



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 2027 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 is committed to ensuring that all individuals have equitable access to our programs and services. In accordance with federal and state law, AgeOptions does not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived: race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ancestry, marital status, physical or mental disability, veteran status, unfavorable military discharge, age or any other category protected by applicable law in any of its programs, services, or employment practices. If you feel you have been discriminated against in access to our funded programs or services, contact AgeOptions (708) 383-0258.*



## AREA PLAN ON AGING

# PUBLIC HEARINGS

AgeOptions will share its proposed FY2027 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](#)



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### Friday, April 24, 2026, 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm AgeOptions FY2027 Public Hearing #1 (Virtual)

Register Via Zoom at:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tSCbaIPqQVaRFtz85jfrPQ>

### Monday, April 27, 2026, 10:00 am - 11:30 am AgeOptions FY2027 Public Hearing #2 (Virtual)

Register Via Zoom at:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/eyEYwP1iRi645o\\_2qurRg](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/eyEYwP1iRi645o_2qurRg)



Visit <https://connect.ageoptions.org/public-information-document-for-fy2027> to read the FY2027 Area Plan Public Information Document or submit written comments. **Written comments are accepted until April 29, 2026.**

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.

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# Fiscal Year 2027 Public Information Document

AgeOptions publishes this Public Information Document as the official summary of its proposed Area Plan for Fiscal Year 2027. A summary of the document will be presented at the Public Hearings listed below.

This document summarizes the third year of the three-year AgeOptions Area Plan for Fiscal Years 2025–2027. It outlines AgeOptions’ plans for service design, service delivery, and the allocation of funds. The purpose of this document is to provide the public with an overview of the plan and an opportunity to review it, ask questions, and offer comments during the Public Hearings.

Comments on the proposed Area Plan for Fiscal Year 2027, as referenced in this Public Information Document, may be submitted to AgeOptions by mail, email, or through the online comment form.

Comments on the proposed Area Plan for Fiscal Year 2027, as referenced in this Public Information Document, may be submitted to AgeOptions by mail, email, or through the online comment form (<https://forms.office.com/r/VFKgFV3nek>). All comments must be received by April 29, 2026. Comments should be directed to Eric Cho, Planning and Evaluation Specialist, AgeOptions, 1048 Lake Street, Suite 300, Oak Park, Illinois 60301 or by e-mail at [Eric.Cho@ageoptions.org](mailto:Eric.Cho@ageoptions.org).

## Public Hearings

AgeOptions, the Area Agency on Aging for suburban Cook County, will conduct two Public Hearings on the suburban Cook County Area Plan on Aging for Fiscal Year 2027. Members of the public are welcome and encouraged to attend, discuss, and provide comments on the Area Plan

If you require special assistance, a translator, sign language services, or other accommodations, please contact Eric Cho at (708) 383-0258 or [Eric.Cho@ageoptions.org](mailto:Eric.Cho@ageoptions.org) at least two days before the hearing you plan to attend.

Date	Time	Location
<b>Friday, April 24, 2026</b>	2:00-3:30 pm	<b>Virtual Public Hearing on Zoom</b> Register at the following link: <a href="https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tSCbalPqQVaRFtz85jfrPQ">https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tSCbalPqQVaRFtz85jfrPQ</a>
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# Statement of Purpose of the Public Information Document and the Area Plan Public Hearings

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The AgeOptions **Area Plan on Aging** is a planning, management, and grant award document. It encompasses service delivery plans and priority issues for FY 2027 for Planning and Service Area 13 (suburban Cook County).

This **Public Information Document** provides an overview of AgeOptions plan to allocate federal and state funding to deliver services to older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers in suburban Cook County. AgeOptions issues this Public Information Document each spring to share detailed information for the upcoming fiscal year.

The **Area Plan Public Hearings** provide an open forum for members of the public to offer recommendations and comments on this Public Information Document. AgeOptions welcomes feedback on the plan, particularly from the individuals and communities we serve. All comments and questions received will be reviewed by AgeOptions Advisory Council and Board of Directors as they consider potential revisions to the Area Plan. A summary of testimony from all public hearings, including any resulting actions, will be prepared by AgeOptions and made available upon request.

# Section 1 – AgeOptions

## The Area Agency on Aging of Suburban Cook County

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### Who We Are

AgeOptions is guided by:

#### Our Vision

*People thriving as they age.*

#### Our Mission

*AgeOptions innovates, partners, and advocates to improve systems and services in order to strengthen communities so people thrive as they age.*

#### Our Values:

*Commitment  
Integrity  
Connectedness*

#### Our Diversity Statement:

*The diversity of our organization and communities is a rich asset that strengthens our mission and guides our decisions and direction.*

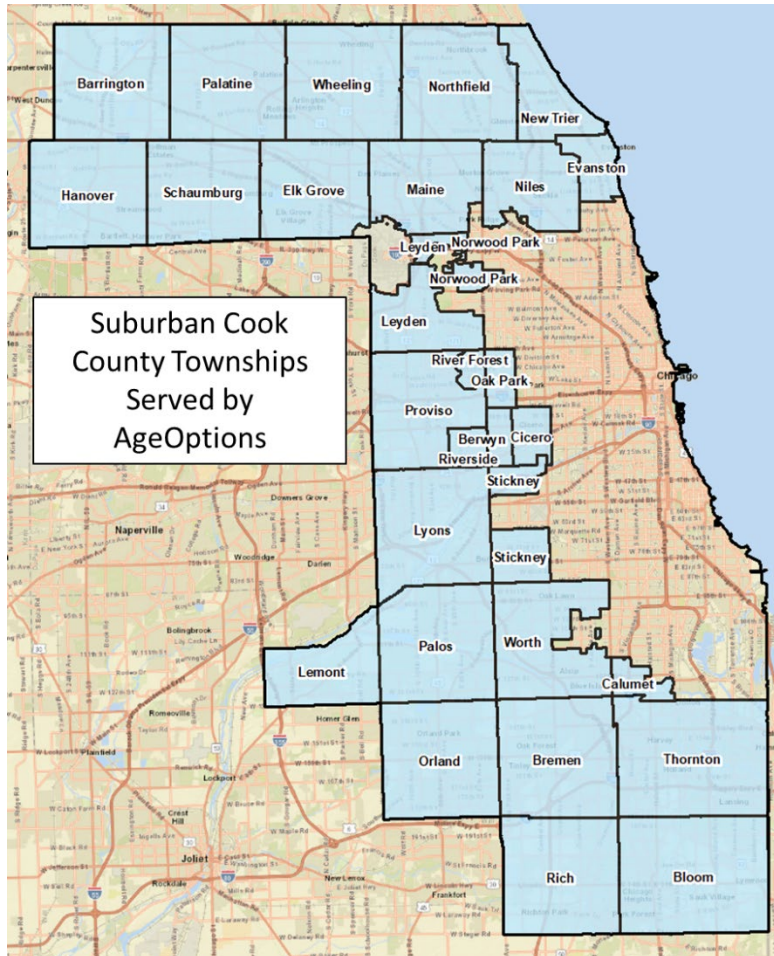
AgeOptions is a not-for-profit organization committed to improving the quality of life and maintaining the dignity of older adults and those who care about them. Our purpose is to connect older adults, aged 60 and over, with resources and options for care so that they have a range of choices and the 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.

