



STRATEGY 15

Address Cultural Stigmas of Aging

State and local agencies and partners should increase opportunities for intergenerational community interactions by:

- a. Redeveloping/growing programs like Senior Education Corps, AmeriCorps Seniors (Foster Grandparent and other programs), AARP Foundation Experience Corps, and NC Education Corps.
- b. Pursuing philanthropic support for resources/collaboratives to help parks and recreation, arts, Senior Games/Silver Arts, cooperative extensions, senior centers, schools, libraries, faith-based partners, etc., to develop intergenerational programming.

Desired Result – Create mutually beneficial experiences that address the social needs of older adults and members of younger generations and increase social connections.

Why does the task force recommend this strategy? –

Intergenerational community interaction is characterized by meaningful contact between older adults and younger people. These interactions allow both age groups the chance to experience relationships that can reduce social isolation and combat ageism, which refers to a negative aging stereotype that includes discriminatory actions and attitudes toward older adults.⁶⁴ With an intergenerational approach through programs like the Senior Education Corps and AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent programs, the needs and interests of both generations can be engaged. Intergenerational integration can enhance mutual understanding and contribute to feelings of belonging to a wider community.⁶⁵ The intergenerational framework values the unique contributions of each generation while respecting the interdependence of the involved groups.

Context – Intergenerational interactions have positive effects on all parties involved:

- For younger generations, relationships with older adults can improve perceptions of aging (i.e., reduce ageism), increase the likelihood that they seek advice from older adults, improve prosocial behavior, increase volunteerism, and improve attitudes about school and the future.⁶⁶
- For older generations, relationships with younger generations can improve physical activity and function, increase social interactions, improve executive function and memory, and decrease experiences of depression.⁶⁷

Examples of Intergenerational Programming and Opportunities

The AARP Foundation Experience Corps is a community-based volunteer program that focuses on students, schools, and older adult volunteers. As an evidence-based intervention, the model tracks both student and volunteer outcomes; for example, evaluation of Social-Emotional Learning outcomes of students in the program found significant improvements personal responsibility, relationship skills, and decision-making, while volunteers felt helpful, more active, and like they had accomplished something.^{68,69} In addition, volunteers experiences improved executive function and memory.⁷⁰

The North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services offers intergenerational programming through its senior centers, though there is no requirement to do so, nor is there an accessible list of the facilities that offer these programs. Incorporating intergenerational practices into current programming can respond to community needs and offer a wider range of resources for both older and younger adults.

The Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) regulations allow for the use of grant funds for public services activities such as programming for older adults and educational programs; the HCCBG can cover the cost of operations and maintaining the facility in which the programming takes place.⁷¹

How would this impact the health of older adults?



Instructing youth about normal aging and tips to prevent falls can enhance the safety of intergenerational households.



Older adults who participate in intergenerational programs have been shown to sustain physical function and strength.



Intergenerational programming focused around nutritious meals, sharing of recipes, and cooking can benefit youth and older adults.



Older adults who make connections with members of younger generations improve their social connectedness.

“ [For older adults] it is their developmental stage of life that provides them with experiences, skills, and abilities that are especially well suited for addressing the growing needs of young people, skills, and abilities that are underutilized and undervalued. ”

- Carr DC and Gunderson JA. *The Third Age of Life: Leveraging the Mutual Benefits of Intergenerational Engagement*

“ AmeriCorps training prepared me to tutor elementary grade students struggling with reading and writing. The youngsters I worked with were all bilingual, but I am not. Because of this difference, we had valuable things to teach each other. This experience was one of my most fulfilling service moments over the years. The emotional reward to witness students gaining confidence and pride is indescribable. ”

- AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer, <https://americorps.gov/stories/halsy-taylor-0>