

Executive Summary

The Department of Aging & Human Services has long recognized the growth in the older adult population and the need to keep pace with the increasing demand for services allowing aging individuals to remain active, vibrant, financially savvy, and healthy for as long as possible, thereby reducing dependency. To continue meeting the needs of older adults and their caregivers in St. Mary's County, we will use the funding mechanisms, programming, coordinated community systems and collaboration opportunities to provide supports that help people age safely, stay connected, and access care.

We continue to strengthen and fortify our Aging and Disability Resource Center/Maryland Access Point as a point of entry for our jurisdiction's older adults and persons with disabilities, and caregivers. We provide assistance to help people navigate health care, long-term services, housing, transportation, benefits, and caregiver support to name a few. Options counseling identifies needs, explores long-term care options, and assists with making informed choices about future plans. Referrals to other local programs, community services and public benefits are ongoing. This assists us in connecting older adults and people with disabilities to programs our Department has to offer as well as other resources in our community, ultimately reducing a duplication of efforts.

The St. Mary's County Department of Aging & Human Services coordinates and provides a wide range of programs and services that help older adults remain independent for as long as possible and helps support caregivers. These include:

1. Senior Center Operations –

- This division supports the three Senior **Activity** Centers. The centers are the focal point for many programs and special events offered by the Department, including the congregate meals program, opportunities for social contact and recreation, fitness opportunities, and access to special staff services. The division strives to provide a variety of high quality, dynamic, and affordable programs and activities for the independent senior community that promote good health, fitness, education, socialization, and the development of skills and interests. As a result of the pandemic, we initiated and continue to provide classes, lessons and activities through our Virtual Senior Activity Center.

2. Nutrition –

- St. Mary's County has a diversified Home-Delivered Meals (HDM) program that helps older adults in need age in place using Federal funds through the Older Americans Act, as well as through state funds, county funds, and donations. The HDMs program provides well-balanced meals and a friendly visit to seniors who are homebound and who cannot shop or cook for themselves.
- The Congregate Meals program is a valuable service offering fresh lunches Monday through Friday to older adults at the senior activity centers. The

congregate meals program allows our Department to provide appetizing meals at the three senior activity centers and one nutrition site.

3. Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) –

- As the number of older adults in the county increases, more individuals and families are faced with the challenge of caring for older persons whose ability to provide for their own care and needs has declined. A primary goal of our Department is to help these individuals and families find the means of remaining as independent as possible within their own homes and communities. To respond to this goal, services are made available to eligible persons in their home or nearby community facilities and eliminate or minimize the need for services in more costly health care institutions.

The services offered through the HCBS Division include:

- Aging and Disability Resource Center /Maryland Access Point (MAP)
- Caregiver Support/Respite
- Medicaid Waiver for Older Adults (Community First Choice)
- Options Counseling
- Senior Care Program
- Senior Rights & Advocacy/Ombudsman

4. Caregiver Support –

- The National Family Caregivers Support Program and County In-Home Services Program offer respite grants to families caring for an aging family member. The grants are used to offset costs associated with hiring a caregiver of the family's choosing to provide respite in caring for their loved one. Grants are also available for seniors caring for a grandchild younger than 18 years of age and for a parent caring for an adult child with a disability 18 years of age or older. The St. Mary's County Caregivers' Support Group meets once a week at the Garvey Senior Activity Center. The Support Group is designed to be a safe space for caregivers to share their experiences and learn about resources. This group is open to caregivers of all types, including those caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's or dementia, diagnosed with Parkinsons, recovering from a stroke, or experiencing other physical, cognitive, or mental challenges.

5. Health Promotion –

- We will continue providing health promotion and disease prevention efforts to help older adults maintain a better quality of life with such programs as EnhanceFitness.

6. Senior Information & Assistance –

- The Senior Information & Assistance (Senior I&A) Division offers information in the areas of housing, Social Security, benefits programs, transportation, and other community programs. Additionally, Senior I&A provides seniors and their families with guidance and referrals to Department of Aging & Human Services

programs, public and private community resources, and information regarding assistance programs. Service coordination is available to seniors who require assistance in accessing services, applying for various assistance programs, or need help and information about a variety of issues.

7. Community Programs & Outreach –

- The Community Programs & Outreach Division communicates timely and topical information to the community through the bi-monthly newsletter, website updates, Facebook, and local media. This division also oversees the planning and implementation of the Department of Aging & Human Services' signature events, including Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, the Community Health & Wellness Fair, Keys to Senior Independence, and Veterans Resource Day.

We will continue adapting to the needs of our senior community and look to the future by using the Longevity Ready Maryland (LRM) Plan as a multisector approach to addressing the emerging needs across the lifespan. The Epic Goals – Building a Longevity Ecosystem, Promoting Economic Opportunities, Preparing Marylanders to Afford Longevity, and Optimizing Health Wellness and Mobility are the focus.

