

Mercer County Area Agency on Aging, Inc. Newsletter

September 2024



A Message From the CEO

Mercer County Area Agency on Aging, Inc., Senior Centers are not closing!

With the recent passing of the Governor's Budget, Area Agencies on Aging were overlooked and received no increase in funding for the services provided to older adults in the Commonwealth. This marks more than 15 years since the Agencies on Aging received an increase in their base allocation. Over the past few years, budgets have been manageable because of special COVID funding and funding provided through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Those funds have ended and now we are back to our underfunded budget.

As you are certainly aware of the increase in everything over the past 15 years, we too are feeling the pinch of higher prices. Many Agencies on Aging throughout the Commonwealth are looking at reducing services and reducing hours or closing senior centers to manage expenses. Our waiting lists are growing, but because we see the importance of our senior centers, we have no plans to close any of our senior centers or reduce their hours.

Our mission is to enrich the quality of life of older adults in Mercer County and enable them to maintain their independence as long as possible. Our programs and services support this goal, and our Senior Centers are an integral part of our mission.

Social isolation has a very harmful effect on people in general, but especially on seniors who already spend a lot of time alone. Our Senior Centers have wonderful activities to stimulate older adults mentally, physically and socially. We have seen participation grow at our Senior Centers since the lifting of COVID precautions and because we feel so strongly about the good our Senior Centers do, we will continue to operate as we have been for as long as we are able.

If you are a Center participant, you may have noticed that we have made a slight increase to our suggested daily donation amount. The suggested donation has been the same amount for well over 20 years and we felt it was time. If you are able to donate to one of our Senior Centers, please do so. If you are not able, do not let that stop you from attending. Nobody will be turned away because they are not able to donate.

Another way to help us is to contact your local State Representatives and let them know how much these services mean to you. Let them know that it is important that Agencies on Aging get their fair share of funding. This month, the legislature will be voting on whether or not to provide supplemental funding for Aging Services. The Department of Aging requested \$15.2 million to support Aging Services but did not receive that funding when the Governor's budget was passed. This is a mere 5% increase for Aging Services. As a matter of note, **Senior Services are not paid for through taxes. The PA Lottery provides funding for Senior Services.** Hopefully the legislators will see the importance of transferring the much-needed funding from the Lottery to the Department of Aging for Agencies on Aging to continue operating as usual.

So don't panic – your Senior Center is as important to us as it is to you, and we plan on keeping our Senior Centers open!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Sandy'.

Monthly Health & Wellness Tips



September is National Suicide Prevention Month – a time to remember the lives lost to suicide, acknowledge the millions more who have experienced suicidal thoughts, and the many individuals, families and communities that have been impacted by suicide. It’s also a time to raise awareness about suicide prevention and share messages of hope.

We Can All Prevent Suicide

Understanding the issues concerning suicide and mental health is an important way to take part in suicide prevention, help others in crisis, and change the conversation around suicide.

Hope Can Happen

Suicide is not inevitable for anyone. By starting the conversation, providing support, and directing help to those who need it, we can prevent suicides and save lives.

We Can All Take Action

Evidence shows that providing support services, talking about suicide, reducing access to means of self-harm, and following up with loved ones are just some of the actions we can all take to help others.

Crisis Centers are Critical

By offering immediate counseling to everyone that may need it, local crisis centers provide invaluable support at critical times and connect individuals to local services.

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline outlines five action steps you can take if you know an older adult who is thinking about suicide:

1. **Ask.** Don’t be afraid to be direct with the person at risk. Ask questions like, “Are you thinking about suicide?” and “How can I help you?” to initiate a conversation in a supportive and unbiased way.
2. **Be there.** If you’re able to, be physically present for the person in order to ease feelings of isolation and provide a sense of connectedness. If a face-to-face visit is not possible, be there for them via phone or video calls.
3. **Keep them safe.** Find out if the person has already made any attempts on their life. Do they have a specific plan or timing in mind? Do they have access to their planned method of self-harm? Learning the answers to these questions can help you understand whether this individual is in immediate danger.
4. **Help them connect.** If a senior in your life is thinking about suicide, it’s important for them to establish support systems they can rely on now and in future moments of crisis.
5. **Follow up.** Studies have shown that following up can reduce suicide-related deaths in high-risk populations. Once you’ve had an initial conversation with the vulnerable person and helped them establish a support network, make sure to check in.

