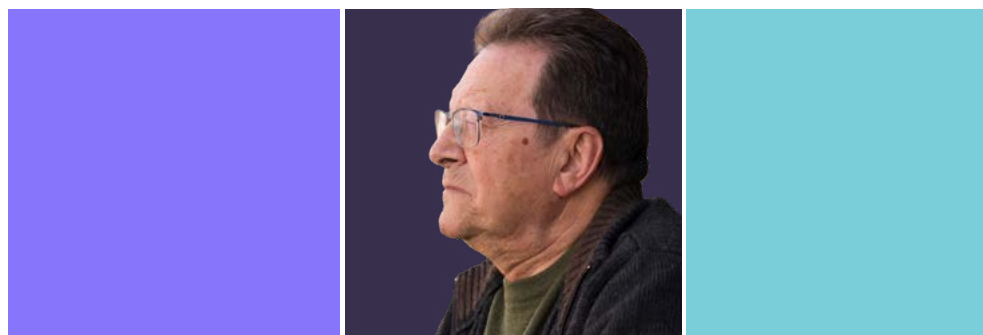




Jewish Federation
OF CLEVELAND
HERE FOR GOOD

REPORT ON THE
**2024 OLDER ADULT
TASK FORCE**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



The Torah commands us twice (both in Exodus and Deuteronomy) to “honor thy father and mother.” The Older Adult Task Force, convened by the Jewish Federation of Cleveland, sought to explore and discover the challenges faced by the older adults in our community and recommend actions to improve or ameliorate those challenges, thereby honoring a most sacred commandment.

The conclusions and recommendations in this report represent over a year of effort by many knowledgeable and committed people; professionals of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland and their affiliated agencies and volunteer leaders who are dedicated to the interests and welfare of the aging community. I am honored to have been given the responsibility of chairing this task force, and I thank all those involved in this interesting, challenging and exciting endeavor.

Aging in the year 2025 has changed dramatically since the Jewish community’s older adult services organizations were founded. The population of those over the age of 65 is increasing and people are living longer, healthier lives. Economic pressures and a mobile population have challenged the concept of family caregiving, and technology threatens the human interaction so necessary to a fulfilling life. “New” neurological diseases corresponding with longer life present challenges not formerly dealt with in such large numbers. These and so many other factors create a complex challenge to be explored.

The recommendations herein are concrete; some more actionable than others. It will be the responsibility of the Federation’s Community Planning Committee, the Board of Trustees, Federation leadership, and their agencies and partners to determine how and when to address these conclusions.

Those of us involved in this first step of making the lives of our honored and respected older adults better will be eagerly anticipating the next steps.

Susan Hurwitz
Chair, Older Adult Task Force

For a full description of the findings and detailed recommendations, refer to the full report online at jewishcleveland.org/publications

BACKGROUND

The U.S. older adult population is set for unprecedented growth, with one in five Americans projected to be 65 or older by 2030. In Cleveland, Jewish older adults represent an even higher proportion compared to the general population according to the 2022 Cleveland Jewish Community Study. As the number of older adults rises, their needs, characteristics, and preferences about how they want to age are also evolving. This growth is occurring within a shifting, complex service landscape shaped by various systemic factors. As we enter this period of historical growth of the older adult population, we must be prepared to respond to their needs and navigate this changing landscape together.

OUR COMMITMENT

The Cleveland Jewish community has continually committed itself to caring for those in need. As the older adult population continues to grow, so too will their need for services. This Task Force is a renewal of our community’s commitment to caring for older adults in 2025 and beyond.

The Jewish Federation of Cleveland established the 2024 Older Adult Task force to assess the changing needs and preferences of older adults in Jewish Cleveland, understand the availability of services, identify gaps and barriers, and recommend how Federation and its partners can make the greatest impact in these areas.

The Task Force developed an inventory of available services for older adults in Jewish Cleveland, consulted with over 30 professionals and organizations from a variety of sectors in the Jewish and general community, and conducted interviews and focus groups with 32 Jewish older adults and their caregivers.

KEY PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Force’s findings were expansive and enlightening, presenting a wealth of information that required deep discussion and prioritization based on where the greatest community needs and the strengths of Federation and its partners align. These key priority areas and recommendations are the result of this thoughtful and thorough prioritization process conducted by the Task Force.



Care Navigation and Planning for Aging



Isolation and Loneliness



Housing and Supportive Services



Transportation

Gaps & Barriers

Three primary indicators of gaps and barriers emerged repeatedly throughout the Task Force process. It is imperative that the implementation plans account for these gaps and barriers and their various manifestations within the lives of older adults and their families.

- **Barriers due to medical needs and level of functioning:** As an individual's health needs become more complex, their need for more hands-on, intensive services increases. Certain conditions so profoundly change a person's life, such as dementia and Parkinson's disease, that special attention must be paid to these subgroups.
- **Financial barriers:** Many older adults and their families are priced out of the goods and services they need. The costs of care, housing, and basic needs are high and out-of-reach for many. Individuals who are financially "stuck in the middle" face the unique barrier of being above the threshold of typical financial eligibility for most assistance programs, but below the level of adequate financial resources to afford what they need.
- **Gaps caused by the absence of natural supports:** The presence or absence of natural supports in a person's life also impacts how their needs are met. For example, the presence of family members and their willingness to help, where the individual lives, if they have neighbors or friends they can rely on, or if they are connected to a synagogue. Whereas one person may rely on their daughter or neighbor for a ride, another cannot. Again, the individual's medical conditions and level of functioning can drastically alter the nature and capacity of these relationships.

