

# State Plan on Aging 2019 - 2022



## Population Health

**GOAL: Educate and empower older Ohioans, adults with disabilities and their caregivers to live active, healthy lives to maintain independence and continue to contribute to society.**

Our bodies change throughout our lives. This is a simple fact that has important impacts on our health and wellness as we age. With an increased risk for chronic conditions come many new concerns, such as managing the symptoms of those conditions to maximize our independence and considering how various conditions, symptoms and treatments increase our risk in other areas, such as falls, medication misuse, pain management and malnutrition, to name a few.

Many of the concerns for older adults are the very same that Ohio's public health programs focus on every day. This state plan goal focuses on health outcomes and other factors that can positively or negatively impact the health and well-being of older Ohioans and people with disabilities.

- **Chronic Disease Management and Prevention** – More than three out of four older Ohioans adults age 65 years and older have at least one chronic condition such as heart disease or diabetes; 43 percent have two or more. People living with chronic conditions often experience a lower quality of life and higher rate of disability.
- **Nutrition** – Good nutrition supports a healthy and active lifestyle, reduces frailty and disability, improves health outcomes and reduces health care costs. Malnutrition is caused by a range of factors (from physical changes to limited incomes, lack of transportation and more) and can lead to a range of problems, including increased rates of chronic conditions and disability.
- **Falls Prevention** – Falls are the leading cause of injury-related emergency department visits, hospitalizations and deaths among older Ohioans. Falls are not a normal part of aging, yet many processes of aging (e.g., loss of muscle strength and bone density, chronic conditions and medication use) can lead to a higher risk for falls. However, most falls can be prevented through strategies that improve health, create safer environments and manage the fear of falling.
- **Pain Management** – Chronic pain is common among older adults and is one of the most common conditions reported to health care professionals. When not managed properly, pain can lead to reduced mobility, avoidance of activity, falls, depression and anxiety, sleep impairment and isolation. Some treatments for chronic pain can increase risk in other areas, such as falls and medication misuse.
- **Dental, Vision and Hearing** – Changes in vision, hearing and oral health are natural effects of aging. Yet, needs related to these areas are frequently unmet in older adults. Often, changes in these areas are not reversible, so regular, preventive care is crucial. When problems in these areas are not addressed in a timely fashion, they can lead to poorer overall health and wellness and increased disability.

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- **Mental Health** – Prevalent, ageist views hold that older adults become less happy with age and that depression, memory loss and cognitive decline are normal parts of aging. While this is not true, many factors, such as isolation, disability, grief and loneliness, can contribute to poorer mental health and increased rates of suicide among older adults. Older adults are less likely than younger adults to receive treatment for mental and substance use disorders. The early recognition of mental issues, such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse and more, can prevent life-threatening outcomes.
- **Substance Abuse and Addiction** – With an increase in the incidence of chronic health conditions comes increased use of opioids and other medications to treat symptoms. While medication is generally intended to lessen symptoms and improve quality of life, it can cause harm in some situations. Studies have shown that about three in five older adults take their prescription medications improperly. Further, body changes can interfere with how the medicines work or impair the ability of the older adult to follow the physician’s instructions.

This goal represents the state plan’s largest section of objectives and strategies and stresses the importance of nutritious meals, tobacco cessation, physical activity, falls prevention and dental, vision and hearing screenings. This section also includes objectives and strategies that support vulnerable populations, such as people living with dementia, behavioral health impairment and substance abuse or addiction.

### OBJECTIVES:

**CHRONIC DISEASE MANAGEMENT AND PREVENTION:** Offer and promote interventions that help older adults prevent chronic disease, as well as assist older adults who are living with chronic disease to reduce and control symptoms that would otherwise alter the quality of their lives.

**NUTRITION:** Address food insecurity and malnutrition in older adults and maximize use of current nutrition services programs, including home-delivered and congregate meals.

**FALLS PREVENTION:** Strengthen existing falls prevention activities, identify opportunities for new initiatives and continue the educational campaign to reduce the risk of falls for older Ohioans.

**PAIN MANAGEMENT:** Support increased use of alternative interventions that older adults can use to manage their temporary or chronic pain without the use of controlled substances.

**DENTAL, VISION AND HEARING:** Promote the need for increased access to dental, vision and hearing health screenings and services for older adults, especially those with low incomes.

**MENTAL HEALTH:** Increase awareness of the need for mental health resources and services for older Ohioans.

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND ADDICTION:** Support increased access to the resources and services needed by older adults to better prevent and manage substance abuse and addiction.

### Dementia and the State Plan on Aging

Dementia is an area of population health that is addressed throughout the state plan. Hundreds of thousands of older Ohioans struggle with the day-to-day challenges of living with or caring for someone with dementia. While many states have a stand-alone dementia plan, Ohio includes dementia strategies in our comprehensive state plan on aging. Doing so allows us to leverage progress in other areas of the plan, such as caregiver support, access to information, aging in place and even civic engagement for a more integrated approach.