Aging in Maryland

The St. Mary's County Department of Aging & Human Services will continue expanding services to older individuals with the greatest economic and social needs especially for low-income minority individuals. Special outreach efforts will continue encouraging an increase of low-income minority individuals to participate in our services and programs. We do outreach to areas that have a population of low-income, minority individuals, such as the annual Juneteenth celebration. We also do regular outreach opportunities to the local libraries. A variety of advertising intended to reach every segment of the population is utilized, including, but not limited to print and radio ads, billboard advertising, as well as our social media platforms.

The Department utilizes an outreach strategy known as the Aging Road Show, which is a presentation to different groups within the county that outlines in a PowerPoint format the many programs and services available to the area's seniors. The presentations are to community groups, church groups, business, and agencies to help promote our Department and encourage participation in the programs and services we have to offer.

Our Department of Aging & Human Services newsletter (New Beginning) is a major outreach tool to encourage participation of individuals with the greatest need. The Department will continue to contact groups, churches, agencies, and leaders of the community to familiarize their membership and/or staff with Department programs and services.

Minority leaders and other groups will be invited to participate in discussion groups. Minority membership on the St. Mary's County Commission on Aging is encouraged to assure that minority needs and viewpoints are represented in senior issues involving discussions with the Commissioners of St. Mary's County. Also, as in the past, there will be special programs at the

senior activity centers emphasizing different ethnic backgrounds to promote attendance and socialization at the centers.

St. Mary's County Department of Aging & Human Services will not only maintain the current level of programming and fiscal oversight of the many grants and other revenue sources, but we plan to explore more and different initiatives that help support the needs of our senior community. These initiatives may include the opportunity to enhance senior activity center programs appealing to a broader age range of seniors. The evening programs at one of our three centers is increasing in popularity and attendance. We will assess the feasibility of expanding programming through year 2027. Our meals program continues its in-person food committee meetings. The committee is comprised of Aging & Human Services staff – division manager for senior center operations and the meals program, Department director, deputy director, our food provider representatives, and a participating senior from at least one of the three senior activity centers. Meetings are held quarterly to review survey results from older adults who receive either home delivered meals or congregate meals. We will discuss the survey results, issues or concerns and possible changes to the menu. The goal is to consistently have a large majority of questionnaire responses in the excellent and satisfactory categories. Older adults, with health challenges and behavioral health concerns is an ongoing issue. We will explore opportunities to continue addressing the challenges of finding long-term placement options for these individuals.

The Department of Aging & Human Services effectively uses its resources to meet the needs of the senior population by determining those with the greatest needs in the community. In-home assessment tools are one way to help determine our consumers' level of functioning, as well as the amount and type of assistance needed. We have agreements with several providers to support the needs of our county's senior residents including, but not limited to, a legal services provider, a meals provider, and a variety of fitness instructors. The activities and programs provided through our senior activity centers are a direct service and provided through our Department. All the programs and services available through our Department, in addition to other community resources, assist older adults to remain in their homes for as long as possible, thereby thwarting long-term placement.

Older Americans Act Compliance

According to the Federal Register, the Administration for Community Living's (ACL) final rule modernizes of implementing the regulations of the Older Americans Act (OAA) of 1965. The final rule fosters improved service delivery and enhanced benefits for OAA participants, particularly those in greatest economic need and greatest social need.

Our Department will continue to ensure all our programs and services operate in line with the OAA requirements, including those outlined by the Final Rule by adhering to its key provisions including, but not limited to the proper use of OAA funding, how those with the "greatest economic need" and "greatest social need" are addressed, while avoiding conflicts of interest.

The Department will adhere to the Aging and Program Directives, complete program and financial reports, submit Requests for Funds in a timely manner and participate in program monitoring and financial audits.

DRAFT

Longevity Ready Maryland

Goal 1: Build a Longevity Ecosystem

Cross Sector Coordination

Priority. Maintain and continue to build and strengthen partnerships with service providers, community organizations, nonprofits, and the private sector.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. The Department hosts a monthly Community Care Forum where local government organizations, nonprofits, and the private sector are invited to share best practices, upcoming programs, events, training opportunities, new resources, and to network, making gaps in services less challenging. Regular attendees include the local Ombudsman, Maryland Access Point (MAP) staff, the Guardianship program coordinator, the Health Department, the Southern Maryland Center for Independent Living, St. Mary's Medical Adult Daycare, the Charlotte Hall Veteran's Home, and local nursing facilities and home health care agencies.

Priority. Promote age-friendly land use and development.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. The Department is involved in development of the county's Master Plan aka Comprehensive Plan, "which spells out the manner in which a municipality, county or sub-area of a county must develop." The lead agency is the Department of Land Use and Growth Management. This plan "must explain how anticipated growth will impact community facilities and the environment, and identify areas where growth will occur." The Department's involvement allows opportunity for input on how development and land use decisions directly impact older adults.