For a full description of the findings and detailed recommendations, refer to the full report online at jewishcleveland.org/publications

Care Navigation and Planning for Aging

Our Goals: Individuals and their families feel that they have support and resources that they need to confidently navigate older adulthood. Providers and community leaders thoughtfully plan and collaborate to care for older adults and their families.

Key Findings: Older adults and their families find themselves having to navigate increasingly complex systems as their needs, preferences, and abilities change. Navigating these systems and resources takes tremendous time, effort, and emotional energy. Lack of awareness of existing resources, demands on providers' time, and increased cost of care compounds these challenges. Older adults and their families are often underprepared for the logistical, financial, emotional, and spiritual impacts of transitions that occur during older adulthood. Lack of knowledge, financial limitations, and stigma are frequent barriers to effective scenario planning.



Recommendation Highlights

- Create an integrated and coordinated network that connects older adults and their families with the right programs, services, and resources that meet their specific needs throughout their aging journey, through intentional collaboration and planning between Federation, its beneficiary agencies, and partners. This includes:
 - the creation of a navigable, visible entry point option for older adults and their families to increase awareness and access to services and resources and
 - a planning framework that will enhance Jewish community agencies' respective areas of expertise, increase awareness and understanding of each other's services, and strengthen collaboration between organizations.
- Invest in care navigation, case management and patient advocacy services to enhance service delivery for older adults.
- Facilitate cross-sector connections within and beyond Jewish Cleveland to share resources, increase awareness of services, foster collaboration, and make effective referrals.

Isolation and Loneliness

Our Goals: Older adults can engage in a variety of activities that support their social well-being while also accessing essential services and resources. Older adults can create and maintain connections to communities regardless of where they live. Individuals and families living with Dementia and other neurological conditions have expanded opportunities for socialization and respite.

"I feel forgotten...like whatever I gave to the community no longer matters."
– Resident at Deer Creek Lodge Assisted Living Community

Key Findings: Many trends within the older adult population and environmental factors carry risks of isolation and loneliness. These include preference to age at home; greater longevity, increased health needs, and limited mobility; limited transportation access; ageism, and stigma surrounding aging. Isolation, loneliness, and stress also impact family caregivers due to time constraints and changing relationship dynamics.

Recommendation Highlights

- Leverage collaboration between agencies to create new opportunities and enhance current offerings in a variety of areas. Integrate support for basic needs within programming by collaborating with partners to include access to food, health screenings, financial guidance, and other resources.
- Empower older adults through self-directed initiatives by facilitating forums for older adults to co-create opportunities that interest them, fostering ownership and engagement.
- Identify opportunities to bring Jewish programming and services to Jewish residents at senior living facilities.
- Partner with organizations to expand socialization opportunities for older adults with dementia and other neuro-cognitive issues and respite services for their caregivers.



Housing and Supportive Services

Our Goals: Increase the number and variety of housing options for low- and middle-income older adults. Individuals and families understand their housing options, have access to housing resources and services, and develop housing strategies to meet their current and future needs.

Key Findings: An overwhelming majority of older adults desire to age in their home and community, however, it is estimated that at least 70% will eventually require some form of long-term care.

Over the past decade, most of the senior housing that has been developed has been designed for people in the higher income segment, while low-income affordable housing has been chronically underfunded.

These trends have created significant gaps in affordable options for older adults across both low- and middle-income brackets. Two critical housing-related needs emerged during the task force process: (a) the need for quality, affordable senior housing options that can accommodate older adults' health and mobility needs; and (b) the need for affordable and accessible supportive services that enable older adults to continue residing safely at home.



Recommendation Highlights

- Engage in advocacy and planning with community partners and housing experts. Identify and collaborate with partners to advocate for legislation and funding that will increase high-quality, affordable housing options for seniors, including Medicaid-waiver assisted living and skilled nursing care.
- Provide services, education, and resources to guide and support older adults' planning and decision-making processes regarding their housing needs, preferences, and available options.



Transportation

Our Goals: Older adults have greater access and encounter fewer barriers to transportation services.

Key Findings: Although most older adults drive, driving skills gradually decline with age. Current transportation options for older adults are supplemental, with limits on the types of rides, distance, hours of availability, and frequency of rides as well as restrictions based on one's geographic location. Transportation services are severely limited for older adults with mobility needs, such as those who use wheelchairs, require hands-on assistance, or need intensive 1:1 support as with dementia.

Most current services require riders to be self-sufficient in entering and exiting the vehicle. Providers report that transportation services are increasingly expensive to provide due to rising insurance costs, maintenance costs, and limited staffing.

Recommendation Highlights

- Connect older adults with existing transportation options via care navigation services, targeted outreach and communication strategies, and referrals from other service providers.
- Explore ways to address older adults' financial, technological, and safety concerns with current transportation options.
- Develop or extend low-cost transportation solutions, ensuring that they accommodate mobility aids and offer flexible hours, including evenings and weekends.

NEXT STEPS

Federation staff members will work with partner organizations, Federation colleagues, and lay leaders to develop implementation plans and carry forward the commitment to care for our older adult community members.



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**For a full description of the findings and detailed
recommendations, refer to the full report online at
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