

# Chapter Three: How to Reach Older Adults in Your Community

Older adults tend to be more socially isolated than people in other age groups, and this can make them difficult to reach. They often live alone and do not have anyone to help them apply for benefits. In addition, they are more mistrustful of giving out personal information and are potentially too proud or embarrassed to ask for government assistance. These barriers make it even more important to create partnerships with agencies in the community that have already established trust with this population.

## Partnering with the Area Agency on Aging

When reaching out to older adults, a great place to start is the local Area Agency on Aging (AAA). The AAA is responsible for the planning, development, coordination, and administration of services to assist older adults, adults with disabilities, and caregivers within the community. The AAAs may provide services directly or by contract and are a trusted and valued resource for older adults within the community. AAAs provide Older American Act (OAA) Programs that target older individuals with the greatest economic or social need, with particular attention to low-income minority older individuals and older individuals living in rural areas.

The following sections describe AAA programs you may consider collaborating with to conduct outreach to older adults.

## Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP)

HICAP is a consumer-oriented health insurance counseling and education program. Counseling services are available for individuals age 65 or older on Medicare; persons younger than age 65 with a disability and on Medicare; and those who are imminent of eligibility for Medicare. Many HICAP clients have low incomes and may be eligible for CalFresh benefits.

HICAP offers the following services:

- Community education on:
  - ▶ Medicare Part A (helps cover inpatient hospital stays, hospice care, and some other services)
  - ▶ Medicare Part B (other medically necessary services such as outpatient services, doctors' visits, durable medical equipment, some preventive, and other services)
  - ▶ Medicare Part C (Medicare Advantage Plans and other managed care plans)
  - ▶ Medicare Part D (prescription drug coverage)
  - ▶ Medigap supplemental insurance policies
  - ▶ Long-Term Care Insurance
- Individual health insurance counseling that provides objective and accurate comparisons of Medicare Part C and Part D Plan choices, Medicare Savings Programs, and Medicare Part D Extra Help

- Informal advocacy services regarding enrollment, disenrollment, claims appeals, prescription drug exception, and other urgent Part C and Part D Plan coverage issues
- Legal assistance or legal referral to assist individuals with legal questions related to their benefits

The California Department of Aging (CDA) contracts with 26 AAAs to provide HICAP services throughout the state. Services are available in all California counties.

CalFresh outreach workers who would like to collaborate with local HICAPs should contact the HICAP Program Manager in their local area. A directory of local HICAPs can be found on the CDA website at [www.aging.ca.gov/hicap/countyList.aspx](http://www.aging.ca.gov/hicap/countyList.aspx). Outreach workers can also dial the HICAP statewide number at 1-800-434-0222 if they are calling a HICAP from a landline in the same county as the local HICAP. Calls to the 800 line placed from a cell phone or out of state are rerouted to a dedicated line at CDA.

### Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP/Title V)

Title V provides part-time work-based training opportunities for older workers (aged 55 and older) in local community service agencies. It also assists program participants in obtaining unsubsidized employment. The program provides a variety of supportive services such as personal and job-related counseling, job search assistance, and job referral.

When determining a client's income for CalFresh benefits, statutes specifically exclude income earned through the SCSEP/Title V training program. Participants in the SCSEP/Title V program are aged 55 and older, low-income, and unemployed. These individuals may be eligible for CalFresh.

### Congregate Nutrition Program and Home-Delivered Meals Program (Title III C)

This program provides healthy meals in a congregate setting such as at a senior center or to older adults in their homes. Meals must meet one-third of the Dietary Reference Intakes and follow Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The program targets individuals with the greatest economic need.

Most Title III C programs do not provide meals on weekends or evenings. CalFresh benefits can help older adults purchase additional healthy foods at times when meals are not provided.

In some areas, participants may use their CalFresh benefits to provide a voluntary donation to the program. A donation is encouraged; it is not required. Title III C Nutrition Programs provide an opportunity to donate, but no eligible individual will be denied a meal because they are unable or unwilling to donate.

### Title IIIB Information and Assistance (I&A)

The I&A program links individuals to resources and services in the community that can meet their specific needs.

