

RECOMMENDATION 6
Strengthen Existing Programs and Services

As North Carolina's aging population continues to grow, it becomes imperative to adapt and bolster existing programs and services to meet the needs of older adults. While federal, state, and local programs for older adults have existed for decades, the aging population, and their needs, have evolved over time. Between 2020 and 2040, the proportion of the North Carolina population aged 65 and older is projected to increase from 17% to 21%. Many older adults, especially those residing in rural or underserved areas, may not have access to vital services, or they may be unaware of the availability of services. Additionally, barriers such as financial constraints, social isolation, geographic limitations, physical or sensory disability, and availability of technology can hinder access to these essential services. Hence, enhancing the knowledge of existing programs and making necessary modifications and investments is crucial to promoting health aging.

AGING SERVICES IN NORTH CAROLINA

Many existing programs in our state provide services to help older adults remain independent. Across 95 of 100 counties in North Carolina, there are around 170 senior centers.⁶ These centers work to leverage resources to support the health and well-being of older adults with information and referral to services, home-delivered or group meals, transportation, educational sessions, exercise classes, and much more.^A

Food programs such as congregate meals, home-delivered meals (e.g., Meals on Wheels), the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) help older adults who need access to food.

Programs such as adult day programs, the Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), the Centers for Independent Living North Carolina Statewide Independent Living Council, State/County Special Assistance In-Home Program for Adults, and home modification help older adults live safely and successfully within the community when their health and/or mobility has limited their ability to live independently at home.

The strategies to achieve **Recommendation #6 – Strengthen Existing Programs and Services**, call on ways to sustain and enhance programs that are already serving many North Carolinians, particularly to meet the needs of those who are not currently reached.

A Individual and group services vary by senior center location.