Priority. Improve data capture and dissemination.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. The Department is improving data collection and integrity by using frequent internal audits, and monitoring of missing data measures. The Department uses AIM, Excel, OAAPS, and Smartsheets to record and report data.

Justice, Equity, and Inclusion

Priority. Address the needs of vulnerable older adults through education and outreach.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. The Department will continue to provide education and outreach through Older Americans Act (OAA) Title VII Elder Abuse funding, VEPI and Ombudsman activities. Funding is used to provide outreach activities in both long-term care facilities and the community during Elder Abuse Awareness Month, and other community events such as the annual Community Health Fair, Caregivers Conference, Caregivers Breakfast, Veterans Resource Day, Citizens Academy, County Fair, and Keys to Senior Independence, to name a few.

The Department's Ombudsman regularly visits long-term care facilities to educate residents about residents' rights and good care practices. The Ombudsman receives and resolves complaints made by or for residents of long-term care facilities. Any abuse or alleged abuse taking place in a long-term care facility is addressed by the State Ombudsman and the Office of Health Care Quality.

Additionally, the Department hosts a document shredding and medication takeback event in cooperation with the local Health Department and Sheriff's Office. The senior activity centers regularly hosting scam and fraud seminars.

Priority. Increase the distribution of resources to historically underserved and under-resourced communities.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. The Department will continue its efforts to expand services to older individuals with the greatest economic and social needs with particular attention to low-income minority individuals through the OAA Title IIIB funding. As in past years, special outreach efforts will be made to encourage an increase of low-income minorities participating in senior services and programs. The Department does outreach to areas that have a population of low-income, minority individuals, such as the annual Juneteenth celebration. This past year, the Department provided outreach for the first time at the 2025 Pride SOMD celebration, an event organized by Pride SOMD to support and celebrate the LGBTQIA+ community. The Department conducts regular outreach opportunities to the local library. A variety of advertising intended to reach every segment of the population is utilized, including, but not limited to print and radio ads, billboard advertising, as well as our social media platforms.

The Department utilizes an outreach strategy known as the Aging Road Show, which is a presentation to different groups within the county that outlines in a PowerPoint presentation, the many programs, and services available to the area's seniors. The presentations are to community groups, church groups, business, and agencies to help promote the Department and encourage participation in the programs and services.

Priority. Continue to serve the 65+ public guardianship community in St. Mary's County.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. In St. Mary's County, the number of guardianship cases has fluctuated over the last several years and, although a relatively low number, the amount of time and attention given to the persons for whom the Director is guardian goes beyond the perceived expectations of the guardian's responsibilities. A grant is provided by the State to help with the expenses incurred in performing the guardianship role. In addition to the Director who serves as Guardian, the Division Manager for Home and Community-Based Services and an hourly employee serve as the guardianship representatives and assist in the coordination of services and making critical personal decisions, such as health care, housing, and daily needs.

Maximizing Volunteerism

Priority. Recruit older volunteers and multigenerational volunteer teams into coordinated service opportunities.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. The Department hosts the St. Mary's County Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). Several RSVP Volunteers serve in various capacities, supporting the mission of the Department. The Department will continue its extensive use of community volunteers in providing services to older adults in the county. Principal volunteer services include a wide-ranging network of home-delivered meals drivers, Seniors Rides Program, persons who assist in the senior activity centers, and many persons who assist at Department-sponsored community events and programs, such as the Annual Community Health Fair and Men's Health Day.

Another program of the Department with volunteer emphasis is the again granted Senior Rides Program which utilizes volunteer drivers to transport seniors to medical appointments, complete errands, and to some social events.

Additionally, RSVP has over twenty-seven stations in the community where volunteers are assigned to programs and services that match their backgrounds, interests, and talents. These community stations provide opportunities for multigenerational volunteerism.

Coordination with Maryland Department of Health State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP)

Priority. Continue to contribute to the efforts of SHIP through involvement with the local Health Department.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. The Department works closely with the Local Health Department (LHD). Their Healthy St. Mary's Partnership is a community-driven coalition of partners working together to improve health in St. Mary's County. The coalition mobilizes members through four action teams to address the priority health issues in St. Mary's: Behavioral Health, Chronic Disease Prevention, Environmental Health, and Violence, Injury, and Trauma. The Department will continue to have representatives on the Health St. Mary's Partnership Action Teams. The Department provides data as requested and may explore hosting focus groups at the senior activity centers related to the Community Health Assessment.

