

ISSUES IN AGING

As part of our consideration of areas to focus on in the coming year, I have identified several top issues in the field of aging. We have discussed many of these before and have funded projects addressing several of them. This is a quick overview; you may identify other aspects of an issue to focus on. As tools for advancing the discussion, please review the strategic implementation plan and this list. Be prepared for a quick poll at the meeting indicating your top 5 priorities. Note: identifying top priorities does not mean that proposals focusing on other issues will not be given full consideration but will help focus my efforts.

Family caregiver support – Problem: Nearly 1 in 5 Americans is a family caregiver, 53 Million and growing. Many are also juggling care of children and jobs, few have any training or support. It is a job that keeps expanding but a family caregiver feels they can't quit. Impact: support groups and counseling/care coordination.

Support of Quaker meetings Problem: many monthly and yearly meetings do not have the resources to support aging Friends. Impact: create central "library" of resources, facilitate sharing.

Isolation + loneliness – Problem: the pandemic illustrated how many aging adults—even in residential settings- are lonely (subjective feeling) and isolated (lack of social contacts). Loneliness impacts all aspects of health and wellbeing. Impact: support programs and technology that encourage connection.

Mental health –Problem: the pandemic also increased awareness of mental health concerns into the open, especially depression and anxiety. Impact: support counseling services for aging adults.

Dementia- Problem: People with dementia have unique needs. They get bored and lonely which leads to agitation, anxiety and depression. They also don't feel productive. Conventional activities often don't work, evidence shows that music and art connect powerfully. New models of care are emerging. Impact: support programs that engage people with cognitive change.

Intergenerational – Problem: Age-segregation is common today, especially in senior residences, yet intergenerational connections create relationships, reduce loneliness, encourage lifelong learning and use of technology. Impact: support intergenerational programming.

Leadership development, engaging youth – Problem: Few young adults think about pursuing careers in aging services, there are few Quakers to assume leadership of aging programs and communities. Impact: support programs that provide internships and develop leadership skills.

Technology – Problem: Technology became a lifeline during the pandemic for many people, but there continue to be those without devices, confidence in using them, broadband access. 58% of people age 65+ do not have broadband at home. Other technologies are being implemented for safety in aging in place. Impact: Ziegler fund. Support purchase of technology, tech volunteer programs.

Workforce – Problem: Care communities are struggling to hire and retain qualified staff, and the

problem is predicted to worsen. Impact: support models that help with retention through innovative training and advancement strategies.

Care coordination – Problem: Many aging adults need help navigating connection with the many services they need. Without assistance they often give up and don't get the service. Impact: support care coordination, pastoral care, community health workers, peer specialists and other models of care.

Underserved communities – Problem: It is clear that resources are not distributed equitably and that some communities have greater need. There is growing attention on organizations that represent the communities they serve. Impact: Support these organizations.

Aging in place – Problem: More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of Americans over age 50 want to remain in their own homes. Some have no other choices. However, homes are often not built for this, and people need additional services as they age. Impact: support care coordination and home modification services.

New housing options – Problem: retirement community models of 40 years ago are not what today's retirees are seeking, especially in a pandemic. Impact: support efforts to create new models.

LGBTQ+ - Problem: More people in the LGBTQ community do not have children and live alone; many residential communities are not welcoming. Impact: support programs, cultural competency.

Diversity – Problem: One model (especially one borne of white privilege) does not work for all people; cultures have their own ideas about aging and care for elders. Impact: support welcoming communities and programs that address needs of specific communities.

Ageism – Problem: Ageism is evident in all aspects of life. The pandemic showed that many older adults lost jobs and were unable to get re-hired as well as ways that healthcare could have been applied differently. Impact: be mindful of our own ageism, support organizations building awareness.

Equity, Inclusion– Problem: the pandemic and social justice issues have illustrated great inequalities in the distribution of resources such as jobs, food, housing and healthcare. How does this intersect with our work? Impact: support BIPOC-led organizations, grantee efforts to address DEI in their work, review FFA practices.