Introduction or Overview

In 2008, the City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS)/Harris County Area Agency on Aging (HCAAA) spearheaded a dialogue to discuss and document the issues our city’s older adults face in navigating their central domains of life. This collaborative discussion produced a comprehensive view of the aging community across eight domains: Health and Well-Being, Access to Quality Care, Basic Needs: (Food, Clothing and Utilities), Housing, Transportation and Mobility, Safety and Security, Civic Engagement/Volunteerism, Employment, Spirituality, Culture, Recreation and Lifelong Learning. The exploration led to the publication of the City’s first document which identified resources and needs in Aging Service Delivery: The Aging Agenda (Agenda).

Methods or Program Description

HDHHS/HCAAA partnered with local leaders of national organizations, regional representatives of state agencies, chief executive staff and other non profit senior services organizational staff, Texas Medical Center representatives, Universities and, most importantly—our subject matter experts—older adults. Designated leaders guided workgroups to research, review and assess existing data that identified available services, “promising practices,” resources and gaps for the community’s older adults across the eight domains with recommendations made for each to allow older adults to age in place successfully.

Results

The Aging Agenda serves as a source document to inform and instruct the aging community network, influencing additional ideas and actions beyond the initial recommendations. It has been used to direct advocacy and actions as well as guide the leverage of new funding. The Agenda established a framework to address the needs as seen by the aging community and the agencies who are a part of this strategic initiative to maintain a coalition to maximize utilization of the limited resources to ensure Houston’s seniors are able to age in place successfully.

Future Directions

The Agenda will continue to serve as a dynamic source document to guide service delivery and the coordination of resources among partnering organizations tasked with meeting the needs of Seniors in the Greater Houston area. With baby boomers aging into their senior years at the rate of 10,000 a day, available resources will continue to fall far short of demand. Systematic collaboration and coordination is essential to avoid duplication, facilitate leveraging, and ensure equitable appropriation of available funds and resources; as well as serve as a model for future age-friendly initiatives such as the AARP network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities initiative.

For more information contact Harris County Area Agency on Aging at 1-800-213-8471 or visit our web-site: http://www.houstontx.gov/health/Aging/