

“ Our rapidly growing and diverse older adult population strengthens our state and communities. We’re going to continue our work to make North Carolina the best place in the country to grow older. ”

- Governor Roy Cooper on Executive Order 280 North Carolina’s Commitment to Building an Age-Friendly State

North Carolina has a rapidly growing aging population. By 2028, one-fifth of all North Carolinians will be age 65 or older. By 2031, there will be more adults 65 years and older than children under 18. Most older adults want to “age in place” – living as much of their lives as possible in their homes and communities.

To support older adults, leaders must understand the influence of policy, community, and individual context across the life course. The experience of older adulthood is the culmination of experiences in childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood and a multitude of political, social, and economic factors. Some older adults may not have adequate wealth and income in their retirement due to historic and ongoing racial disparities in education, employment, and housing. Some may have spent less time in the workforce due to caregiving responsibilities. Similarly, one’s marital status or family structure may influence their access to social support and assistance in older adulthood. Economic resources, accessible services, and opportunities for social inclusion can support food security, falls prevention, mobility, and social connectedness for individuals as they age.

There is a wide array of responsible parties needed to take action to fulfill the recommendations and strategies from the NCIOM Task Force on Healthy Aging that are detailed in this report. State level policy makers and local community leaders need to address the economic and social circumstances of those who are older adults now and those of us who hope to age to that status. These leaders are also important stewards of financial resources for programs that address many needs of older adults. Individuals and community leaders need to address ageism and create communities that help everyone have an opportunity to experience healthy aging. State leaders, program administrators, and many others need to ensure that the programs and services that serve older adults do so regardless of where they live, their economic background, or other aspects of their identities. State and local leaders also must ensure there is attention and action to address the workforce to serve older adults.

In response to our state’s demographic changes and the expressed needs of this population, Governor Roy Cooper, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services’ Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS), AARP NC, and other stakeholders have initiated multisector strategic planning to ensure that state organizations adequately meet the needs of older adults presently and all North Carolinians as they age. In addition to calling on the leaders identified in this report to take action, the task force is encouraged by the opportunity presented through the DAAS multisector plan for aging, known as All Ages, All Stages NC, and strongly supports their stated purpose:

“ ‘All Ages, All Stages NC: A Roadmap for Aging and Living Well’ is North Carolina’s groundbreaking multisector plan for aging (MPA). This comprehensive initiative aims to provide a strategic framework and practical guidelines to ensure that individuals of all ages and stages of life can thrive and age gracefully within the state. All Ages, All Stages NC recognizes the diverse needs and aspirations of North Carolina’s residents, offering a roadmap that promotes holistic well-being, equitable access to services, and vibrant community engagement. By fostering collaboration between government, communities, and individuals, NC’s MPA will create a future where every person can enjoy a fulfilling and empowered life, regardless of their age or circumstances. ”

- NCDHHS, Division of Aging and Adult Services,
<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/aging-and-adult-services/mpa-all-ages-all-stages-nc>