Since 1974, AgeOptions has served older adults and their families throughout suburban Cook County as part of the national aging network. This network includes the Administration for Community Living at the federal level, the Illinois Department on Aging as the State Unit on Aging, and approximately 622 Area Agencies on Aging across the country, all working together to help older adults and their families access the services and supports they need.

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 and serves a region that is home to more than 2.47 million people.



The older adult population in suburban Cook County is growing rapidly and becoming increasingly diverse. Based on the American Community Survey (2020-2024), there are 618,385 older adults living across 130 communities in the region. 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 individuals age of 60 and over, as well as family caregivers of all ages, with priority given to individuals with low incomes, minority populations, and those with limited English proficiency. In FY 2025, AgeOptions and our community partners made a difference in the lives of 196,778 individuals.

## What We Do

- **Planning:**

AgeOptions evaluates the needs of older adults and their caregivers, gathers public input to set service priorities, and develops innovative programs and service models. Through this process, AgeOptions works to help older adults remain independent in their homes, support family and informal caregivers, protect the rights of older adults to age with dignity, and ensure access to proper nutrition and essential community services.
- **Coordination:**

AgeOptions coordinates a wide network of services by partnering with community organizations, many of which receive funding through the Older Americans Act. We engage with our Advisory Council and community partners through regular meetings to ensure effective service delivery. These collaborations support programs such as Adult Protective Services, Caregiver Resource Centers, Aging and Disability Resource Centers, Nutrition Programs, and Culturally and Linguistically Accessible Services (CLAS). While most programs focus on suburban Cook County, AgeOptions also administers several initiatives that serve the broader Chicago metropolitan area and the entire state of Illinois.
- **Advocacy:**

AgeOptions advocates for older adults, caregivers, and adults with disabilities at both the federal and state levels. We support policies, funding, and benefit programs that improve quality of life for aging populations. AgeOptions informs legislators about how proposed policies affect older adults and the service network that supports them. We also lead an Advocacy Task Force for individuals interested in aging-related issues and work with government agencies to ensure programs are accessible to those who qualify.
- **Program Development:**

AgeOptions designs and sustains innovative programs that reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. Examples include partnerships with libraries, Memory Cafés, and other initiatives highlighted in the *Area Agency on Aging Programs and Services* and the *AgeOptions Signature Programs Appendix*.
- **Distribution of Funds:**

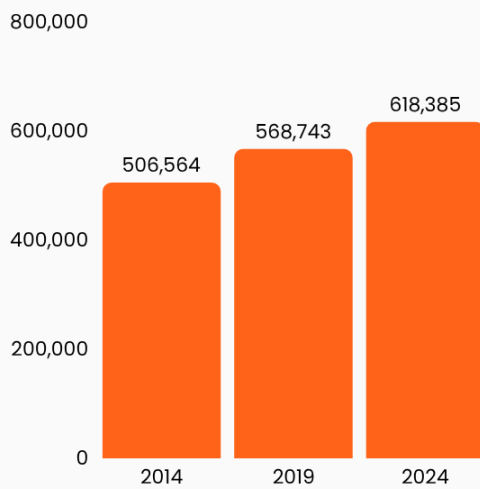
Through research-based planning and evaluation, AgeOptions distributes federal, state, and private funds to a broad network of community service providers. We support more than 100 organizations across the state through grants and contracts, including nonprofit agencies, municipalities, townships, libraries, senior centers, and organizations serving older adults with limited English proficiency.

# Demographics of Our Area

The following highlights some key demographic data about suburban Cook County from the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, published by the U.S. Census Bureau. Most data are from the 2020-2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates, except for the comparison data from 2019 (2015-2019 ACS) and 2014 (2010-2014 ACS).

## SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

### The Older Adult Population Continues to Increase



### Increasing number of older adults

Older adults make up 25% of the total Suburban Cook County population, up from 20% in 2014.

16 states have smaller older adult populations than Suburban Cook County.

### Housing costs remain high

19% of older adult households rent their homes.

Nearly 40,000 older adult renters (55%) spend more than 30% of their household income on rent.

Over 90,000 older adult homeowners (30%) spend more than 30% of their household income on housing.

### Racial and Ethnic Diversity

1 in 3 older adults are members of racially and ethnically diverse communities.

This is an increase of more than 70,000 individuals since 2014. (133,000 to 207,000)

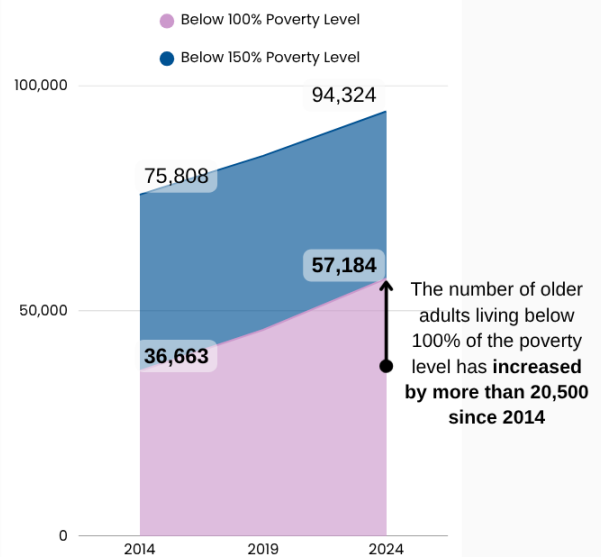
### Language Diversity

1 in 4 older adults speak a language other than English at home. 15% of older adults speak English less than “very well.”

### 1 in 4 older adults are living alone

Over 153,000 older adults (25%) live alone in their home.

### The number of older adults living below poverty levels continues to rise rapidly



## Section 2- Area Plan Development

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### 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 approach designed to improve efficiency and effectiveness, identify opportunities for improvement, and ensure compliance with the Older Americans Act requirements to prioritize outreach to older adults with the greatest social need and greatest economic need (“priority populations”). The steps and key activities of AgeOptions FY2027 planning process are outlined below.

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

- AgeOptions begins the planning process on the needs of older adults in our service area. This step includes conducting comprehensive needs assessments and collecting data from a variety of sources.
- For the current area plan, this includes the following activities:
  - 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 firm specializing in demographic, social and economic analysis, to develop a ailed data on the populations we serve – see [\*Demographic Analysis Website\*](#).
  - In 2024, AgeOptions worked with Polco, a survey and data analytics company, 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 randomly selected and the remainder were sent to our priority groups whose primary languages were 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.
- AgeOptions gathers input from local experts, community organizations, and service providers to identify the needs and gaps in available services. This includes:

- Adult Protective Services supervisors
- AgeOptions Advocacy Task Force
- AgeOptions Advisery partners
- AgeOptions Board and Advisory Council
- AgeOptions Caregiver Resource Center 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
- Care Coordination Units in PSA 13
- 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 to Health 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 2020-24.
- 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 uses a structured process to review and improve the current service system. This includes:

- Analyzing costs associated with each service, including expenditures by service category and units of service (e.g. cost per person served, cost per unit)
- Reviewing service delivery data (NAPIS) by service to assess service effectiveness in meeting the needs priority populations
- Examining 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 understand their needs and to gain insights into their experiences with the AgeOptions Service system. For example, in 2025, we conducted listening sessions with current congregate meal participants at 30 sites with a short survey and informal conversations.
- 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 who experience 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 - Virtual Programming and Technology:**

The traditional one-size-fits-all approach to service delivery may no longer meet the needs of older adults and their caregivers. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become clear that a combination of virtual and in-person programming for social services, caregiver support, and nutrition programs can help reach a broader range of participants, particularly those who are homebound. At the same time, access to technology and digital skills varies widely among adults aged 60 and older.