Suicide Data: Pennsylvania

This fact sheet reports data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) unless noted otherwise (see footnote). This is the most current verified data at time of creation (August 2024).

14.2

deaths per 100,000 people in 2022, ranking PA **38th** in suicide mortality

2nd leading cause of death for ages 10-14

3rd leading cause of death for ages 15-24

2nd leading cause of death for ages 25-34

4th leading cause of death for ages 35-44

5th leading cause of death for ages 45-54

9th leading cause of death for ages 55-64

12th leading cause of death for ages 65+

2.6%

The rate at which suicides increased in the US from 2021 to 2022¹

11th

Leading cause of death in the US in 2022

The data above were obtained from the CDC's WISQARS Leading Causes of Death Visualization Tool for 2022

Populations at increased risk of suicide:

While anyone can experience suicidal ideation, some groups experience increased risk factors that can contribute to suicide, such as discrimination. These groups can also intersect (ex. veterans with disabilities).

Below is a non-exhaustive list of some of these groups:

LGBTQ Youth:

39% of LGBTQ youth considered suicide in 2023, including half of transgender and nonbinary youth. LGBTQ youth of color reported higher rates than their white peers.²

Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color (BIPOC):

People of American Indian or Alaska Native descent had a 26% increase in suicide rate between 2018 and 2021. Black individuals saw a 19% increase and the suicide rate among Hispanic persons increased by nearly 7%.³

Older adults:

Between 2001 and 2021, suicide rates significantly increased for men ages 55-74 and women 55-84.⁴

People with disabilities:

A study in 2021 found that people with disabilities were 3X more likely to report suicidal ideation in the prior month compared to people without disabilities.⁵

Black adolescents:

The suicide rate among Black youth ages 10 to 19 has increased 54% since 2018, and is increasing faster than other racial and ethnic groups.⁶

Veterans:

The suicide rate for Veterans was significantly higher than that of the national general population in 2020, although the Veteran suicide rate in PA did not significantly differ from the national rate for Veterans.⁷

Additional sources:

1. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2022/20220930.htm

2. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2024/>

3. <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2023-02-09/suicide-rates-have-risen-among-people-of-color>

4. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db483.htm>

5. <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/disparities-in-suicide.html#disabilities>

6. https://watsoncoleman.house.gov/imo/media/doc/full_taskforce_report.pdf

7. <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2020/2020-State-Data-Sheet-Pennsylvania-508.pdf>

Do you have a Permanent Persons with Disability Parking Placard?

- The placard should not be displayed on the rearview mirror while the vehicle is being operated. Placards are only to be displayed when the vehicle is **parked in areas designated for the use of persons with disabilities**.
- Placards are designed and manufactured to be durable for five years. To avoid damage to the placard, when it is not being displayed, it should be stored in a safe place away from long exposures to extreme hot and cold temperatures and direct sunlight.
- The placard will not entitle vehicles that are designated to transport persons with disabilities to be parked in areas where parking is prohibited.

- If the placard owner no longer requires the use of the placard, and the placard is still valid, the placard must be returned to PennDOT. The placard must be mailed to: Bureau of Motor Vehicles, P.O. Box 68268, Harrisburg, PA 17106-8268. If the placard has expired, it can be destroyed. There is no need to return it to PennDOT.
- Any unauthorized person found to be in violation commits a summary offense and shall, upon conviction, be sentenced to pay a fine of not more than \$100.



Be Prepared for Election Day— November 5, 2024

Are you ready for the 2024 General Election? Go to vote.pa.gov and check your voter registration status. Make sure that your registration address is correct. You can also see if you requested a mail ballot and the location of your polling place.

If you need a mail ballot, you can call the Mercer County election office and they will send you the mail ballot application. Mail ballots will be mailed out in early October.

If you have any questions about the 2024 election, call the Mercer County Election Office at 724-662-7542.



Senior Farmer Market Vouchers— Do not forget the Senior Farmer Market Vouchers can be used until November 30, 2024.