Goal 2: Promote Economic Opportunity

Long-Term Care Dementia Navigation

Priority. Enhance programs to meet the needs of individuals experiencing cognitive challenges.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. All MAP staff completed training on administration of the AD8 and the Johns Hopkins Memory Care Family Checklist (JHCFC). MAP staff refer consumers to the tools and, when needed, staff provide assistance in completing the tools. Additionally, staff are available to assist consumer in interpreting the results and reviewing

relevant community and Department resources. The National Family Caregiver Support program offers training, information, and respite grants to caregivers caring for someone with dementia. As well, the Long-Term Care Dementia Care Navigation (LTCDCN) program offers respite grants. The Department partners annually with Charles and Calvert Counties to offer a Caregiver Conference. Many sessions are relevant to caregivers of persons with dementia. For example, this year's conference includes topics such as unwanted and inappropriate behaviors, a dementia simulation, culturally responsive dementia caregivers, and planning for the future. The Department offers the evidence-based program, Building Better Caregivers, and in the upcoming reporting year, has plans to implement Savvy Caregivers, a leading evidence-based dementia family caregiver training program. The Department offers Thrive Mindfully, a health promotion program for people with dementia and their caregivers, quarterly at the senior activity centers. Memory Café is offered twice monthly and is an opportunity for people with dementia and their caregivers to engage socially and participate in recreational activities. The program started a year ago with support of LTCDCN funding and has grown in popularity and participation. The Department partners with the local Library and Senior Activity Centers to provide Memory Activity Kits. Kits include dementia friendly activities and games that caregivers and persons with dementia can do together.

The Department's Community Programs and Outreach Division provides outreach booths at community events as well as conducts presentations to community groups and organizations informing the public about the programs and services available to older adults through the Department. In the future, informational materials including how to access the AD8 and JHCFC will be available to display at community events. MAP staff receive referrals from Health Care Providers for services within the Department or for resources outside the Department. MAP staff are expanding relationships with Health Care Providers by providing them with fact sheets and brochures detailing the services the Department offers.

Employment for All

Priority. Evaluate and bring attention to the impact of unpaid older workers on Maryland's economy.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. Annually, the Department hosts a recognition ceremony to honor the contributions of RSVP volunteers in St. Mary's County. In 2025 these volunteers contributed volunteer services that have a national value of over \$700,000 based on the estimated national value of a volunteer hour of service in the United State published by *Independent Sector*. A ceremonial check is presented to the County Commissioner President to highlight the economic value of volunteer service by adults over the age of 55.

Priority. Collaborate with the American Jobs Centers in providing access to supportive services and employment supports.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. The Department's Garvey Senior Activity Center is co-located with the Leonardtown Library. The Southern Maryland JobSource Mobile Career Center visits the location monthly and offers job seeking and preparing services to the

community. Department staff refer consumers who are seeking employment resources to the Southern Maryland JobSource, which is a partner of American Job Centers.

Goal 2: Promote Economic Opportunity – Support a multigenerational workforce with opportunities for all ages and abilities while advancing Maryland’s economic competitiveness

Caregiving Supports

Priority. While our Department is the county’s main source and the authority on programs and services for older adults and caregivers, we understand caregivers contribute significantly to the care and support of their loved ones, family, and friends. Supporting caregivers is crucial to their ability to continue caregiving, and to keeping those they care for in the community for a longer period. Our Department provides the National Family Caregivers Support Program (NFCSP) and a County In-Home Services Program through small respite grants to families caring for an aging family member. The grants offset costs with hiring a caregiver to provide relief in caring for their loved one. Grants are available for seniors caring for a grandchild under 18 years old and parents caring for an adult child with a disability 18 or older.

Our Department offers an annual Caregivers' Breakfast for anyone who serves as a caregiver, in a clinical setting or as an individual. Caregivers may be a spouse or adult child, or a family member who would benefit from information and sharing with others. The breakfast is an opportunity to talk with individuals who share similar challenges while enjoying a free breakfast and learning from inspirational speakers.

The Annual Southern Maryland Caregivers' Conference alternates between the St. Mary’s, Charles, and Calvert County Area Agencies on Aging.

Designed for family and paid caregivers, this one-day event may enrich one's knowledge and skills in caring for an aging individual or for someone with a disability. The conference includes access to service providers and professionally presented educational sessions on caregiving-related topics.

Our St. Mary’s County Caregivers’ Support Group meets once a month in the evening. The Support Group is a space for caregivers to share their experiences and learn about resources. This group is open to caregivers of all types, including those caring for loved ones with dementia, diagnosed with Parkinsons, recovering from a stroke, or experiencing other physical, cognitive, or mental challenges.

We have offered the Building Better Caregivers workshops for participants to:

- Discover strategies for self-care and stress management.
- Connect with fellow caregivers in a supportive and understanding environment.
- Gain insights into effective communication and problem-solving techniques.
- Set personalized goals to enhance their caregiving experience.

This workshop is for family caregivers (parent caring for a child, spouse supporting their spouse, adult child caring for an aging parent, or anyone caring for another family member with a disability). We will continue providing Building Better Caregivers workshops.

We proudly provide Making Connections: A Memory Café of St. Mary's County. Our memory cafés provide a safe and engaging environment for those with mild cognitive impairments, Alzheimer's Disease, or related dementias AND their care partners, family, and friends.