### **Response:**

In response to this finding, AgeOptions will continue to encourage a mix of virtual and in-person programming whenever possible. Through partnerships with Library CARES libraries, AgeOptions also supports digital inclusion efforts by offering the Northstar Digital Literacy program at participating public libraries. Trained library staff assist older adults in getting started with technology, assessing their digital skills, and building new competencies needed to access online services and resources. AgeOptions also encourages caregivers to join Trualta, an eLearning platform that offers interactive support groups, webinars, educational content, and toolkits to equip and empower caregivers who can access all of this from the comfort of their homes.

### **Finding - Affordability of Housing/Home Preservation**

Based on listening sessions, coalition meetings, as well as [reports](#) there is an increase in the number of un-housed older adults and housing insecurity. Rents have skyrocketed, which is especially difficult for those on a fixed income and there is a lack of affordable housing. According to the 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates from the Census Bureau, 55.2% of all renters 60 or older in suburban Cook County are cost-burdened, and 30.3% of homeowners 60+ are cost-burdened. Cost-burdened means that they are spending 30% or more of their income on rent or housing.

**Response:** In response to the challenges faced by older adults, AgeOptions launched 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, enhance home safety, and connect older adults to other benefits and resources to make their lives more affordable. In our FY25-27 Request for Proposal, we sought applications for the updated "Housing Assistance" and "Home Repair" services. In FY26, ten agencies are participating in either Housing Assistance or Home Repair programs. Data from FY25 revealed the following about the older adults served:

- 14.6% were at risk of eviction or already in the eviction process.
- 12.7% required repairs or modifications to their homes to age in place.
- 46.2% were living in housing they could no longer afford.

**Finding – Older Adults Vulnerable to Scams:** According to the [Federal Trade Commission \(FTC\)](#), adults age sixty and older reported older adults reported losing more than \$2.4 billion to fraud in 2024, compared with about \$600 million in 2020. Because many incidents of fraud are never reported, the FTC estimates that the true financial impact on older consumers may have reached as much as \$81.5 billion nationwide in 2024.

- Compared with adults ages 18 to 59, older adults were significantly more likely to report losing money to certain types of scams, including tech support scams, prizes/sweepstakes/lottery scams, and government imposter scams. Among all fraud categories, investment scams resulted in the greatest financial losses for older adults, followed by business impersonation scams and government imposter scams.
- Older adults also filed more reports of money lost through fraud that began on social media than through any other contact method. However, while social media scams were reported most often in aggregate, the median loss per incident was much higher for scams initiated by phone calls. In terms of payment methods, older adults reported losing the most money through bank transfers and cryptocurrency, while credit cards and gift cards were the payment methods most frequently associated with reported fraud.

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.

**Response:** In response, AgeOptions is advocating for mandatory reporting requirements for bankers and other safeguards about financial scams. The Illinois Area Agencies on Aging is advocating for funding to help safeguard older adults from falling prey to scams. AgeOptions also regularly shares the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s Money Smarts for Older Adults Resource Guide, which directly provides resources and education about consumer scams. AgeOptions leads the statewide Illinois SMP (Senior Medicare Patrol), which builds consumer awareness about health care fraud and scams through community presentations and other outreach. SMP also send out a bimonthly Fraud Alert email newsletter to over 500 statewide recipients.

### **Finding - Culturally Competent Services:**

Through focus groups and two Needs Assessments, AgeOptions gathered valuable insights from Black, Brown, limited English speaking, and immigrant 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.

**Response:** 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. AgeOptions Caring Together, Living Better (CTLB) program supports African American and Hispanic/Latinx caregivers and older adults through trusted partnerships with faith-based and community organizations. Additionally, AgeOptions funds nutrition programs that serve various priority populations, including Black, Brown, limited English-speaking, LGBTQ+, and older adults who prefer Kosher or Halal diets.

**Finding – Increased Visibility of Aging Services:**

Our Needs Assessment findings show that people are unaware of aging services or do not know how to access services and need a visible, central hub of information and resources.

**Response:** In response, our Aging and Disability Resource Network (ADRN) serves as a central hub for high-quality, local information, 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 LGBT+ older adults.
- Partnering with local public libraries through the Library CARES program, which equips librarians with the tools to make informed referrals to the aging network. Our needs assessment found that public libraries are a community site that many older adults already trust and access.

For more details on how we are working to increase the visibility of aging services, please refer to Section 3 on the Statewide Initiatives, particularly the Visibility and Quality Assurance initiatives. To find your local ADRN, visit [AgeOptions Provider Search](#)

### **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.

**Response:** In response, AgeOptions continues to provide the following services:

- **Meal kit delivery program:** Provides older adults with the equivalent of three meals per day in FY 2026, offering groceries and recipes that meet 100% of daily nutritional requirements. Beginning in FY 2027, the program will transition to the equivalent of two meals per day due to reduced funding. Meals are available in a variety of cuisines, including general diet, Latine, African American, Korean, Halal, and Kosher options.
- **Congregate meal cafés:** Nutritious meals are provided at locations which offer social and recreational activities and nutrition education. Congregate meals play a major role in reducing social isolation, which is strongly linked to better physical and mental health outcomes for older adults. In FY 2026, there are a limited number of “to-go” meals at some locations. Beginning in FY 2027, “to-go” meals will be eliminated to emphasize the importance of socialization within the Congregate Meal Program.
- **Home Delivered Meal Program:** Meals delivered to a client’s home and offer a wellness check during delivery. An independent agency determines eligibility for clients. Currently there is not a waiting list for home delivered meals, however, due to increasing need and less available funding, wait lists may occur.
- **SNAP outreach and application assistance:** Outreach and support to help older adults apply for and access SNAP benefits.
- **Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons:** Distribution of coupons to help older adults access fresh fruits and vegetables.
- **Emergency shelf-stable meals:** Shelf-stable meals are available for Home Delivered and Congregate participants in emergency situations when regular meals cannot be provided.
- **Ongoing advocacy:** Continued efforts to support the nutrition program and secure sustained funding.

### **Finding - Community, Connection, and Socialization Matter to Congregate Meal Diners:**

In 2025, AgeOptions staff visited 30 congregare meal sites to collect feedback from diners via surveys and informal listening sessions. The feedback revealed that the top reasons people attended sites were the opportunity to talk to others and the presence of friends. When asked how the meal program helped them, respondents most often said it helped them connect with others, even more frequently than they said the food helped them be healthy. However, when asked to say which is more important, participants said that both food and socialization were equally important.

The feedback also showed that congregare meal sites play an important role in connecting older adults to additional support and helping them maintain independence.

Most survey respondents reported that, because of attending the meal program, they now have a better idea of where to go for additional help or services. During listening sessions, several diners described learning about information, community news, benefits, and resources from other participants, creating an informal peer-to-peer network for sharing information.

