Outreach to Older Adults

October 2012

PRESENTED BY:

AGE OPTIONS

Connecting Older Adults with Community-based Resources and Options

The Area Agency on Aging of Suburban Cook County, since 1974
What We Will Cover Today

• Who Are “Older Adults?”
• Older Adult Services Network
• Working with Trusted Partners
• Methods of Outreach
Who are “Older Adults?”

• Definition of “older adult” varies based on program, circumstances (55+, 60+, 65+, etc.)
• No one method of outreach will be successful in reaching all “older adults”
  – Major generational differences among age groups (55-64 vs. 85+)
  – Urban vs. rural areas
  – Education
  – Culture/ethnicity, language barriers
Older Adult Services Network

• Older Americans Act – federal legislation that funds services for older adults and their family caregivers
  – Established U.S. Administration on Aging, state units on Aging, and Area Agencies on Aging to plan and facilitate services
  – Services include: information & referral services, nutrition services, senior centers, caregiver supports, health promotion/disease prevention, senior community service employment program, elder abuse/neglect, transportation, legal assistance, etc.
Older Adult Services Network

• Illinois
  – Illinois Department on Aging
    • 13 Area Agencies on Aging
      – AgeOptions – suburban Cook County
        » 70 local provider agencies

• Care Coordination Units (CCU’s) – implement state Community Care Program services (case management, in-home support services)
Working with Trusted Partners

• Local older adults services network (Area Agencies on Aging, Care Coordination Units, senior centers)
• Home delivered/congregate meal programs
• Retired Senior Volunteer programs
• Senior buildings (low income buildings run by housing authorities or religious groups; independent and assisted living facilities, etc.)
Working with Trusted Partners

- Churches and faith-based organizations
- Higher education programs for older adults
- Health care access points (hospitals, home health agencies, primary care clinics, pharmacies, physicians, etc.)
- Local services (barbers/hairdressers, etc.)
- Local police departments – Elderly Service Officers (ESO’s), TRIAD/SALT councils
Working with Trusted Partners

• Social groups – AARP chapters, Rotary club, BINGO, cultural organizations

• Parks/recreation departments, libraries (particularly those with regularly scheduled activities for older adults)

• Legislators’ offices
Methods of Outreach

• Best methods depend on location, culture, age group, literacy, etc. – utilize focus group or an advisory council representative of the community trying to reach

• face-to-face, telephone, digital (in that order) – Ensure accessibility of facilities and websites

• Use of volunteers – peer-to-peer education
Methods of Outreach

- Newspapers, newsletters
- Flyers, brochures, tip sheets distributed at local ‘trusted partner’ sites
- TV, radio advertisements
- Internet
  - Ensure accessibility and ease of use
  - “Younger” older adults tend to use internet much more frequently than older counterparts, but increasing use among all older adults
Methods of Outreach

• Language and images matter!
  – Use affirmative, person-centered language (e.g., “people with disabilities”). Avoid words with negative connotations (e.g., “elderly” and “senior” tend to be perceived negatively)
  – Use images of real people (not cartoons) and are representative of target group(s). Ideal to use images of people that actually live in the community if possible (face recognition).

• Use focus groups to test perceptions
Methods of Outreach

• Accessibility considerations

(Accessibility is an important consideration for outreach and materials regardless of age. “Older adult” ≠ disability!)

– Vision

• Large print, clear fonts
• Colors with strong contrast – black on white
• Minimize “busyness” – words written over pictures, too many images/words on a page (simple is better!)
Methods of Outreach

• Accessibility considerations
  – Hearing
    • Minimize background noise
    • Look directly at person and speak clearly; do not cover mouth, yell, or over-annunciate words
    • Assistive devices/technology
    • Make Medicare Work Coalition (MMW) Toolkit for working with individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing (HoH):
      http://www.ageoptions.org/whatwedo/mmw.cfm (under “Toolkits”)
Methods of Outreach

• Accessibility considerations
  – Mobility
    • Ensure that facilities are accessible to individuals with limited mobility when providing face-to-face counseling, outreach presentations, etc.
    • Lack of transportation can be a major barrier for individuals who are homebound due to mobility limitations or other health issues. Outreach to these populations is best done through trusted community agencies that provide home visits or peer-to-peer outreach via family, friends, and neighbors.
Thank you!

If you have questions, contact:

Erin Weir
Manager of Health Care Access

AgeOptions

(800)699-9043
TTY: (708)524-1653
erin.weir@ageoptions.org

Over the past 30 years, AgeOptions has established a national reputation for meeting the needs, wants and expectations of older adults in suburban Cook County. We are recognized as a leader in developing and helping to deliver innovative community-based resources and options to the evolving, diverse communities we serve.