Monthly Scam Corner

Scam Notice from the Pennsylvania State Police

Pennsylvania State Police are warning people to be aware of scammers claiming your loved one is in jail and saying they can be released in exchange for cash. Scammers will contact you by phone and explain that your loved one (typically a grandchild), is in trouble and currently in jail, or faces the possibility of jail, and will even cite specific names, according to a news release from state police. The scammers will often say "Don't talk to anyone about this, I'm sure it would be embarrassing to your family," state police say. They will then explain that in exchange for cash, their loved one will be released from jail, according to the news release. State police say the scammers will then ask for an address where they can pick up the money. At this point, they will send a courier to pick up the cash, state police say. Even if it sounds like your loved one's voice on the phone, please hang up and contact the loved one in question.

Here are some tips from state police to help protect you and keep you from becoming a victim of a scam:

- Don't feel pressured to provide payment for something or to someone, do research into it first, run it by a friend or family member.
- Do not give out sensitive information over the phone. Example: social security number or bank account number.
- NEVER place money in your mailbox or at your doorstep for someone to come and pick up.
- Do not give remote access to anyone for any of your devices.
- Never make a payment to someone with gift cards – it's a scam!
- Remember, just because someone says they are from a certain "company," it doesn't mean they actually are!
- If you feel a phone call might be a scam or you are being asked for sensitive information – hang up!
- Scams can happen through e-mails also. If there are a lot of misspelled words, it might be a scam. Always look at the e-mail address it was sent from, if you don't recognize it, don't respond or open any attachments.

"Trust your instinct, if it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't," state police say. Don't be so quick to give away your hard-earned money, state police say. Call your family members directly to ensure they are fine. If you or anyone you know is a victim of a scam, contact Law Enforcement to have it investigated.

Annual Credit Report

This is the official site to get your free annual credit reports as guaranteed by Federal Law. Be careful when typing this site name into your web browser. There are many look-alike sites with similar web site addresses. Access online at: annualcreditreport.com

Senior Resources

AARP (www.aarp.org)— The National site for AARP a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization for people, ages 50 and older. Call 1-888-687-2277

Benefits Checkup (www.benefitscheckup.org)— An online questionnaire to help search for a list of all state and federal benefits.

COMPASS (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Application for Social Services [www.compass.state.pa.us])— Enables Pennsylvania citizens to apply for social service programs online. Call 1-800-692-7462.

Medicare (www.medicare.gov)—The official government site for Medicare consumer information. Call 1-800-633-4227

Mental Health Services

Do you need to talk to someone about loneliness or depression?

Locally:

Mercer County Crisis:

724-662-2227

Community Counseling Center Warm Line:

724-981-1741

1-866-853-7758

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:






Dial 988 –or- 1-800-273-8255

Veteran Crisis Line: Call 988 then press 1.

Do you need help paying your Medicare Part D premiums, deductible or co-pay amounts? If the answer is yes, and you meet income and resource guidelines, you may qualify for Extra Help. The Extra Help program provides assistance to Medicare beneficiaries with limited income and resources that can lower or cut Part D costs.

To learn more about the Extra Help program, including the income and resource guidelines, contact

Pennsylvania Medicare Education and Decision Insight, PA MEDI,
at the Mercer County Area Agency on Aging, Inc. at 724-662-6222.

PRESCRIPTION ASSISTANCE		
ELIGIBILITY 		
Call: 800-225-7223	PACE	PACENET
Age 65+		
PA Resident for at least 90 days		
Individual Income	under 14,500	between 14,500-33,500
Married Income	under 17,700	between 17,700-41,500

Local Volunteer Opportunities:

Mercer County Area Agency on Aging, Inc.
724-662-6222

American Red Cross 1-800-422-7677

Meals on Wheels 724-342-2042

United Way of Mercer County 724-981-1884

Mercer County Food Bank 724-981-0353

MCAAA, Inc. Contact Information:

www.mercercountyaging.org



Administration / Care Management /
Older Adult Protective Services

133 N. Pitt Street, Mercer, PA 16137
724-662-6222

Greenville Senior Community Center
45 Alan Avenue, Greenville, PA 16125
724-588-3155

Grove City Senior Community Center
301 S. Broad Street, Grove City, PA 16127
724-458-6844

McQuiston Center by the Park
29 Railroad Street, Sandy Lake, PA 16145
724-376-3608

Shenango Valley Senior Center
and Adult Day Care
220 N. Buhl Farm Drive, Hermitage, PA 16148
724-981-7950