive Program (based on the meals served in the prior fiscal year and the national level of funding available)
- Special or one-time only funds (such as the Illinois General Revenue Funds for gap-filling services for grandparents of any age)

How AgeOptions Distributes Funds

AgeOptions uses a population-based funding formula to determine the maximum available dollars to each area in suburban Cook County for Supportive Services (Title III-B) and Caregiver Services (Title III-E). The factors and weights of AgeOptions funding formula remain the same as previous years:

Factor	Weight
60+	30%
60+ 100% of poverty	35%
60+ Racially/Ethnically Diverse	15%
75+	10%
60+ living alone	10%
TOTAL	100%

Funds are distributed using the formula for each of the 30 townships (with North and South Proviso broken into two areas) in suburban Cook County.

AgeOptions Procurement Process

AgeOptions maintains a list of organizations interested in receiving notices of funding opportunities/Requests for Proposals (RFP). AgeOptions plans to conduct a different RFP every two years: Nutrition will be in 2026 for a four-year-cycle, then Title IIIB, IIID and IIIE will be issued two years later for a four-year-cycle. See the table below. We also conduct RFPs for Ombudsman and Adult Protective Services in conjunction with

IDOA at their request. Note: Each grantee will receive up to a one-year award and depending on performance, AgeOptions may offer three one-year extensions:

RFP issued	For Fiscal Years:	Programs
Spring 2026	2027-2030	Title III-C Nutrition RFP
Spring 2028	2029-2032	Title III B, D, E RFP
Spring 2030	2030-2033	Title III-C Nutrition RFP
Spring 2032	2032-2035	Title III B, D, E RFP

AgeOptions Signature and Supplemental Programs

The Older Americans Act Programs are not equally funded, but their importance is significant and are considered the foundation for all aging services in our region. The associated boxes are the activities AgeOptions has adopted to ensure that our region is doing all we can do to bring services to older people. The chart below shows how AgeOptions signature and supplemental programs augment the Title III and Title IV programs under the Older Americans Act.

Title III-B Supportive Services	Title III-C Nutrition Programs	Title III-D Health Promotion	Title III-E Caregiver Services	Title VII Vulnerable Elder Rights Protection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HOPE Program • Avisery • Benefits Enrollment Center • LGBT+ Program/Thrive with Pride • Social Isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Outreach • Senior Farmer's Market Program • Meal Kits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IL Pathways to Health • Take Charge of Your Health • Falls Prevention • Community Health Worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring Together, Living Better (CTLB) • Trualta • T-CARE • Memory Cafe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) • Suburban Cook County Fatality Review Team • Elder Legal Risk Detector

Section 9 - AgeOptions Programs Signature Programs

While AgeOptions main sources of funding are the federal Older Americans Act and Illinois General Revenue Funds, AgeOptions has made progress in securing grant funds from sources other than the Older Americans Act to enhance current programs and develop new programs. AgeOptions has a variety of innovative programs that respond to the rich diversity of our communities. In addition, AgeOptions Board has a Resource Development Committee and is working to expand fee-for-service programs related to our non-Older Americans Act programs.

Benefits Enrollment Center: The National Council on Aging awarded AgeOptions funding that sustains the Benefit Enrollment Center (BEC). The BEC offers person-centered counseling to find, screen and enroll seniors and people with disabilities who have limited income and resources into available benefit programs. The primary focus is on the following programs: Medicare Part D Extra Help (or Low-Income Subsidy, LIS), Medicare Savings Programs (MSP), Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP).

AgeOptions BEC also participates in projects to increase awareness and accessibility to money saving benefits for older adults. One such grant project, “Boost Your Budget” is an annual public awareness campaign that supports enhanced outreach about benefits to Suburban Cook County.

Caring Together, Living Better (CTLB): Caring Together, Living Better (CTLB) is a grassroots program that supports low income, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx caregivers and older adults in communities located throughout the west suburbs. AgeOptions partners with faith-based and community organizations to build caregiver support services available through the AgeOptions Caregiver Program. Caring Together, Living Better connects the majority African American and Latinx caregivers to these services through the faith-based and community partners. With the support of the Westlake Health Foundation, there are currently 5 partners serving the west suburban communities of Bellwood, Berwyn, Cicero, Maywood, and Melrose Park. Our partners provide volunteer-based caregiver education and support programs including three churches with large African American congregations, one church with both Black and Latinx congregants, and one Latin social service organization.

Caring Together, Living Better (CTLB) was initially founded in 2009 by AgeOptions with Weinberg Foundation to serve the south suburbs working with faith communities and local nonprofit organizations. Some of the south suburban church-based volunteer programs continue to operate although the south suburban grant funding has ended.

