

North Carolina Coalition on Aging Public Comments 2027-2031 State Aging Plan

The North Carolina Coalition on Aging (NCCOA) welcomes this opportunity to provide public comments on the 2027-2031 State Aging Plan. NCCOA is a dynamic group of provider, advocacy, and consumer organizations and agencies plus individual supporters who work collaboratively to give voice to issues that affect older North Carolinians. The mission of NCCOA is to improve the quality of life for older adults through collective advocacy, education, and public policy work.

All of us who work in the aging field in North Carolina are well aware of the growth of our state's older adult population. We can be proud that the state's Multisector Plan on Aging, All Ages, All Stages, NC, has been developed as a blueprint to guide efforts for addressing the needs of our aging population and for helping to ensure that North Carolina is a good place to age well. The Coalition is excited that our staff and Board members have helped to provide leadership for the development of the Multisector Plan and the implementation of the Plan's recommendations that are being worked on now.

This State Aging Plan provides an excellent opportunity to support the work taking place to implement the recommendations of the Multisector Plan by helping to inform how the Division's work and the resources it administers can be used to address the identified needs of older adults, adults with disabilities, and their caregivers. Key areas of need that the Coalition believes the State Aging Plan should focus on include the following:

- Helping stabilize the health care workforce crisis by building on initiatives already ongoing in the state and by expanding incentives to attract and retain healthcare workers. A rate and wage analysis is currently being done pertaining to the direct care workforce. The results of this study should serve as a guide for concrete steps to be taken to enhance the recruitment and retention of workers.
- Supporting programs that help enable older adults in our state, regardless of where they live, to have access to a continuum of home and community-based services and long-term services and supports. Many counties have gaps in services, are not able to provide individuals with the level of services needed, or they have long waiting lists for programs.

- Supporting older adults in their efforts to age in place in their homes and communities by addressing challenges such as lack of resources for home repairs and modifications, the strain or rising property taxes, and an inadequate supply of safe, affordable, accessible housing stock.
- Fostering a culture of healthy living across the lifespan through support for programs that enhance adult's health and well-being including multipurpose senior centers and evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention programs such as NC Senior Games, Inc.
- Advocating for services and benefits that may be under threat due to policy changes or funding reductions. For example, ensuring that family caregivers are not adversely impacted by the new Medicaid work requirements.
- Supporting family caregivers who provide millions of dollars in care to loved ones across communities in our state with little to no support by strengthening programs and services to lessen the caregiver burden such as Project C.A.R.E, expanding family leave policies, and establishing a state tax credit to help offset out-of-pocket costs for expenses incurred in caregiving.
- Seeking statutory improvements to the state's Adult Protective Services Legislation that has not been revised since 1975 which will address gaps in service delivery, update legal frameworks to reflect current best practices, and improve protections for vulnerable adults. Also, additional funding is needed to ensure county departments of social services have the necessary resources to deliver effective adult protective services, including emergency services.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide comments.

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