The I&A program may be the first contact that older adults, their families, and caregivers make to learn about programs and benefits in their community. The program can inform the community of local resources such as food banks, meal programs, and other food assistance information like CalFresh. CalFresh Outreach staff can help ensure that I&A staff and volunteers are aware of basic CalFresh eligibility guidelines that apply to seniors and how and where to refer potentially eligible clients.

### Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)

SFMNP is a program that provides low-income older adults with coupons that can be used to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs at Certified Farmers' Markets from May through November. The SFMNP is very popular with this age cohort across the state.

Talk to your AAA about coordinating the distribution of SFMNP coupons and CalFresh outreach at an enrollment clinic and/or prescreening event. Encourage older adults to use their CalFresh benefits at their local Certified Farmers' Market.

### Get Connected with Your Local AAA

When you contact your AAA, ask to speak with the specific program manager (i.e., HICAP, Title V, Title IIIC, Title IIIB, SFMNP) or

discuss the reason for your inquiry with the administrative assistant.

 For contact information for the local AAA in your county, refer to *Older Adults Appendix B*.

### Partnering with Other Agencies

CalFresh outreach workers can collaborate with other agencies to work with the older adult population they serve. Examples are:

- Area Agencies on Aging
- Adult day care facilities or Community-Based Adult Services Centers
- Association of State Nutrition Network Administration
- CalFresh Office
- Caregiver support groups through AAAs, faith-based groups, organizations, etc.
- Civic organizations (Lion's Club, Rotary Club, Masons, Kiwanis, and others)
- Community Action Agencies
- Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), Senior Corps programs
- Grocery stores or local farmers' markets
- Home health agencies and visiting nurse programs
- Hospitals and health clinics
- Humane Society or pet rescue organizations

- Labor unions
- Local houses of worship or other faith-based organizations
- Local libraries
- Medicare/Medicaid managed care organizations
- Nutrition programs for older adults (congregate meal sites, home-delivered meals, Meals on Wheels)
- Public housing authorities
- Public transportation authorities
- Radio “Community Spotlight” programs
- Senior recreation centers
- Senior or older adult advocacy groups (AARP Foundation, National Council on Aging)
- Service organizations (American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Goodwill)
- Unemployment offices
- USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture
- Volunteer groups (foster grandparents, telephone reassurance programs, etc.)

### Going to Where the Older Adults Are

A great place to conduct CalFresh outreach to older adults is at locations where they typically gather. Examples are:

- Senior centers
- Congregate dining sites
- Senior housing facilities
- Mobile home parks
- Cooling centers (on hot days)
- Churches, houses of worship
- Community centers
- Public libraries
- Senior health fairs
- Local farmers’ markets



## Reaching Older Adults in Mobile Home Parks – An Effective Outreach Strategy

Catholic Charities Diocese of Stockton has found that senior mobile home parks are ideal locations for conducting CalFresh outreach. “Seniors are comfortable there,” says Simona Rios, program director of Nutrition Assistance Services with Catholic Charities Diocese of Stockton. “They can go back to their trailer to get the paperwork easily. Seniors appreciate us coming to them.”



Strategically targeting venues where low-income older adults reside can make the process of providing prescreening and application assistance easier for the client and the outreach worker. If a client needs to retrieve paperwork, such as utility bills or Social Security checks, they can access it more quickly. The advantage is that clients do not have to go anywhere; the outreach workers are coming to them and making it as easy as possible.

Catholic Charities Diocese of Stockton has teamed up with its local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) to make their outreach events even more successful. Marketed as “Senior Information & Enrollment Fairs,” the events include more than just CalFresh. HICAP staff members participate to enroll people in the Limited Income Subsidy program and AAA staff members are available to talk about their local transportation program. As Jill Erikson, manager with the Stanislaus County Department of Aging and Veterans Services (AAA), notes, “The more programs that go along, the greater the draw to the event!”

Also important to bringing people out to the event is publicity. “It’s helpful to make contact with the manager and activities person at the mobile home park and send out fliers about the outreach event. Do a little work ahead of time to get people to the events,” suggests Erickson. “On the flier, tell them the documentation to bring with them.” Rios adds that sometimes they make mistakes and go to mobile home parks in a better area with higher income, but they are learning as they go.