

Elder Options

INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER

SETTING THE PERSPECTIVE

There are over 492,657 older persons age 60 years or older residing in the sixteen counties comprising mid-Florida. Most of these citizens have spent years as productive citizens looking forward to the retirement years. For a large share of older persons the lack of sufficient income and/or employment opportunities becomes a critical intervening factor.

Older persons in mid-Florida are becoming increasingly active in their communities and political groups. This activity has resulted in greater attention to the needs of older persons. It has also resulted in the development of a wide range of publicly supported programs, benefits and services for the elderly. While national programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and Food Stamps have been developed to address the income needs of the older population, other programs such as nutrition, senior centers and in-home care have been implemented to serve the social and supportive needs of seniors. Older persons pride themselves on self-sufficiency and independence and want most of all to support themselves. Much has been accomplished in mid-Florida through various programs and benefits to assist our older population, but much more help and opportunity is needed to ensure dignity for older persons in their later years.

WHAT WE DO

Elder Options' mission is to ensure that older adults have a trusted and unbiased place to turn for information, resources, and assistance that meets their unique needs and enhances their quality of life. We advocate for and cooperatively work with communities to strengthen support systems and create new and innovative service options that focus on personal choice and independence.

Elder Options serves as the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) and the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for Mid-Florida. The ADRC provides information on programs that can help older people, caregivers and adults with disabilities remain active and independent. The ADRC also serves as a clearinghouse of information to people of all ages connecting them with information and resources for a variety of long term care needs and aging issues. When you call the ADRC, your questions and concerns will be addressed by knowledgeable and caring staff members who will link you with up-to-date information about the wide array of resources available to meet your needs.

Elder Options also develops service plans and awards financial assistance to local service provider agencies such as councils on aging and social service departments for the provision of direct services to older persons living in mid-Florida. These highly visible local organizations translate state and federal monies into tangible community-based services for older individuals. The Agency's three principal funding sources are (1) the federal Older Americans Act providing nutrition and supportive services and (2) the Florida Community Care for the Elderly (CCE) program providing home-based services as an alternative to institutional care; and (3) Medicaid Waivers providing home and facility based services to eligible frail elders.

For more information on our agency, please visit us on the web at [http:// www.agingresources.org](http://www.agingresources.org)

ADVISORY COUNCIL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Elder Options Advisory Council, which is mandated by the federal Older Americans Act, is a direct means for older persons in the planning and service area to have their interests represented in Elder Options' activities. This representation is fostered by Advisory Council members' direct participation in programs, communication with other service recipients, as well as their strategic relationships with community groups, senior organizations and with Elder Options' Staff and Board of Directors. Therefore, it is important for Advisory Council members to have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities both to Elder Options and to the community that they represent.

Elder Options Advisory Council is a voluntary group of citizens who receive information from Elder Options and take that information back to their communities. The Council also provides guidance, advice, and support to Elder Options to plan, develop, coordinate and administer services to older persons. They also serve as a critical linkage between Elder Options and the local elderly community. The Advisory Council's most important obligation is to help Elder Options carry out the intent and objectives of the Older Americans Act. It fulfills this obligation by working with Elder Options Board and Staff and through community leadership.

Elder Options Board of Directors and Elder Options Advisory Council are both essential components of Elder Options. They both serve as primary sources of leadership and community support. However, for the Board and Council to function effectively, a distinction must be made between them. Elder Options Board of Directors is the Agency's governing body. It is legally responsible for the actions of the Agency. The Board of Directors establishes policy for the operations of Elder Options and develops procedures to be followed by the Staff for carrying out those policies.

Elder Options Advisory Council offers advice and recommendations to help Elder Options Board and Staff accomplish goals and implement policies and procedures. Elder Options Advisory Council has no official governing power, and its authority is derived from its outreach and information sharing in the community and its ability to advise the Board and Staff with respect to needs, services, problems, and opportunities to improve service delivery to older persons.

In order for you to effectively exercise responsibility as an Advisory Council member, it is important that you become acquainted with the way the Council operates, its responsibilities and powers, and the specific rights and responsibilities you have as a Council member. It is equally important that Council members understand the major aspects of the Older Americans Act and Florida's CCE program, how systems of aging services have developed, what constitutes those systems, and how they work.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

As a voluntary Council member, you are not expected to be technically proficient in all aspects of the field of aging. During the time that you are a member of the Advisory Council, you will periodically have questions about the programs and operations of Elder Options. When you have questions, you

should contact a Staff member for answers and clarification. An informed Council member is an effective Council member.

To assist you in becoming acquainted with the programs and operations of Elder Options, we have compiled a list of questions most commonly posed by Council members. Please review these questions and answers and please remember to ask the Staff to answer your own questions as they arise.

What is Elder Options?

Elder Options is a non-profit private agency designated by the State of Florida to plan, coordinate and advocate for the development of a comprehensive service delivery system for older persons in Mid-Florida. It works with federal, state and local officials; elderly constituents; service providers and the private voluntary sector to coordinate existing services and stimulate new ones.