Our Long-Term Care and Dementia Care Navigation (LTCDCN) Project provides services to people with symptoms of dementia that may interfere with activities of daily living (ADLs) and their caregivers' ADLs by providing information and referrals to long term care and chronic disease services, provide programs that engage individuals in regular exercise, and provide support for caregivers.

Goal 3: Prepare Marylanders to Afford Longevity – Improve economic security for the 100 – year lifespan through affordable housing, financial literacy, and access to support services

Affordable Housing

Priority. Supporting those older adults who are at risk of or who are experiencing housing instability.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success.

The Department of Land Use and Growth Management is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan. The current plan (2010) points to the development of a variety of housing types that meet the needs of the county's citizens based on the demographic, economic and employment characteristics of the population. Moreover, the current draft of the new plan, St. Mary's 2050 Charting Our Tomorrow, has a Housing section that reads, "'Aging in place' is restricting normal filtering of housing from one household to another, reducing the stock of housing that is normally available to first-time homebuyers." As a result of the addition of our Department's inclusion, feedback and perceived priorities for our county's older adults, St. Mary's 2050 has several policies that suggest to **Foster the Development of Senior Housing Options** -foster the development of housing options for older adults that include independent living choices, as well as assisted living and nursing care communities. It seeks to *Evaluate Expedited Review Process for Housing Developments* - "evaluate the opportunity to provide an expedited building permit review for housing developments that are affordable to median income households or below." It also includes, *Streamline Approvals for Aging in Place Home Modifications* – "evaluate the building permit requirements for home modifications for seniors and persons with disabilities that are aging in place (staying within their own home). Update processes to streamline these approvals." In addition, **Ensure Age and Ability Friendliness Through Accessible Designs** - *prioritize accessible design of transportation corridors, sidewalks, and bus stops that are frequently used by older adults. Ensure development regulations and zoning decisions in residential areas, especially aging neighborhoods, allowing*

older residents to age in place. Finally, the plan proposes to **Continue to Monitor the County's Housing Stock to Ensure Choices for All Income Levels** - *continue monitoring the variety of the County's housing stock to ensure choices are provided for all income levels and housing needs.*

St. Mary's County also offers several property tax relief programs:

- **65-10 Senior Tax Credit**: Provides a 10% credit off the county tax liability for up to 5 years.
- **Senior Matching Tax Credit**: Matches the state's Homeowner's Tax Credit.
- **Senior "CAP" Tax Credit**: Freezes property taxes based on the amount when the individual first purchased the property.

Priority. Increasing access to programs and services that address an individual's cost of living.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success.

The Department will continue expansion of services and options helping individuals age-in-place providing wraparound services including, but not limited to in-home care; health-related care; transportation such as the Senior Rides Program, a volunteer-based transportation service currently offered by this Department, as well, the St. Mary's Transit System (STS) which provides fixed-route buses, ADA paratransit, and the Specialized Statewide Transportation Assistance Program (SSTAP) - door-to-door transportation for eligible older residents and people with disabilities to essential locations; working with the Department of Social Services, Center for Independent Living, Center for Life Enrichment, and other service providers.

Financial Stability

Priority. Increase awareness of financial planning education and resources that can help older adults understand and manage their costs.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success.

We often receive "crisis-driven" calls and inquiries when seniors and/or their family members are seeking information and resources. In an effort to reduce these types of calls, the Department offers an education series program, Keys to Senior Independence, geared toward educating the public, not exclusively the older adult population, that aims to prepare individuals ahead of when they or someone they know has a need for support. Planning for the future can feel daunting, but with helpful information and expert guidance, individuals may become more confident about the choices ahead. People who have questions about managing their finances as they age, those looking for strategies to stay resilient and adapt to life's changes, those who are concerned about protecting their assets and ensuring their wishes are respected and followed may find answers to their questions or learn of the resources available to help them manage their needs.

Keys to Senior Independence was developed, intentionally, to educate program participants at an institution of higher learning where they can experience an environment that fosters teaching and

learning, removing the stigma that may exist within senior activity centers. Over the years we have provided a variety of financial literacy classes with experts in their respective fields. This year, during the first session, Financial Planning, we have a financial advisor scheduled who will help attendees learn how to make the most of their money as they age. Another session, Legal Preparedness, will have representatives from the St. Mary's County Bar Association who will cover key legal tools such as wills, trusts, advance healthcare directives, and more, to help safeguard one's independence. Whether planning for oneself, supporting aging parents, or approaching retirement, the educational series covers ways to protect independence and quality of life.

We will continue to have presentations for older adults at the senior activity centers on the signs of fraud and scams and how to avoid them.

Streamlining Access to Services and Benefits

Priority. Streamlining access to benefits and supports through a No Wrong Door approach, leveraging Maryland Access Point and SHIP, providing a person-centered, home and community-based support through SOAR while aligning other state and local resources.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success.

