

White Paper on the Douglas County Senior Initiative

Living Well, Aging Well

In early 2012, the Partnership of Douglas County Governments (PDCG) established the Senior Initiative to focus on the impact that changing demographics - principally the growth in the County's population aged 60 and older - will have on the communities and constituents served by Partnership members. To develop the Initiative, an advisory committee was formed with representatives from each Partnership member.

The Advisory committee established two short term goals as follows:

- Establish effective, two-way communication with the senior community including families, businesses and the interested public.
- Determine and evaluate awareness and familiarity of resources currently available to residents of Douglas County within the senior community, including the awareness of seniors, family members, businesses and the interested public.

The tactics to meet these goals include:

- Creating a communication pipeline with the senior community.
- Connecting the target population (seniors) with amenities (facilities, services, organizations) supporting this group.
- Mapping the network of senior-serving providers to assess the strength of those connections and gaps in our community.
- Identifying the market needs of seniors as a growing percentage of the population.
- Using various communication strategies (pipelines) to test for the knowledge of current resources.

The Advisory Committee has already completed a Provider Network PARTNER Survey to better understand the network of providers of formal services who serve people over the age of 60 in a variety of ways. We are now ready to launch a survey to Douglas County seniors. Through this survey we want to learn:

- The current and future quality of life needs of individuals 60 and older living in Douglas County.
- To what extent individuals and families in the county are aware of resources and find them to be accessible.
- Demographic information and communication style preferences from survey responders to assist in meeting our stated goals.

The Committee will also be hosting “listening tours” to encourage a broad response to the survey and gather additional input from seniors and their families in person. The PDCG Communications Subcommittee is leading the public affairs strategy to launch the survey and “listening tours” as broadly as possible to all partnership member jurisdictions and their senior citizens.

On behalf of the Advisory Committee, Douglas County has contracted with the CU Denver School of Public Affairs to develop and conduct both the provider network and senior citizen survey, as well as, assist in the interpretation of survey results in relationship to achieving the stated goals. The County set aside \$5,250 from funds used to address senior issues in our community to cover these costs. All other support for the Senior Initiative is coming from PDCG Advisory Committee members and Douglas County staff.

The ultimate goals of the Senior Initiative are:

- A strong communication pipeline connecting older adults and their families to information and resources that will meet the needs of our changing demographic.
- Broadly-gathered factual input from older adults for PDCG members about what will sustain living well and aging well in our communities.
- Build on the strengths of existing resources in our community to enhance the communication pipeline, fill gaps and meet identified needs through resource and policy development in the public and private sectors.
- Leverage what is currently in place to meet changing needs as the market for senior-related goods and services dictates – not the creation of a new agency or organization.
- Encourage the development of innovative methods to address the issues identified through the survey and listening tours across the whole PDCG landscape of services, resources, long range plans and future development of our various communities to serve older adults.

Timeline

It is our expectation to present an interim report by October 2013 and a final report with recommendations by year end 2013.

Barbara Drake, Member
Douglas County Senior Initiative
Advisory Committee
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