What is the Area Plan on Aging?

The Area Plan is a formal contract between Elder Options and the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, which explains how Elder Options intends to carry out its responsibilities under the Older Americans Act. The Area Plan also projects the use of funds, which are made available to Elder Options from federal, state and local public and private sources. In keeping with the Area Plan, Elder Options contracts with local service providers in all sixteen counties of the planning and service area (PSA) for the delivery of direct services to older persons.

What is the PSA?

A planning and service area (PSA) is a geographical area designated by the State of Florida for purposes of planning, development, delivery and overall administration of services under the Area Plan. There are eleven PSAs in Florida. The PSA for Mid-Florida is the largest in the State covering about 11,000 square miles, or about 21% of Florida's geographical area.

Counties included in our PSA are:

Alachua	Dixie	Lafayette	Putnam
Bradford	Gilchrist	Lake	Sumter
Citrus	Hamilton	Levy	Suwannee
Columbia	Hernando	Marion	Union

Who runs Elder Options?

Elder Options is a private non-profit corporation originally chartered on July 6, 1977. The Corporation is governed through a duly adopted set of by-laws, which are periodically reviewed by the Board of Directors and amended as necessary. The Board of Directors consists of members elected in such a manner as to ensure equitable geographical representation of the PSA.

Does the Advisory Council Assist the Board?

Yes. The Advisory Council meets every other month and receives information from Elder Options to take back to their communities and also provides guidance to Elder Options Board and Staff on such matters as community programs, the Area Plan, and actions affecting older persons and local interests and needs of mid- Florida's older population.

How is Elder Options/AAA organized?

The AAA is organized in such a manner as to provide maximum effectiveness and efficiency of operations with a small professional staff. The staff is organized into four principal offices that are supported by various functional areas. The Office of Financial Operations consists of one division: Management Services, as well as Financial Reporting and Information Technology services. The Office of Access and Eligibility consists of two divisions: Consumer Counseling & Enrollment, and Information/Referral and Assistance. The Office of Community Care Coordination consists of one division: Community Outreach and Healthy Aging, as well as Care Transitions and Caregiver Support and Training. The Office of Program Operations consists of one division: Contract Management; and Quality and Compliance, as well as the Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Elders (SHINE) program. The operations of Elder Options are managed by a team approach under the leadership of the Executive Director. Each staff member assumes a significant degree of responsibility and control of the various functional areas of agency operations.

What services are provided under Elder Options programs?

A major function of Elder Options is to shape and encourage direct services development to meet the needs and priorities identified in the Area Plan. Elder Options is highly dependent on community input for making decisions about the types of services it funds and where services are located. The following categories of service are provided under the Area Plan:

- Older Americans Act Services (OAA) - The OAA provides a variety of in-home and community-based services such as caregiver training and support, chore, congregate dining, home-delivered meals, homemaker services, information and referral, transportation and nutrition education. The OAA also funds programs providing specialized services. For example:
 - Title III C of the OAA funds the Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP), which provides reimbursement for the purchase of United States-produced agricultural and other food commodities for use in nutrition projects operating under approved OAA contracts.
 - Title III D of the OAA funds the Disease Prevention and Health promotion Program which provides evidence-based disease prevention and health promotion services and information at senior centers, meal sites and other appropriate locations.

- Title III E of the OAA funds the Family Caregiver Education and Support Program which provides support for the family caregiver through screening and assessment for resource referral, community outreach, educational and training opportunities tailored for the family caregiver, support group development, respite opportunities and caregiver forums.
- Community Care for the Elderly (CCE) - Cost-effective services like homemaker, chore, adult day care, respite care, home delivered meals and other similar services designed to assist frail older persons to stay in their own homes rather than entering nursing homes.
- The Alzheimer's Disease Initiative (ADI) - Provides services to address the special needs of individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related memory disorders.
- Home Care for the Elderly (HCE) - Provides a subsidy payment to help caregivers maintain low-income elders in their own home or in the home of the caregiver.
- Medicaid Waiver (MW) – Assists Medicaid eligible frail elders and persons with disabilities who are at risk of nursing home placement to maintain independence while living at home or in the community.
- The Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC): The ADRC provides information and assistance, makes referrals, determines program eligibility and provides long-term care choice counseling to all elders in need of care regardless of geographic or economic considerations. The ADRC also serves as a clearinghouse of information to people of all ages connecting them with information and resources for a variety of long term care needs and aging issues.

What specifically is my role as a Council Member?

Your role as a member of Elder Options Advisory Council is to be an informed and concerned representative of your area. You will receive information about programs and services from Elder Options staff and be able to take that information back to your local community. You will also use your knowledge of your community and the needs of its older population, your personal skills and experience, and the information provided to you by older persons and others to advise Elder Options Board and Staff regarding the aging services that are delivered in the planning and service area.