The Department's Maryland Access Point (MAP) site is the link to health and support services. The St. Mary's County Department of Aging & Human Services works to provide older adults, persons experiencing a disability and caregivers with a single point of entry to access information and referrals to resources and services, provide options counseling regarding benefits and long-term care planning, connect caregivers of older adults and adults with disabilities to services, provide access to services offered by the Department and its partner agencies such as the Southern Maryland Center for Independent Living, the Department of Social Services, the Health Department and other community service providers. The MAP site links active adults to services, activities and programs. Working in coordination with the MAP staff, the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) offers free counseling for individuals receiving Medicare benefits and their family members or caregivers. SHIP counselors can help individuals make informed and impartial decisions about their health insurance needs.

Through the Supporting Older Adults with Resources Programs (SOAR) the Department will have the flexibility of using "SOAR funds" to refine our Senior Care program and tailor the needs of the consumers in the Senior Care program. That will help us support older adults through a healthy aging process, with caregiving assistance, housing stability, and social contact with the goals of reducing emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and premature nursing home placement. By helping older adults remain healthy, independent, active, and engaged, communities lower health care and long-term care costs while strengthening local economies and reducing strain on families and public resources.

Goal 4: Optimize Health, Wellness, and Mobility – Invest in programs that support healthier, more purposeful, and active lifestyles to Marylanders can enjoy longevity and reduce dependency

Equitable Systems of Care

Priority. Supporting St. Mary’s County residents to lead healthy, purposeful, and active lifestyles.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success.

Our Department will continue its promotion of the expansion of access to, and utilization of, community-based programs and services that address long-term care needs of our community’s older adults.

Priority. Continue to provide many community-based programs and services that promote longevity and healthy living, including access to healthy food, physical activity, and social contact.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success.

The provision of a diversified Home-Delivered Meals program that helps seniors age in place. It is funded with Federal monies through the Older Americans Act, state funds, county funds, and donations. Home-Delivered Meals are balanced meals and a friendly visit to homebound seniors who cannot shop or cook for themselves.

Our congregate meals program will continue offering fresh, hot meals weekdays to seniors at the three senior activity centers and one nutrition site for lunch.

Our dietician will provide group nutrition sessions in the senior activity centers and one-on-one nutrition meetings with seniors.

With funding provided by the Commissioners of St. Mary’s County, we will continue the Farmers Feeding St. Mary’s County effort. The program, in collaboration with the University of Maryland Extension Office, local farmers, the produce auction, the Department of Economic Development, Feed St. Mary’s – a community-driven food bank for county residents, and a host of volunteers, provides fresh produce, free to the community and held twice a year in one of the county’s areas of greatest need. We anticipate impacting over 1,000 individuals during each distribution.

We provide the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program to eligible residents aged 60+ with annual “vouchers”, now in the form of a debit card, to purchase fresh, local produce, herbs, and honey from participating farmers' markets from June through November. Vouchers are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Our quarterly Food Committee Meetings involve Department staff, representatives from our food provider, and a senior who eats congregate meals on a regular basis to assess the taste and quality of the meals by way of the food questionnaires.

The three Senior Activity Centers are the focal point for daily meals and special events offered by the Department including social contact, recreation, fitness opportunities, and access to special staff services. The Senior Center Operations Division provides a variety of high quality, dynamic, and affordable programs and activities for the independent senior community that promote good health, fitness, education, socialization, and the development of skills and interests. We promote free and low-cost community wellness and fitness classes through targeted communications, partnerships with other county departments, and the utilization of public spaces.

The Department operates three senior activity centers – Garvey, Loffler, and Northern. Each is open Monday-Friday. The Garvey Senior Activity Center is open until 8 p.m. Monday-Thursday,

Our annual A Way to Wellness: Community Health Fair is open to the public and free of charge. We have over 50 vendors, health screenings, varied presentations, giveaways and more. Our annual Men's Health Day, though focused on men's health issues welcomes the women in their lives for a well-rounded experience. It is free to attendees.

We promote all the Department's programs and services through our Community Programs and Outreach Division using our Aging Road Show.

Priority.

Enhancing transportation options for seniors and all members of the community.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success.

The Senior Rides Program is funded through a grant from the Maryland Transit Administration and the Commissioners of St. Mary's County. This service is available to individuals aged 60 or older who are unable to utilize other public transportation options and lack reliable sources of transportation.

Using volunteer drivers, riders receive door-to-door transportation to medical appointments, social engagements and shopping. All trips are provided using the volunteer's personal vehicle. The Department will attempt to coordinate transportation requests with other public transportation resources.

According to St. Mary's 2025 Charting Our Tomorrow draft comprehensive plan... The transportation system of St. Mary's County is the lifeblood of its communities.

Public Transportation Access and Expansion *There is a clear appreciation for existing public transportation, coupled with a strong desire for improved and expanded services offering greater access. Much of the community supports improving existing bus routes with more frequent service and adding new routes to unserved areas within the county.*

A significant portion also desired new routes to areas outside the county, such as the Washington, D.C. area. Overarching vision for its transportation element is to foster a safe, efficient, accessible, fair, and sustainable network that supports the county's unique character – balancing

its rich agricultural and maritime history with present-day industry and future growth. This involves not only maintaining and improving existing infrastructure but also embracing innovative solutions and expanding multimodal options to meet the evolving needs of its diverse population.