**Response:** In response to these findings, AgeOptions is taking the following steps:

- **Continuing the congregate meals program** to provide not only nutritious meals but also opportunities for socialization and community connection.
- **Phasing out “to-go” congregate meals by FY2027.** While these meals were an important strategy for reopening sites after COVID-19 closures, the program is returning its focus to in-person meals that foster community and social engagement.
- **Requiring each congregate meal site to host at least one educational session** on nutrition risks and the nutritional needs of older adults.

### **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.

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

- Congregate Meal Program (see above)
- [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 and education activities.

### **Finding – Affordability, Income Inequality and Cuts to Safety Net Programs are Squeezing Older Adults on Already Tight Budgets:**

The number of older adults living under the federal poverty level is rapidly increasing; for example, in 2024, there were more than 57,000 older adults living below the poverty level, an increase of more than 20,000 since 2014 (see our demographic profile on page 8). In conversations with key stakeholders and partners, the Aging Network is witnessing how the incomes of older adults are strained with higher prices for housing, groceries and other daily needs while at the same time there are new cuts or restrictions

to benefit programs like SNAP and Medicaid. Cuts to safety net programs, like Medicaid and SNAP, create higher demand for other community supports and services. For example, several of our partners have reported increased requests for home-delivered meals from residents citing the need for affordable food. A recent USAging Policy Priorities report warns that cuts to Medicaid may limit the ability of states to support cost-effective home and community-based services that have consistently proven to keep people in their communities and out of expensive nursing homes.

**Response:** In response, AgeOptions:

- Applied for and received a \$1.2 million grant from The Chicago Community Trust to provide 100,000 meals, including Meal Kits, to older adults, reach older adults with education on SNAP eligibility, and further strengthen our collaboration with local food banks and food pantries for more quality referrals.
- Launched an awareness campaign on our website and social media to educate about the SNAP cuts and presenting alternative resources, including our local congregate meal sites.
- Created a SNAP toolkit for our providers to use in assisting clients impacted by program cuts, including sample letters to send to impacted clients.
- Collaborated with our longtime partner Greater Chicago Food Depository to boost outreach around SNAP and help people locate community food pantries.
- Created digital literacy flyers with instructions on how to access benefits portals to empower older adults to take charge of their benefits status.
- Through Avisery, we provide education and expert consultation to professionals who counsel older adults and people with disabilities on health care insurance options, including Medicare and Medicaid. Avisery has issued several calls to action via its statewide email list for advocacy to protect Medicaid and SNAP, including an invitation for Medicaid and SNAP beneficiaries to join Protect Our Care Illinois Medicaid Storytelling Collection Workshop and share what these benefits have meant to real Illinoisians in their own words.
- With our [Benefits Enrollment Center](#), we provide 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.
- Continued to fund and coordinate some of our core Aging Network programs that address nutrition, benefit access, and more, including Congregate and Home Delivered Meals; ADRN and CLAS agencies who assist with benefit applications, including Seniors Ride Free, Medicare Savings Programs, Medicaid, Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Medicare Part D Extra Help/Low Income Subsidy (LIS), Medicare Savings Programs, Medicaid, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Participated in advocacy coalitions, including the Greater Chicago Food Depository-led Save Our SNAP Coalition, for which our CEO also serves on

the Steering Committee, and Protect Our Care-Illinois, a statewide coalition of health care advocates, providers, and consumers joining together to protect and defend Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act.

- Advocated for income related programs such as increasing the Supplemental Security Income benefit and protecting Medicaid and SNAP benefits.
- As a part of increased advocacy efforts, AgeOptions was invited to join a panel for a Subject Matter Hearing about the impact of the changes and cuts to SNAP in front of the Illinois House Appropriations - Health and Human Services Committee. We joined and provided testimony on how the SNAP cuts and changes would most impact older adults and caregivers. We also submitted written testimony.

### **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.

**Response:** In response, AgeOptions provides:

- [Illinois Pathways to Health](#) 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 screen individuals for social drivers of health needs and resolve identified gaps.

In addition to these programs we offer, AgeOptions wrote a successful grant application to the National Council on Aging to revitalize the [Illinois Falls Prevention Coalition](#). The Illinois Falls Prevention Coalition brings together community organizations, public health departments, healthcare providers, fire fighters, advocates and more to help older adults stay safe, active, and independent. AgeOptions staff serve on the leadership team and provided technical and logistical support for the creation of the coalition. The coalition now has 178 members representing professionals and community members across the state.

### **Finding – Caregiver for Older Adults:**

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

**Response:** In response, AgeOptions provides an interactive eLearning platform, [Trualta](#) which also includes online support groups and we also provide in-person support groups, Evidence Based Training and Education, counseling, and Memory Cafes.

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 Section 3 on the Statewide Initiatives.

**Finding – Older Adults Raising Non-Biological Children:**

Our needs assessments also identified a group of adults age 60 and older who are providing care for a relative age 18 or younger, often referred to as grandparents raising grandchildren or kinship caregivers. Although this group represents only about 1% of the older adult population, it is disproportionately made up of people of color. Older adults in these caregiving roles face a unique set of challenges, including navigating legal, financial, and educational systems while managing their own aging-related needs.

**Response:** In response, AgeOptions is piloting the Parenting a Second Time Around (PASTA) training, a multi-week, evidence-informed course developed by Cornell University and adapted by AgeOptions. The program is designed to increase grandparents' and kinship caregivers' knowledge of available resources and supports, while also strengthening their confidence and skills in caring for the children in their family.

## Section 3 - Statewide and Local Area Plan Initiatives

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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: Increased Visibility of the Aging Network**

**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.**

**Illinois Department on Aging’s description of this Initiative:** “In FY25-FY27, AgeOptions will adopt the Statewide Initiative as its Local Initiative to support increasing statewide visibility of the Aging Network. 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 to increase visibility of the Aging Network includes:

1. **AgeOptions engaged a marketing firm to develop a Public Awareness Toolkit** that includes customizable graphics, social media posts, brochures, posters, and messaging. Internally, AgeOptions has used these materials to create social media content, posters, and outreach messages. Through this work, we learned that many Aging Network partners do not have dedicated marketing staff, which can make it challenging to adapt customizable materials. To increase usage, we have found it more effective to identify a single message and set of graphics and promote them during a coordinated timeframe. For example, in FY 2025 we implemented this approach during our Day of Advocacy for the Older Americans Act in May 2025. In FY 2026, we plan to build on this strategy by highlighting Older Americans Month in May 2026, developing a simple set of ready-to-use social media graphics and messaging that partners can easily share to emphasize their role in the Aging Network.

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 AgeOptions [Provider Referrals - Search](#) , 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. The AgeOptions Advisory Council formed a new Member Engagement and Activation Taskforce. This goal of this task force is to inform community members about AgeOptions and better coordinate community feedback about aging service needs. (This task force replaces our efforts to start an Aging Network Street Outreach team with the Advisory Council).
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 on 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 will continue to participate in coalitions and networks as part of our outreach and to amplify our voice.
18. 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 Allies in Aging 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.

In FY26, AgeOptions is launching a Friendly Aging Network (FAN), a network of organizations and services that are committed to being inclusive and affirming for

LGBT+ older adults. The goal is for LGBT+ elders to feel comfortable participating or accessing services even if they choose not to self-identify as LGBT+.