Care Coordination under the Colbert and Williams Consent Decrees (HOPE):

Since February 2020, AgeOptions has served as a “Prime Agency” under the Colbert Consent Decrees’ Comprehensive Care Management Transition Program (CCMTP) implementation plan. As a Prime Agency, AgeOptions together with North Shore Senior Center, is responsible for assisting nursing home residents interested in transitioning back to the community, with skill building, housing location, links to community services and supports, and continued support and assistance for 18 months once they transition back to the community. AgeOptions has branded our work as “H.O.P.E”. “Home Options Path to Empowerment”.

Other partners include Featherfist for housing location, Legal Aid Chicago for helping clients access Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security (SOARS), and other non-funded partners including Envision Behavioral Health and CARA Collaborative supportive employment services

The Colbert and Williams Consent Decrees advocates for the rights of nursing home residents to live in the least restrictive environments in line with the 1999 federal Supreme Court Olmstead Decision.

Avisery by AgeOptions: Since 1999, AgeOptions has educated professionals and consumers on how to navigate the various health care coverage options available to older adults. As state and federal governments have sought to increase consumer choice and control health care costs, it has become increasingly difficult for older adults to make informed choices about the insurance options that best meet their needs. While cost is a factor to consider, consumers also need information about 1) whether current health care providers are in-network; 2) whether medications are covered; 3) deadlines for enrolling in different coverage; and 4) eligibility for financial assistance programs to help cover out-of-pocket costs. The frequent introduction of new health insurance plans and revisions to existing policies adds levels of complexity to the public health insurance benefits system.

To help them make the right choices, older adults rely on health insurance counselors and other professionals in aging services organizations for support. Avisery by AgeOptions provides education, training, and technical assistance to these professionals, enabling them to help their clients access affordable healthcare coverage that allows them to thrive as they age. Avisery provides this impartial education to professionals through various avenues, including training, webinars, technical assistance, and informational email alerts.

Through interaction with these professionals and their clients, Avisery gathers data on unintended consequences, barriers to access, and implementation failures that plague the health benefits system. Avisery leverages its relationships with public officials, agency employees, and health plan representatives to resolve situations for individual beneficiaries. Additionally, through participation in advocacy coalitions, Avisery works towards system change at the health plan, state, and federal levels.

Home Preservation – Comments brought forth at our listening sessions shed light on the increased housing insecurity and homelessness among older adults in our area. More than half of the evictions the Cook County Sheriff’s Office served were for older adults and rents were increasing while income stayed the same. In response, AgeOptions developed our American Recovery Program funded Home Preservation Program. This ARPA funding ends September 30, 2024. AgeOptions continues to fund home preservation efforts under the services of “housing assistance” and “home repair.”

Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP)/Empowering Seniors to Prevent Healthcare Fraud: The SMP Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Program is a national program that empowers Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries to prevent, detect, and report health care fraud. AgeOptions leads the Illinois SMP Program with funding from the Administration for Community Living. AgeOptions reaches all areas of Illinois with the SMP message by partnering with the 12 other Illinois Area Agencies on Aging, White Crane Wellness Center and the Coalition of Limited English-Speaking Elderly.

Trained volunteers and staff give community presentations (in-person or virtually), SMP Bingo presentations (with prizes), outreach events/health fairs, and provide one-on-one counseling to Medicare and Medicaid recipients and caregivers on the SMP Message:

- **Protect:** Protect yourself from Medicare errors, fraud, or abuse by never giving your Medicare number to strangers who call or visit your home.

- **Detect:** Learn how to detect potential errors, fraud, or abuse by reading your Medicare Summary Notice or explanation of benefits from your insurance company.
- **Report:** If you suspect that you have been a target of errors, fraud, or abuse, contact the SMP Hotline at (800)699-9043 and we will return your call within 24 hours.
- If you would like a presentation on Medicare Fraud you can contact us at (800)699-1463 to schedule.

The Illinois Senior Medicare Patrol has continued their media campaign that includes television public service announcements (PSA's) in both English and Spanish, radio PSA's in both English and Spanish, doctor's office closed circuit television PSA's in over 250 waiting rooms of rheumatologists, cardiologists, and neurologists., internet/banner advertisements on CBS websites, in store audio in over 200 grocery stores across Illinois and a prescription bag monograph campaign in over 300 pharmacies across the state.