What are my responsibilities as a Council Member?

- 1) Provide input into the development and administration of Elder Options' Area Plan.
- 2) Receive information about programs and services from Elder Options staff and be able to take that information back to your local community.
- 3) Assist with the conduct of public hearings.

- 4) Represent the interests of older persons.
- 5) Review, comment, and advise Elder Options Board and Staff on all community policies, programs, and actions which affect older persons.
- 6) Assist with performing needs assessment; i.e., surveying to determine what services elders need.
- 7) Participate on task forces, standing committees, and/or steering committees.
- 8) Foster communication between Elder Options and the local service providers.
- 9) Upon the direction and approval of Elder Options Board, testify or making presentations at local and state legislative hearings, meetings, or conferences.
- 10) Assist in recruiting and training of volunteers.

Are there any federal or state regulations that apply directly to the Advisory Council?

Yes. Elder Options is required to comply with the Florida Open Records Law. All of Elder Options records are considered public records and must be made available, upon request, to the general public.

Elder Options is considered a covered entity under the Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Among other things, HIPAA regulates all aspects of health care data that is collected and exchanged between health care providers and those entities that pay for the cost of the care. HIPAA also has far reaching rules intended to protect the security and privacy of personal health information that is stored and transmitted through computer networks. While Elder Options Advisory Council members only rarely come into contact with protected health information, a client complaint, grievance, or other related matter may cause the Advisory Council to review a client's protected health information. In keeping with the confidentiality requirements of HIPAA, Elder Options requests that Advisory Council members agree to and sign a "Confidentiality Agreement."

When does the Advisory Council meet?

Elder Options Advisory Council meets on the second Wednesday of every other month. Council members serving on a Task Force or Committee will also have regularly scheduled meetings.

Will I be sent notices of my next meeting?

Yes! You will receive advance written notice of regularly scheduled Council meetings. You will also receive minutes; any special announcements, and reports.

What do I need to know about aging to be a good Council Member?

You need to have a general idea of what the aging network is and how services are provided to address the needs and problems experienced by the older population. A great deal of information is presented in this handbook to help you learn about the aging network and how it operates to benefit older persons. You should also ask Elder Options staff to explain any programs, terminology, etc. which are confusing or difficult to understand.

What is my relationship with other Council Members?

You are co-workers...members of a team with the goal of ensuring the development and operation of a comprehensive and coordinated system of services for the elderly in the mid- Florida planning and service area.

Can I bring a friend to Council meetings?

Yes. It may be an interesting education for your friend.

Is there a limit to the number of Council meetings I can miss?

Occasionally, everyone becomes ill, or has an emergency and must miss a meeting. If you must be absent from a regularly scheduled meeting, we would appreciate it if you would notify Elder Options' office. This will provide us with information on who cannot attend and why. There are a number of Council meetings you can miss. However, after a member has missed four consecutive meetings, he/she is removed from the Council.

Is membership on the Council going to cost me money?

Your time and your willingness to serve as a member of this Council are your voluntary contributions to your community. Your travel while serving on this Council is reimbursed. Hopefully, any loss to you other than the time you contribute, should be minimal.

At every Council meeting you are provided a travel reimbursement form. You should complete this form and return it to Elder Options' staff. Your travel reimbursement check will arrive by mail at your home within a reasonable period of time.

What skills do I need as a Council Member?

You need many skills, but no specific skill. You need to be able to listen to the needs of older persons in your community; to listen to information about issues currently relevant to the aging network; to ask questions about ideas, services or trends which may have an impact on aging services in your area; and to speak up for what you believe. In other words, you need to be able to listen, to speak, to question, to wonder and to understand.

How can I find out what my particular community needs are?

The best way to determine your local community needs is by talking to members of your community. You may wish to speak with the staff of local programs funded by Elder Options. You may also wish to speak to members of your County Commission, local educators, local service providers, clergy, your neighbors, and your friends. All of their opinions are valid. The aging network may not be able to address all of the needs in the community, but we do need to know about the needs in the community.

What am I expected to take back to the community?

You are expected to take back to the community any information you gather about aging services that are occurring. Communication is a two way street. Because of your unique position on the Council, you are able to bring information from the community to the Council as well as to take back to your community information about the aging network and programs and services for older persons.

What is the composition of the Advisory Council?

According to the Older Americans Act, Elder Options Advisory Council must include individuals and representatives of community organizations who will help to enhance the leadership role of Elder Options in developing community-based systems of services.

The Advisory Council must be comprised of:

- (1) More than 50 percent older persons, including minority individuals who are participants or who are eligible to participate in OAA programs;
- (2) Representatives of older persons;
- (3) Representatives of health care provider organizations, including providers of veterans' health care, if appropriate;
- (4) Representatives of supportive services provider organizations;
- (5) Persons with leadership experience in the private and voluntary sectors;
- (6) Local elected officials; and
- (7) The general public.