In the original Area Plan, AgeOptions proposed establishing a baseline number of LGBTQ+ older adults participating in programs or services. However, given the current climate of discrimination toward LGBT+ individuals, we recognize that some older adults may not feel safe disclosing their identity. As a result, we are shifting our approach to focus on creating welcoming and affirming environments for all participants, regardless of whether they self-identify as LGBT+.

## **Initiative 2: Quality Assurance**

**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.**

**Illinois Department on Aging's description of this Initiative:** "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 and is planning the FY 26 training, 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 include:
  - o Leadership and Social Service Directors
  - o Adult Protective Services (APS) Supervisory staff
  - o Aging and Disability Resource Network (ADRN) staff and CLAS staff
  - o Caregiver Resource Centers (CRC)
  - o Nutrition Grantees
  - o Home Preservation Grantees
  - o Library Stipend Grantees
  - o SMP Grantees
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 establish specific training requirements for Adult Protective Services (APS), Aging and Disability Resource Network (ADRN), and Caregiver

Resource Center (CRC) staff to support consistent, high-quality service delivery. In partnership with Rush University, AgeOptions developed the Caregiver Resource Center Learning Management System (CRC LMS). AgeOptions continues to maintain and support the CRC LMS, which is available to Caregiver Resource Centers throughout Illinois.

**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: Public Awareness Campaign for Informal Caregivers**

**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.**

**Illinois Department on Aging's description of this Initiative:** "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.”

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 included 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 Communication Toolkit** featuring a resource guide for outreach, shared widely across our partner network of aging service providers and other Area Agencies on Aging. The toolkit includes social media engagement assets, creative elements, and imagery, expanding our library of inclusive images representing BIPOC older adults and caregivers for ongoing use.
- **Radio and print advertisements** to reach a broad and diverse audience.
- **Posters, postcards, brochures, social media posts, press releases, and ads** for wide distribution among multiple channels
- **Earned media** to further amplify messaging and increase visibility
- **A community event** honoring older adults and caregivers, while connecting them to local resources and supports
- **Street team outreach**, engaging older adults directly in locations where they work, socialize, and worship.

In FY 27, AgeOptions will continue to work with our Caregiver Resource Network to utilize these materials and activities, ensuring sustained engagement and expanded access to caregiver resources across suburban Cook County.

**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 which is available in English and Spanish

**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** for caregivers of individuals with dementia.

- **Stress-Busting Programs** 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:**  
Beginning in FY 2025, Caregiver Resource Centers were granted the flexibility to use respite vendors and facilities not listed on AgeOptions "Respite Registry." Starting in FY2026, Caregiver Resource Centers may select either a respite vendor from the AgeOptions "Respite Registry" or a vendor identified and vetted by the CRC. 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

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### 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 and Senior Health Assistance Program:** Provides answers to questions and connects older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers to programs and services.
- **Counseling:** Personal counseling 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 Preservation/Housing Assistance:** 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).
- **Home Repair:** Minor modifications to allow older adults to remain safely in the community.
- **Legal Assistance:** Assistance in settling non-criminal legal matters, protection of legal rights, advocacy, and education.
- **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 (SOS):** 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:** Arranging or providing transportation to assist people unable to use conventional means of transportation to reach services, reduce isolation, or encourage independent living.
- **Library CARES Program:** AgeOptions partners with public libraries across suburban Cook County to connect adults 60 or older and caregivers with aging services, technology access, and opportunities to stay engaged in their communities. Libraries participating in the program receive training that helps staff recognize the needs of older patrons and refer them to AgeOptions or our Aging Network. Because public libraries serve as trusted access points for local communities, Library CARES can strengthen social connections, expand digital access, and bring aging-related support to familiar, welcoming spaces where older adults already spend their time. Learn more at [AgeOptions Library Program on our website](#).

## **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 ensure 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. Some meal sites 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.
- **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 Special Diets medical, such as diabetic, gluten-free, and renal meals, throughout our service area. In some areas, we also 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 shelf life as close to one year as possible and will be distributed to participants once a year. Grantees will communicate to participants as to when they should consume an emergency meal.

- **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. 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 fresh produce and fruit. Last year, older adults received a coupon book worth \$25.

## **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, Aquatic Exercise Association (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.

- 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.
- 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 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 plans in FY2027 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.

**Memory Cafés** are welcoming social gatherings for people living with dementia or other cognitive changes, along with their care partners. These programs offer opportunities to connect with others, enjoy engaging activities, and participate in education or entertainment in a supportive environment. Memory Cafés also serve as an entry point for caregivers to learn about additional resources available through AgeOptions and our Caregiver Resource Centers. Some Memory Cafés are offered in multiple languages through partnerships with our CLAS partners, helping ensure that participants can engage in a way that feels comfortable and familiar. Learn more at [Memory Cafés - AgeOptions](#)

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

The Illinois Adult Protective Services (APS) Act specifies that APS includes the investigation of reported cases of abuse, neglect, self-neglect and exploitation for both adults 60 or older and individuals with disabilities ages 18-59.

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

- Receive and respond to reports of adult protective services of 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. APS agencies provide 24/7 coverage. Each designated APS agency creates 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.

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.

**Fatality Review Team:** The Suburban Cook Adult Fatality Review Team examines deaths associated with suspected abuse and neglect of adults with disabilities (ages 18-59) and older adults (ages 60+) residing in Suburban Cook County. The APS Act calls for meetings to be held no less than 2 times per year (320 ILCS20/15). Meetings are coordinated by AgeOptions. The 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. For more information, [Suburban Cook County Fatality Review Team - 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 – Proposed Program Planning Allocations**

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### **National and State Issues Impacting FY 2027 Initial Funding** **(For services starting October 1, 2026)**

There are several components impacting FY 2027 funding:

- **Federal:** Older Americans Act (OAA) is discretionary, meaning it must be approved every year through appropriations. Over the past 4 to 5 years AgeOptions carefully managed American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding to plan for gradual use and planned depletion of the funds. The ARPA funding was a welcome boost to OAA programs, which is now completely depleted. This has brought the traditional annual flat appropriation levels into sharp focus. On February 3, 2026, Congress appropriated the Older Americans Act funding through September 30, 2026. FY 2027 levels are projected based on FY 2026 levels. The Congressional budgeting process for FY2027 is now in its very earliest stages and we expect Continuing Resolutions or partial year funding into the first quarter of FY 2027, We are already working with our national partners to advocate for increased funding but there is still uncertainty about the final levels for FY27. The November mid-cycle elections could provide more insight into the funding picture.
- **State:** On February 18, 2026, Governor Pritzker unveiled his proposed budget for FY 2027. This proposal includes level funding area agencies on aging services such as home delivered meals and caregiver. AgeOptions and others are advocating for an increase in state home delivered meals and caregiver support funding, if we are successful, suburban Cook County would receive approximately an additional \$2 million for the home delivered meals program. The budget proposal included a \$166.8 million increase for the Illinois Department on Aging Community Care Program and a \$3.3 million increase for Adult Protective Services.

AgeOptions also made the following assumptions in estimating funding by Title for FY 2027, including:

- NSIP funding will remain at FY 2026 funding levels
- Title Transfer: 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.