The community desires safe bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Building upon the success of the Three Notch Trail, there continues to be a desire to see more trails in rural areas.

The demand for expanded public transportation options, particularly to unserved areas and the aging population, demonstrates the role of transportation in promoting access to essential services. Improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure not only offers recreational opportunities but also encourages physical activity, contributing to public health outcomes. The need to ensure feasible safety for Amish and Mennonite communities traveling via horse and buggy is another example of addressing the specific transportation needs of diverse populations within the county.

Priority.

Livable communities

Ensure the long-term success of the multi-modal network through strategic financial planning, support for long-range bicycle and pedestrian projects, preservation of future transit corridors, and expansion of public transportation.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success.

Commit to providing expanded pedestrian and bicycle opportunities for both recreation and transportation.

Weave a network of recreational and transportation trails into the fabric of the community by incorporating them into all new land use and development projects.

St. Mary's County, Maryland, offers a diverse mix of livable communities, blending rural charm with suburban convenience, tech-driven jobs, and historic waterfronts. [Leonardtwn](#) (historic, walkable), [California/Lexington Park](#) (STEM hub, active), [Wildewood](#) (family-friendly), and [Charlotte Hall](#) (rural, Amish markets) are popular spots, offering a high quality of life.

- **Recreation & Outdoors:** *The county is surrounded by the Chesapeake Bay, Potomac, and Patuxent Rivers, offering boating, fishing, and crabbing, along with 20+ community parks.*
- **Housing & Neighborhoods:** *Choices range from high-tech suburban homes and new developments to historic homes and serene waterfront properties.*
- **Economic Drivers:** *High-tech jobs are concentrated in the Stem/aerospace sectors, with many jobs associated with NAS Patuxent River and related contractors.*

- **Community Feel:** Often described as a safe, family-oriented environment with a "rural mindset" in many areas, creating a tight-knit atmosphere.

Priority.

Expand access to, and utilization of, community-based behavioral health services that address long-term care needs.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success.

The mental health support services for people of all ages are provided by the Local Health (LHD) Department's Behavioral Health Division. Prior to the LHD becoming the authority on behavior health services, the Department was the hub for behavioral health services in the county, including the Core Service Agency (CSA), and substance use treatment and prevention service coordination.

Goal 4: Optimize Health, Wellness, and Mobility

Nutrition

Priority. Incorporate services which address hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition.

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. The congregate meal program at the senior activity centers remains a vital and growing nutritional program. A variety of special nutrition programs have been offered to attract new program participants. Some of these, such as special menus, culturally tailored menus, or special entertainment activities that incorporate a meal have garnered success. We offer culturally and ethnically sensitive meals on occasion (i.e. during the Lenten season, we provide non-meat meals).

Home delivered meal referrals are received continually. The Department does not have a wait list for Home delivered meals and to date, has been able to serve all who need and qualify for meals, many thanks to the financial support of the County Commissioners. Currently, the Department has 17 routes (12 daily hot meal routes, 5 weekly frozen meal routes). Routes are continuously monitored based on consumer need and changes are made to the meal delivery routes to accommodate consumers in areas of greater social and economic need. All home delivered meal consumers receive shelf-stable emergency meals for use for when meals cannot be delivered, for example, inclement weather. The congregate meal program that began in 2018 at the Cedar Lane senior apartment buildings continues with maximum participation. The Commissioners of St. Mary's County responded to the request for a congregate meals program at Cedar Lane with

funding to support a staff person and a daily lunch (Monday – Friday) for 60 people per day at this location.

The Department’s MAP I&A and Nutrition staff have a food pantry resource directory to provide to consumers seeking food resources. One of the Senior Activity Centers has a Tech Tutor program that assists consumers with troubleshooting on mobile, tablets, or PCs. One of the popular topics is assisting consumers navigate grocery delivery services.

A food committee meets quarterly. The committee consists of Department staff – division manager for senior center operations and the meals program, Department director, food provider representatives, and a participating older adult from each of the three senior activity centers. Meetings are held quarterly to review survey results from older adults who receive either home delivered meals or congregate meals. The Committee discusses the survey results, issues or concerns and possible changes to the menu. The goal is to consistently have a large majority of questionnaire responses in the excellent and satisfactory categories.

The Department hosts, twice a year, the Farmers Feeding St. Mary’s County events, by purchasing and providing fresh produce and meats from local farmers, and made available to the public free of charge. Distributions are held in areas of greater economic need. Several entities contribute to its ongoing success, including the University of Maryland Extension, the Department of Public Works and Transportation, Feed St. Mary’s, the SMC Sheriff’s Office, the Department of Economic Development, and many volunteers.