Illinois Family Caregiver Coalition (IFCC) – The Illinois Family Caregiver Coalition is a growing Coalition of over 400 organizational members throughout Illinois that serves as a conduit to address the goals of the Federal RAISE Act in Illinois. AgeOptions has assumed a leadership role in supporting the IFCC. AgeOptions serves as the fiscal agent for the IFCC, providing supervision and guidance for the IFCC.

Illinois Pathways to Health: AgeOptions developed and owns the statewide community care hub offering social care and evidence-based health promotion and falls prevention programming. We offer statewide programmatic training, technical assistance, unified marketing materials including a communications tool kit with templated marketing materials, website, streamlined database, reporting tools and one contract access to this network to health care providers, insurers, and others that are interested in offering these programs to their patients/members.

Take Charge of Your Health Programs: *Take Charge of Your Health* is an interactive workshop series designed for individuals with ongoing health conditions. This evidence-based program, originally developed at Stanford University, now owned and licensed through the Self-Management Resource Center (SMRC) provides information and tools to help individuals manage their health and lead active lifestyles. Workshops meet weekly for 2 ½ hours for six weeks and are led by two trained facilitators. The workshop group consists of no less than ten and no more than twenty participants. Workshop facilitators are often volunteers who have either personal or professional experience with ongoing health conditions. AgeOptions offers four versions of the program at locations throughout suburban Cook County:

- Take Charge of Your Health: Provides information and self-management skills for older adults with ongoing health conditions and their caregivers.
- Tomando Control de su Salud: A culturally adapted Spanish language version of Take Charge of Your Health for older adults with ongoing health conditions and their caregivers.

- Take Charge of Your Diabetes: Provides information and self-management skills specifically for older adults who have diabetes, are diagnosed as pre-diabetic and their caregivers.
- Take Charge of Your Diabetes - Plus: The same program as above, but with a clinical wrap-around program that includes one-on-one assessments and counseling provided by a registered dietitian. Participants must be diabetic and are required to have a physician referral.
- Tomando Control de su Diabetes: A Spanish language version of Take Charge of Your Diabetes for older adults who have diabetes, are diagnosed as pre-diabetic and their caregivers.
- Take Charge of Your Pain: This class is designed for people who have a diagnosis of chronic pain, offering strategies for dealing with their symptoms.
- Cancer: Thriving and Surviving: Provides information and self-management skills for older adults with cancer and their caregivers.
- Workplace CDSMP: A version of Take Charge of Your Health designed to be delivered to a workplace with one-hour sessions

Falls Prevention Programming

- A Matter of Balance: a program that emphasizes practical strategies to reduce the fear of falling and increase activity levels of older adults
- Bingocize: a program that combines exercise and health information with the familiar game of Bingo
- Fit & Strong! A 24-session program that combines low impact aerobics with Self-Management discussions.
- Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention: an evidence-based Tai Chi program designed to reduce the fear of falling, improve relaxation and balance and provide socialization.

AgeOptions currently provides facilitator training for organizations interested in building internal capacity for many of these programs.

As a Community Care Hub, Illinois Pathways to Health is seeking regional and statewide contracts from health care payors and providers to expand the reach of our health promotion, falls prevention and other social care programs by demonstrating value and impact to the health plans and providers.

Memory Café Programs: In 2018, AgeOptions provided stipends to several of our Older Americans Act funded agencies to pilot 21 memory cafes throughout Suburban Cook County. AgeOptions launched the Memory Café concept to address social isolation among older people and to work towards dementia friendly communities throughout suburban Cook County. The stipend opportunities were for Congregate Meal Sites, Caregiver Resource Centers, and Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Agencies to allow for a demonstration project during fiscal year 2019 with the intent that it would expand throughout our network and continue beyond fiscal year 2019. For FY2026, there are 13 active Memory Cafes.

A memory café is a social gathering designed for people living with dementia, or another form of cognitive impairment, and their care partners feel welcomed and engaged in their own community. The cafes focus on socialization, engaging activities, education, and entertainment. They are also designed as entry-points where caregivers can connect to a caregiver specialist from one of our Caregiver Resource Centers to learn more about resources outside of the Memory Café that may be available to them.

Five (5) of the 13 funded memory cafes are being implemented by an AgeOptions funded CLAS agency and are thus bilingual cafes to meet the needs of the communities they serve. There are memory cafes held in Korean, Arabic, Mandarin, and Gujarati.