AgeOptions Funding (Federal & State)	Projected FY 27 units	Projected Clients for FY 27	Estimated AgeOptions Funding
<b>Social Services</b>			
ADRN/Information & Assistance	177,891	64,226	\$1,519,117
ADRN/Options Counseling - one-on-one	0	0	0
Chore Housekeeping	16,000	500	\$450,000
Counseling	824	97	\$17,800
Education	1,327	656	\$124,894
Friendly Visiting	1,011	37	\$15,000
Housing Assistance	4,058	1,128	\$442,966
Legal Assistance	2,786	541	\$401,000
Home Repair	275	149	\$127,211
Recreation	77,119	14,127	\$316,610
Respite	2,576	45	\$65,775
Senior Center		3,719	\$39,892
Senior Opportunity & Services	9,870	2,092	\$85,426
Culturally and Linguistically Accessible Services - CLAS	22,355	5,270	\$510,675
Senior Health Assistance Program			\$395,147
Transportation	31,713	915	\$142,670
<b>Long Term Care Ombudsman Service</b>			
Long Term Care Ombudsman	Data is reported directly to Illinois Department on Aging		\$1,427,323
<b>Nutrition Services – currently in a procurement process</b>			
Congregate Meals	332,495	12,443	\$4,258,554
Home Delivered Meals	1,381,009	11,066	\$10,115,955
Meal kits delivered to homes	765,444	1000	\$3,665,903
<b>Caregiver Support Services</b>			
CRC ADRD Gap Filling	197	122	\$64,379
CRC ADRD Training	745	113	\$126,451
CRC Case Management including TCARE	14,336	1,432	\$509,884
CRC Counseling	5,603	1,011	\$392,000
CRC Gap Filling	300	249	\$99,116
CRC Group Training and Education	992	468	\$169,654
CRC Information and Assistance	6,884	2,074	\$171,427
CRC One-on-One Outreach	3,295	1,146	\$150,812
CRC Respite	38,844	4,55	\$531,493
CRC Support Groups/Memory Cafes	4,341	868	\$179,863
GRG Counseling	1,017	113	\$39,327
GRG Gap Filling	166	84	\$37,466

GRG Group Training	151	47	\$17,405
GRG Information and Assistance	1,384	121	\$16,346
GRG Support Groups	1,177	130	\$46,975
Legal Assistance Relatives Raising Children	116	20	\$40,365
<b>Health Promotion and Disease Prevention</b>			
Evidence Based Health Promotion	12,396	1,376	\$109,869
<b>Title VII I-Team</b>			
APS Interdisciplinary teams			\$34,867

## **AgeOptions proposed changes to service design from FY26:**

Due to anticipated reductions in funding, AgeOptions will implement the following changes to service design and funded programs effective October 1, 2027. These plans are subject to change based on final Federal and State funding levels.

### **Nutrition**

- Elimination of “to-go” meals at Congregate Nutrition sites.
- Modification of meal kits: Funding for meal kits will be reduced by 25% due to limited resources. To continue serving as many older adults as possible, the number of meals provided will decrease from the equivalent of 21 meals per week to 14 meals per week. Meal kits will be delivered on a biweekly schedule rather than weekly.

### **Supportive Services**

- Funding for Supportive Services will be distributed through a two-step process:
  1. Available funding will first be allocated by township using a population-based formula derived from 2019–2023 American Community Survey data.
  2. Each grantee’s share of FY 2026 funding within a township will then be calculated as a percentage and applied to the FY 2027 township allocation to determine final funding levels.
- AgeOptions will no longer fund Options Counseling due to low utilization. Older adults may access comprehensive assessment services through the Community Care Program.
- Funding for chore housekeeping services will be reduced by 50%. AgeOptions was previously the only Area Agency on Aging in Illinois providing this service. The Older Americans Act requires a minimum of 0.04% to be allocated to in-home services; even with this reduction, PSA 13 will continue to exceed that requirement.
- Older adults are increasingly impacted by inflation, rising housing costs, and changes to programs such as SNAP and Medicaid. In response, AgeOptions is strategically aligning resources to strengthen programs that help older adults apply for and access benefits, prevent social isolation, and reduce food insecurity, while continuing to support essential in-home services. Low-income

older adults with limited assets may also access in-home supports through the Community Care Program.

- For agencies that previously received Options Counseling funding and utilized vendors for chore services, AgeOptions will work with grantees to realign funding allocations within each township accordingly.

### **Program Eliminations**

- AgeOptions will not provide additional funding in FY 2027 for Uniper and Legal Risk Detector programs.
- However, we will extend the Uniper contract period to allow frequent users to continue until the FY 26 funding for Uniper is used.

## **Section 6 – AgeOptions Administrative Funds**

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### **Administrative Direct Service Activities**

The Older Americans Act limits agency administrative costs to 10% of the Title III allocation and permits Area Agencies on Aging to provide “administratively related direct services,” including Advocacy, Coordination, and Program Development. For FY 2027, the Illinois Department on Aging has capped AgeOptions use of these services at \$3,317,510.

Given ongoing funding uncertainty, AgeOptions will budget \$1,228,568 for administratively related direct services. This is 37.4% of the IDoA cap.

For FY 2027, Title III-B administratively related direct service funding was allocated as follows: Advocacy (\$315,330), Coordination (\$235,836), and Program Development (\$677,402).

Beginning in FY 2027, the Illinois Department on Aging will allow Area Agencies on Aging to allocate up to 5% of Home Delivered Meals and Caregiver General Revenue Funds (GRF) for program administration. To avoid reducing allocations to subgrantees, AgeOptions will offset this change by reducing its administratively related direct services by an equivalent amount.

### **Advocacy**

AgeOptions leads and participates in a wide range of advocacy efforts to advance the needs of older adults and caregivers. The organization convenes monthly Advocacy Task Force meetings to coordinate strategy and priorities and engages in collaborative advocacy with partners such as AARP and the Alzheimer’s Association.

CEO Diane Slezak serves as President of i4a and sits on the Board of USAging, where she actively participates in national advocacy efforts, including policy briefings, legislative visits, and engagement with federal policymakers. AgeOptions also provides advocacy alerts, maintains strong communication through its website and social media channels, and supports both individual and systems-level advocacy efforts in partnership with local, state, and national stakeholders.

### **Coordination**

AgeOptions plays a central role in coordinating services and strengthening the aging network across the region. The agency convenes quarterly meetings with key partners, including funded agencies, Adult Protective Services, Caregiver Resource Centers, ADRN partners, nutrition providers, and home preservation providers.

Additional coordination efforts include partnerships with Illinois Pathways to Health, Community Care Hub initiatives, and 211 services to streamline access to resources. AgeOptions maintains strong relationships with housing and homelessness

organizations, including the Cook County Sheriff's Office and Suburban Alliance for Homelessness.

The agency also leads the Illinois Family Caregiver Coalition (IFCC), providing fiscal oversight and strategic direction to a network of more than 400 organizations statewide. Ongoing training, technical assistance, outreach, and resource tools—including the iCarol database and online Provider Search—support system-wide service delivery and accessibility.

## **Program Development**

AgeOptions continuously works to strengthen and expand services through program development and innovation. This includes assessing community needs, monitoring program quality, and piloting new evaluation tools to measure impact across Title III programs.

The agency invests in new and expanded initiatives such as Memory Cafés, library partnerships, home preservation services, and caregiver support programs. It actively pursues external funding to enhance programming, including initiatives like Illinois Pathways to Health, SMP, and Benefits Enrollment Centers.

