



NORTHWEST REGIONAL COUNCIL 2008 - 20011 AREA PLAN

MISSION

To fulfill its mission, the Northwest Regional Council's Area Agency on Aging is to develop, foster, and advocate for a comprehensive and coordinated service delivery system responsive to the needs of older individuals and persons served by programs administered by the Northwest Regional Council in Island, San Juan, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties.

The service system will

- (1) promote the greatest degree of personal independence and dignity in a home environment for persons capable of self-care with appropriate supportive services, and
- (2) improve the quality of life by removing individual and social barriers to economic and personal independence.

VALUES AND VISION

We value:

Consumer choice and independence. Consumers should have the opportunity to make informed choices about their care situations.

Consumer advocacy and involvement. Consumers acting as their own advocates (when possible) and community members advocating on behalf of consumers should help shape the system and services that can best address consumer needs.

Protecting consumers from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Consumers should have access to resources to help them avoid abuse and exploitation as well as resources for timely and appropriate assistance in responding to problem situations.

Families and other informal supports as the foundation for care. Building on informal supports should be the first step in assisting older people and people with disabilities who need care.

Caregiving as an important and honorable activity. Caregivers, both paid and unpaid, should be valued and supported by communities. Paid caregivers should be appropriately compensated. All caregivers should have access to appropriate assessment, training, support, and respite from their caregiving responsibilities.

Local community awareness of long term care issues, services, and supports. This awareness provides the basis for an effective network of care for consumers.

Local community strengths and assets as central to identifying, prioritizing, and solving problems. Community members and organizations should be involved in developing strategies and services to support older people and younger adults with disabilities.

Service approaches that focus on empowering consumers, family members, and local communities to the greatest extent possible. These approaches should provide adequate information to consumers at the time it is needed, provide services flexible enough to be tailored to consumer needs and desires, and provide adequate training and support for caregivers.

Access for all consumers. Services, information, and facilities should be physically, culturally, and financially accessible, with appropriate design and sensitivity to consumers of all abilities, languages, cultures, and financial capacities.

Services that are comprehensive, cost-effective, flexible, well-coordinated, and consumer-driven. Services should be flexible enough to be tailored to meet consumer needs, be easy to use, and be prudently managed.

Services that meet safe and appropriate quality standards. Services should be of high quality, with continuous quality improvement achieved through examining consumer feedback and refining quality indicators.

Public policy that allows for funding flexibility. We value flexible public policy that allocates funds to local communities to meet local needs. To this end, we advocate for a change in the federally-designated entitlement service for long term care from nursing facilities to home care.

Learning from experience. Services and programs should incorporate as feasible, evidence-based best practices, value honest evaluation by consumers, and grow and change in the context of consumer needs.

Consumer safety. Programs and services should assure safety and consumer protection regarding health behaviors, medication management, and lifestyle choices appropriate for older adults.

Appropriate training in Geriatrics for all professionals. Older adults offer unique challenges with regard to their health and changing sensory and physical abilities. Each professional training program (including, but not limited to medicine, nutrition, social work, architecture/engineering, education, law) should incorporate coursework or other instruction to meet the needs of older adults.

Opportunity for older adults who wish to work or volunteer. Older adults frequently either need to work for pay or wish to use their skills to volunteer. The workforce should honor the skills of people who are older or who have disabilities by offering flexible work schedules, part time work, or telecommuting by individuals who cannot regularly leave their homes.

Opportunities for healthy aging. Community programs which provide activities and exercise for older adults, educational programs, health-related newsletters, and access to free or low-cost screening and prevention services are important to aging well.

Elder-friendly Communities. Communities that provide for the basic needs and mental and physical health and well-being of their elder citizens; that promote opportunities for frail or dependent older people, and that provide access for civic and social engagement are good for people of all ages.

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