The Department participates in distribution of the Maryland Department of Agriculture distribution of Senior Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) benefits. MAP I&A staff and Nutrition Program staff assist consumers with the online application process as needed. The Department finds it convenient and efficient to have an on-site farmer’s market, if available, the day of distribution featuring fresh fruits and vegetables so that program recipients can easily purchase produce. However, since the implementation of the electronic debit card, St. Mary’s County has seen significantly fewer vendors participating in the program as many vendors are from the Amish community. Nutrition Education is available at the distribution.

Nutrition Education seminars are available monthly at all three senior activity centers. A registered dietician offers information relevant to senior nutrition. The dietician frequently presents on topics that incorporate the food as medicine approach to prevent manage, and treat chronic conditions. For example, some of the recent presentations were “Diet to Manage Stress,” “Nutrition for Inflammation, and “Nutrition for Eye Health.”

The Department does not plan to allow Title III, C-1 funds to be used for shelf-stable, pick-up, carry-out, drive-through, or similar meals to complement the congregate meals program.

Health Promotion

Priority. Identify funding strategy for health promotion programming

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. Health promotion programming is a significant service offered by the Department. Funding for these programs includes, OAA Title IIIB&D funds, Senior Center Operating Funds (SCOF), local funds, and participant fees. OAA Title IIIB funds are used to support some non-evidence based programming, for example, licensing and training for programs and supplies. OAA Title IIID funds are used to support the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, Geri-Fit, EnhanceFitness, Chronic Disease Self-Management, Tai Ji Quan, and Building Better Caregivers. OAA Title IIID supports licensure, training, promotion, and supplies. County funds are used to support the purchase and maintenance of exercise equipment (i.e. treadmills, ellipticals, stationary bikes, etc.) in the senior activity centers. Participant fees support contracted instructor fees for non-evidence based fitness programs such as yoga, strength training, Zumba, etc. The Department has several health focused special events each year, for example, the Community Health & Wellness Fair and the Men's Health Fair. These events are supported with sponsorships and donations and OAA Title IIIB funds.

Priority. Recruiting, training, and retaining leaders

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. Several different strategies are used for recruiting leaders based on the program need. For several programs, Department staff in the senior activity centers lead programming. Fitness Instructors are recruited on the Department's website and Department publications. The most successful method for recruiting instructors has been word-of-mouth. For volunteer lead programs, the RSVP Coordinator assists in recruiting leaders.

All leaders are trained in Department and county policies and procedures. For evidence-based programming, leaders participate in required training for that specific program. Historically, the Department has partnered with the Living Well Center of Excellence (LWCE) for some training or has purchased licensure and training directly from the licensing agency.

Retention of instructors has been challenging, but the Department has several contracted instructors who have been leading programming for twenty plus years. For paid instructors, the Department offers a competitive hourly rate.

Priority. Selection of Programming

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. Programs are mostly selected based on consumer interest and demand. The Department frequently solicits feedback from older adults in the community and has an ongoing process for consumers to provide input and suggestions. Some of the most successful programming has come as a result of the feedback.

Priority. Health Promotion Partnerships

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. The Department has a licensure agreement with the LWCE and plan to continue with that engagement. The agreement provides licensure permissions, and the Department submits required statistics and surveys to the (LWCE). The Department of Aging & Human Services is involved with the Healthy St. Mary's Partnership (HSMP). HSMP developed Healthy St. Mary's 2020, which is the Community Health

Improvement Plan (CHIP). The plan addresses community health needs including those with the greatest economic and social needs. The Department collaborates with many community partners including state and local government Department, non-profits, and private businesses to bring relevant health information to older adults in the community.

Priority. Health Promotion Outreach

Strategies/Objectives/Measures of Success. The Department's Division of Community Programs and Outreach conducts many outreach activities to drive interest and participation in health promotion programming. The staff members schedule outreach opportunities and provide the Aging Road Show to various groups and at several events throughout the year. The presentation, about 45 minutes in length, provides a comprehensive overview of all the programs and services offered by our Department. We plan, promote and execute several community programs every year that also help in our outreach to the community, such as our Keys to Senior Independence, Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, Farmers Feeding St. Mary's County, The Way to Wellness: A community Health Fair, Veterans Resource Day, and a Document Shredding and Medication Take-Back Event, to name a few.

The Department's newsletter (New Beginning) is a major outreach tool to encourage participation of individuals with the greatest need. We will continue the promotion of our Department and the health promotion resources we offer to older adults through our bi-monthly newsletter, which goes out to approximately 7,000 households, not to mention doctors' offices, libraries, and senior activity centers. Six years ago, the Department implemented a twice weekly e-newsletter that highlights programs in the senior activity centers, including health promotion activities. The e-newsletter goes out to over 3,000 email addresses. The Department will continue to contact groups, churches, agencies, and leaders of the community to familiarize their membership and/or staff with Department programs and services. The utilization of radio, print, billboard, and theatre advertising will continue.