Recent efforts include expanding respite options, relaunching the Savvy Caregiver Program, implementing the Trualta eLearning platform, and advancing Dementia Friendly Communities. AgeOptions also develops new outreach strategies, strengthens partnerships across sectors, and leads innovative efforts such as the “Allies in Aging” program and Friendly Aging Network.

## **Administration**

Administrative responsibilities include planning, system development, procurement, contract management, and quality assurance. AgeOptions ensures services are responsive to local needs, supports a coordinated service delivery system, and maintains oversight through monitoring and audit review processes.

## **Direct Services**

### **Information and Assistance**

AgeOptions provides Title III-B and III-E Information and Assistance services as a centralized access point for older adults and caregivers in suburban Cook County. Navigating a complex system spanning 30 townships, 130 municipalities, and hundreds of providers can be challenging, and this service ensures individuals receive accurate, timely support.

Funding supports direct client assistance via phone, in-person, and email; development and distribution of educational materials; and technical support to partners. AgeOptions

maintains a certified Information and Assistance Specialist (CIRS-A/D) and utilizes the iCarol resource database, which also powers a public-facing online directory.

Given funding uncertainty, AgeOptions will maintain its Information and Assistance direct service waiver at FY25 levels: \$258,021 for Title III-B and \$31,471 for Title III-E. The agency projects serving approximately 3,500 clients and delivering 4,000 units of service.

AgeOptions is also strengthening coordination with Metro Chicago 211 by providing training on aging services to improve referrals and ensure older adults are connected to appropriate resources.

## **Health Promotion and Disease Prevention**

AgeOptions is requesting a direct service waiver to continue delivering Title III-D evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention programs through the Illinois Pathways to Health initiative. Programs include the “Take Charge” series (CDSMP, DSMP, CPSMP), falls prevention programs (Fit & Strong!, A Matter of Balance, Tai Chi for Arthritis, Bingocize), and culturally responsive offerings in multiple languages. With more than 20 years of leadership in evidence-based programming, AgeOptions has built a strong network of trained facilitators and partners. The agency ensures program fidelity, provides training and technical assistance, and expands outreach to underserved communities.

Funding supports program coordination, licensing, training, outreach, and direct workshop delivery. Despite anticipated reductions in Title III-D funding, AgeOptions will proportionally reduce both direct and distributed funding while maintaining program quality.

For FY27, AgeOptions is requesting \$69,454 for Title III-D direct services, a decrease of \$1,046 from FY 26. The agency projects delivering 1,200 units of service to approximately 125 participants.

# Section 7 - How AgeOptions Will Administer Changes in Funding

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## 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, at its discretion, the amount of funding to be allocated either by geographic area, by service type, and/or priority populations. AgeOptions may use one or a combination of the following options when awarding such funds:
    - Reduce or prevent waiting lists.
    - Award funds to applicants whose applications were approved through our FY2027-2030 RFP process but not funded due to insufficient available funds.
    - Permit Grantees to submit formal requests, with supporting rationale, to expand existing services within funding levels determined by AgeOptions. Decisions regarding any increase will be based on the submitted rationale, overall performance, and the level of community support demonstrated by the Grantee.
    - Support the development and implementation of program innovations.
    - Provide demonstration funding for a new initiative.
  - b. **Decreased Funding:** If funding to the suburban Cook County region is reduced and AgeOptions determines that reductions to grantee award levels are necessary, AgeOptions reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to take one or more of the following actions:
    - Reduce or eliminate funding to programs that do not meet approved budgeted unit productivity levels. Where AgeOptions identifies unmet need within a service area, it may, at its discretion, allocate funding to another grantee to address that need.
    - Reduce meals, as applicable, in the following order: HDM Second meals, HDM Weekend meals, Meal Kits, Congregate in person, HDM Monday–Friday (both General and Cultural), and HDM Special Diets–Medical.
    - Review each grant based on service levels and other performance factors to ensure the provision of cost-effective services that best meets the needs of older adults.
    - AgeOptions may establish maximum AgeOptions Unit Rates. Such rates will be determined at AgeOptions discretion and may be adjusted based on funding availability, program performance, and participant needs.

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 proportional increases for grantees.
    - Allow grantee to submit formal requests and rationale to expand current services and/or 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.
    - Award funds to applicants whose applications were approved through this process but not funded due to insufficient funds.
    - Provide demonstration funding for a new initiative.
  - b. Decreased Funding: If funding to the suburban Cook County region is reduced, and it is necessary to reduce Grantee award levels, AgeOptions will determine a cut back 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 and 5% of Home Delivered Meals and Caregiver General Revenue Funds. Therefore, if federal funding changes, AgOptions administration would have a proportional decrease in funding.
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 27 funding plan exceeds the requirements for these services and therefore does not request a waiver from this requirement.

## Section 8 - Description of Funding

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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:**

Voluntary client contributions that are made toward the cost of the service received. Note: Clients are not refused service if they are unable or unwilling 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:

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

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: the Nutrition FY27-30 RFP was announced on March 2, 2026, for a four-year-cycle, and 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:

<b>RFP issued</b>	<b>For Fiscal Years:</b>	<b>Programs</b>
Spring 2026 (Deadline to register is April 1 <sup>st</sup> ; Final applications due April 10, 2026)	2027-2030	Title III-C Nutrition RFP
Spring 2028	2029-2032	Title III B, D, E RFP
Spring 2030	2031-2034	Title III-C Nutrition RFP
Spring 2032	2033-2036	Title III B, D, E RFP

## Section 9 - AgeOptions Other Programs

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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.

### **Avisery by AgeOptions:**

Avisery by AgeOptions educates and builds the capacity of professionals to help older adults and people with disabilities understand their health coverage options and make informed decisions about their care. Because insurance plans and rules change often, many people rely on knowledgeable counselors to navigate Medicare, Medicaid, prescription drug coverage, provider networks, and available financial assistance programs. Avisery strengthens this support by providing training, education, and expert guidance to professionals across Illinois, ensuring they have current, reliable information to guide the people they serve.

Through its work with professionals and their clients, Avisery also identifies barriers that make it difficult for consumers to access affordable care. The program uses these insights to collaborate with health plans, public agencies, and advocacy partners to address individual issues and promote broader system improvements.

Learn more at [AgeOptions website on Avisery](#).

*Avisery is supported by private foundation funding, including grants from RRF Foundation for Aging and the Kott Memorial Charitable Trust, and revenue from training fees and corporate sponsorships.*

### **Benefits Enrollment Center:**

AgeOptions Benefits Enrollment Center (BEC) provides benefits screening and application assistance to older adults and people with disabilities. Using a person-centered approach, BEC helps clients access programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicare Savings Program, Low Income Subsidy (LIS/Extra Help), and the Benefits Access Application (RTA Ride Free Card and License Plate Discount). BEC also conducts outreach through resource fairs, educational presentations, and enrollment events.

Learn more at: [AgeOptions website on BEC](#)

*BEC is supported by a grant from the National Council on Aging (NCOA).*

### **Caring Together, Living Better (CTLB):**

Caring Together, Living Better (CTLB) is a community-driven program that supports low-income African American and Hispanic/Latinx caregivers and older adults through trusted partnerships with faith-based and community organizations. CTLB volunteers at these local faith-based and community organizations lead the coordination to provide culturally responsive activities, social support, and educational workshops tailored to the needs of their local communities. These partners act as a welcoming point of connection, helping caregivers and older adults access information, resources, and referrals to the broader aging services network.