Programming in Libraries: AgeOptions works with public libraries across Suburban Cook County to provide recreation services. Libraries in low-income and Black and Brown communities are prioritized. The libraries also prioritize technology offerings – including tech-training and educational materials for older adult patrons. Libraries focused on adapting and expanding programming that would reduce social isolation among their older adult patrons while also connecting them to available resources within their communities, such as their local Aging and Disability Resource Center. Participating libraries also host AgeOptions presentations and evidence-based programming, such as Medicare fraud prevention, benefits access, Illinois Pathways evidence-based classes, and Stress Busters for Caregivers.

Thrive with Pride: AgeOptions created Thrive with Pride to combat social isolation among LGBT+ older adult and caregivers. Through our signature online events and those hosted by our network of community based Thrive “cafes”, we provide social support and vital information to the LGBT+ community. Thrive with Pride Cafes are envisioned as safe spaces for older adults and caregivers to learn more about benefits, share their stories and discuss topics that matter in a safe and affirming environment. Programming is tailored to the needs and interests of participants at each site. Visit [Thrive with Pride \(www.thrivingwithpride.org\)](http://www.thrivingwithpride.org) for more information.

In addition to our Thrive with Pride programming, AgeOptions is strengthening our network’s commitment to reaching older people who are members of the LGBT+ community through outreach, training, and referrals.

Uniper Care: Uniper is a virtual senior center delivered to older adults in a low-tech fashion, including via a UniTV device, that transforms any television into a virtual portal. In 2020, AgeOptions began a Uniper pilot targeting low-income, socially isolated older adults and caregivers and providing Uniper subscriptions to them at no cost. Early data from this pilot shows decreases in loneliness, depression and fall risks. Uniper is designed to be socially engaging and connect users with programs and activities that engage them. Many of our Uniper members have created a community with other users and some have even volunteered to lead discussion groups. More information on Uniper is available [here](#).

Volunteerism: AgeOptions continues to support a welcoming, flexible and creative volunteer program that effectively engages and cultivates the skills of volunteers to enhance aging services in suburban Cook County. AgeOptions uses volunteers for the SMP program, Benefits Enrollment Center, Take Charge of Your Health, fundraising,

iFast, and AgeOptions Board and Advisory Council. For more information about volunteer opportunities, please call at (708)383-0258, email us at information@ageoptions.org , or go to the AgeOptions website at [Careers and Volunteers](#).

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Contact an Agency in Your Area

South Suburbs			
<p>Bloom, Calumet, and Thornton Townships</p> <p>Metropolitan Family Services (773) 692-1033</p>	<p>Bremen, Lemont, Orland, Palos, Rich and Worth Townships</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pathlights (708) 361-0219</p>	<p>Stickney Township</p> <p>Stickney Township Office on Aging (708) 636-8850</p>	
West Suburbs			
<p>Berwyn and Cicero Townships</p> <p>Solutions for Care (708) 447-2448</p>	<p>Lyons, Riverside, Norwood, and Proviso Townships</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Aging Care Connections (708) 354-1323</p>	<p>Oak Park and River Forest Townships</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Oak Park Township Senior Services (708) 383-8060</p>	<p>Leyden Township</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Leyden Family Services Senior Citizens Program (847) 455-3929</p>
North Suburbs			
<p>Palatine Township</p> <p>Palatine Township Senior Citizens Council (847) 991-1112</p>	<p>Evanston, Niles, Maine, New Trier, and Northfield Townships</p> <p style="text-align: center;">North Shore Senior Center (847) 784-6000</p>	<p>Elk Grove, Schaumburg, Barrington, Wheeling Townships</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Kenneth Young Center (847) 524-8800</p>	<p>Hanover Township</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hanover Township Department of Aging Services (630) 483-5600</p>
Suburban Cook Cultural Services and Support			
<p>Hispanic/Latino Communities</p> <p>Alivio Medical Center (773) 254-1400</p>	<p>Arab Communities</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Arab American Family Services (708) 599-2237</p>	<p>Polish Communities</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CLESE (Coalition of Limited Speaking Elders) (312) 461-0812</p>	<p>Korean Communities</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hanul Family Alliance (847) 439-5195</p>
<p>Indo-Asian Communities</p> <p>Metropolitan Asian Family Services (847) 824-9414</p>	<p>Chinese Communities</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Xilin Association (847) 607-6555</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>AgeOptions Provider Referrals</u> Enter address to determine the local partner to contact</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>https://www.ageoptions.org/resources/find-services-in-your-neighborhood/</u></p>	
Countywide Information and Assistance			
<p>Suburban Cook County</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AgeOptions (708) 383-0258</p>	<p>City of Chicago</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chicago Department of Family and Support Services – Senior Services (312) 744-4016</p>	<p>Collar Counties of Cook County</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AgeGuide (800) 528-2000</p>	



For more information, please contact:

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