Founded by AgeOptions, CTLB continues to strengthen community connections and promote well-being by offering supportive spaces where caregivers and older adults can learn, share, and engage with others.

Learn more at: [AgeOptions website on CTLB](#)

*CTLB is supported by private foundations and other funding.*

### **Dementia Friendly Communities:**

AgeOptions is working with local municipalities in Suburban Cook County to be designated as Dementia Friendly Communities, which according to [Dementia Friendly America](#), is “a village, town, city or county that is informed, safe and respectful of individuals living with dementia, their families and care partners and provides supportive options that foster quality of life.” We support cities, towns and villages in our area who are interested in becoming a dementia friendly community with resources, education and technical assistance.

Learn more about the statewide initiative at the [Dementia Friendly Illinois webpage on the Illinois Cognitive Resources Network \(ICRN\) website](#).

*AgeOptions Dementia Friendly Communities initiative is supported by a grant from IDoA.*

### **H.O.P.E. (Home Options Path to Empowerment):**

H.O.P.E. assists residents of 25 nursing facilities in Cook County, 18 and older and on Medicaid, to transition back into the community and live as independently as able. Our mission is to “meet the individual needs of our [clients] as they transition from nursing facilities through the community with person-centered advocacy and support. We promote well-being, quality of life and strive to bring HOPE by respecting each member's unique circumstances and goals.”

H.O.P.E. clients work with our skilled professionals; including social workers, occupational therapists, nurses, licensed clinical professional counselors, community health workers, and others to develop the skills needed to transition back to the community. H.O.P.E ensures that services and supports are in place to meet the

needs of the clients upon transition. Our community team continues to provide case management and support to our clients for 18 months post-transition to ensure that they are stable and able to live safely and successfully.

Learn more at: [AgeOptions website on HOPE](#)

*H.O.P.E. is funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services under the Colbert Consent Decree. The Colbert Consent Decree advocates for the rights of nursing home residents to live in the least restrictive environments under the 1999 federal Supreme Court Olmstead Decision.*

### **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.

Learn more at: [Illinois Family Caregiver Coalition website](#)

### **Illinois Pathways to Health:**

Developed by AgeOptions, Illinois Pathways to Health is a statewide community care hub designed to address social care needs and connect individuals. We serve aging adults who want to stay active, independent, and engaged in their communities by offering accessible, evidence-based programs that support healthy aging, chronic disease self-management, and fall prevention. Our offerings are categorized as Take Charge of Your Health, falls prevention or caregiver support.

*Take Charge of Your Health Programs* are our interactive workshop series designed for individuals with ongoing health conditions. In addition to our general Take Charge of Your Health workshop to address chronic disease self-management, we also offer workshops specific to diabetes, pain management and cancer. These evidence-based programs provide information and tools to help individuals manage their health and lead active lifestyles. The multi-week workshops are led by two facilitators, often volunteers, who have either personal or professional experience with ongoing health conditions. (Tomando Control de su Salud and Tomando Control de su Diabetes are our programs addressing chronic disease management tailored for Spanish speakers.)

*Falls Prevention Programs* are our workshops to empower older adults to improve their balance, strength, and confidence to reduce the risk of falling. These programs include A Matter of Balance, Bingocize, Fit & Strong!, and Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention.

*Caregiver Support Programs* are designed to equip caregivers with practical skills and support while caring for others and include Savvy Caregiver, Stress Busting and Powerful Tools for Caregiving.

Learn more and find local workshops across Illinois at [Illinois Pathways to Health](#)

*Illinois Pathways to Health is supported by a mix of federal funding, sponsorships and business contracts with health plans and providers.*

### **Illinois SMP (Senior Medicare Patrol):**

The Illinois Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) is a statewide program that helps Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries protect themselves from health care fraud, errors, and abuse. SMP staff and trained volunteers share information through community presentations, outreach events, and one-on-one guidance to help older adults and caregivers recognize common scams and understand how to review their Medicare statements for accuracy.

SMP empowers people to take action—whether by learning how to avoid fraud, identifying suspicious charges, or knowing where to report potential issues. These services promote financial security, confidence, and peace of mind as people navigate their health coverage.

Learn more at: [Illinois Senior Medicare Patrol - AgeOptions](#)

*The Illinois SMP Program is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$2,674,785.00 with 100 percent funding by ACL/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS or the U.S. Government.*

### **Kott Gerontology Scholars Program (KGSP)**

The Kott Gerontology Scholars Program (KGSP) provides internship scholarships to advanced graduate students at Chicagoland-area universities who are interested in careers in the aging field. The program equips students with practical experience, access to professional networks, and a strong commitment to working with and on behalf of older adults. The KGSP addresses the recognized scarcity of gerontological expertise and the resulting workforce gap by building a strong bench of aging professionals to support the growing number of older adults living in Chicago and surrounding areas. The program supports students from a variety of disciplines, helping them develop the skills needed for meaningful careers that promote autonomy and enhance quality of life among older adults.

Learn more at [Kott Scholars website](#)

*Kott Gerontology Scholars Program (KGSP) is funded by the Russell and Josephine Kott Charitable Memorial Trust.*

**Thrive with Pride:**

Thrive with Pride by AgeOptions offers social and informational programming that help LGBT+ older adults and the people who care for them connect with aging services, learn about available services, and strengthen their overall wellbeing while growing their social connections. These welcoming activities and events foster community, reduce isolation, and help individuals feel more comfortable reaching out for support from AgeOptions or our network of partners.

Learn more at [Thrive with Pride website](#)

*Thrive with Pride is supported by corporate sponsorship for special events.*

**Allies in Aging (AIA):**

Allies in Aging (AIA) by AgeOptions provides training that helps aging services professionals in our network offer affirming, culturally responsive support to LGBT+ older adults and caregivers. The program strengthens providers' understanding of inclusive language, key issues faced by LGBT+ older adults, and best practices for creating welcoming environments. Through flexible training options offered online or in person, AIA builds confidence and capacity across the Aging Network to ensure equitable, respectful care for all.

**Uniper Care:**

Uniper is a virtual senior center that helps older adults stay socially connected and engaged from home. Using simple technology, including a UniTV device that turns any television into an interactive portal, participants can join live classes, wellness activities, discussion groups, and social programs designed to reduce social isolation and support healthy aging. The platform allows users to build community, participate in activities that interest them, and connect with others in a welcoming environment.

Learn more at: [Uniper on AgeOptions Website](#)

**More Information About AgeOptions Programs:**

If you would like more information about our programs, visit [www.AgeOptions.org](http://www.AgeOptions.org), call us at (708)383-0258, or email us at [information@ageoptions.org](mailto:information@ageoptions.org). If you would like to learn about volunteer opportunities with AgeOptions or our partners, visit the AgeOptions Careers and Volunteers webpage at: <https://www.ageoptions.org/about-ageoptions/careers/>

# AgeOptions Board of Directors and Advisory Council

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## Contact an Agency in Your Area

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



**For more information, please contact:**

1048 Lake Street, Suite 300  
Oak Park, IL 60301-1102

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

(708)383-0258  
(800)699-9043