

NCOA/NISC SELF-ASSESSMENT and ACCREDITATION MANUAL

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT and IMPLEMENTATION

PRINCIPLE

A senior center's program shall provide a broad range of group and individual activities and services that respond to the needs and interests of older adults, their families and caregivers in the community or service area.

RATIONALE

A senior center seeks to fulfill its mission and achieve its goals and objectives through its program. A senior center's program encompasses all activities and services offered by the senior center and also those it makes accessible and available to participants through linkages with other agencies. The participants of a senior center should be in the forefront of the program development. Programs at a senior center are implemented by and with, **not for**, its participants.

Effective program planning and development begin with specific identification of the needs of the population in the geographic area to be served. Planning should take into account suggestions and information gathered from participants, prospective participants, paid and unpaid staff, other service providers, community agency leaders and the latest best practice models and gerontology research. Planning should also take into account the changing characteristics and needs of participants, availability and demand for services and the human and fiscal resource of the senior center and the community.

Strategic planning produces fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide an organization. This process was discussed in the Purpose Standard. In the process of program planning and development the following should be considered:

- The fit of the plan into the center's mission statement;
- The populations and geographic area identified;
- An examination of the needs and interests of the population;
- A resolution that the services and activities will address the needs of the community;
- A determination of resources needed and their availability; and
- Program evaluation to help determine courses of action. (Program Evaluation is outlined in the Evaluation Standard.)

As senior centers prepare for program implementation, they face the challenge of providing a wide spectrum of services and activities that respond to the characteristics of their diverse groups of participants. The phenomenon of aging well has resulted in many senior centers serving two (2) or even three (3) generations at the same time. The characteristics and needs we may have once attributed to a certain age are no longer holding true. Ninety-year olds are using computers alongside the fifty-five year olds. Exercise classes and fitness centers have participants of all ages. The activity may be slightly different, but the goal is the same. Providing the services and activities for a diverse group of people is one of the greatest

challenges for senior centers in the twenty-first century.

Older adults not only want to remain physically healthy and active into later years, but they additionally are concerned about their mental health and cognitive ability. It is easy to recognize activities that stimulate our thinking processes; however these are not the only activities that stimulate good brain health. Research shows that the brain can increase in capacity, as well as maintain cognitive skills through a variety of physical and social activities. The studies of noted neuropsychologist Dr. Paul Nussbaum, of the University of Pittsburgh, have shown that physical activity, socialization, spirituality and good nutrition are equally important.

Age diversity is only one challenge that senior centers face. A center may serve people with varying income levels. There may be individuals who have recently immigrated to this country, or who have been here many years but still practice traditions from their homeland. There will be participants with varying abilities due to chronic illness or a life-threatening event. Transportation and access to service may be a major challenge for participants who want to attend a senior center.

A senior center should offer information and support in a way that empowers participants to understand how to solve their own problems and make their own choices about services and activities. All programs should operate with a positive view and expectation of the older adult.

Many older adults are isolated because of geographic conditions, socio-economic barriers

or health-related hardships. Finding these isolated or hard-to-reach members of the community, identifying their needs and linking them with available services may take extra efforts but should be part of the mission of the senior center. Many times grants or special funds are available to reach these individuals if a senior center takes the time for research. Private funders and government granters are realizing that providing services to the isolated older adult can often save costs in the future.

Most importantly, the participants, program planning committees, paid and unpaid staff should be representative of the community. Senior Centers should make special effort to ensure that no group is overtly or covertly excluded from program participation. A review of formal and informal procedures should be carried out regularly to ensure that no barriers have been established.

Frequently ethical and procedural questions may be raised when planning and implementing activities or services. If the following questions are considered and a procedure is in place it may eliminate confusion and embarrassment. Some of these questions are:

- Is there a need to set criteria for a person to participate?
- Is special consent needed from the participant?
- Are there risks associated with participating that individuals should be informed about?
- Is there a need for more information on a participant than already is recorded?
- Is confidentiality of information being maintained?
- Do instructors or service providers have necessary credentials and insurance?

PROGRAM PLANNING and IMPLEMENTATION STANDARD CRITERIA

A. Program Planning and Development

1. The planning and development of a senior center's program shall involve a combination of participants, paid and unpaid staff, community members and governing structure.
2. As often as possible, program planning and development should be in the hands of the adult participants of the senior center.
3. Program planning is a continuous process that includes:
 - a. Identifying the needs and interests of older adults in the senior center's service area, focusing on all adults not just participants;
 - b. Developing annual program plans that reflect the senior center's mission, goals and objectives;
 - c. If necessary, identifying who is to be served by defining the service area (population and geographic);
 - d. Identifying community resources that support and strengthen activities and services;
 - e. Analyzing the best way to provide programs;
 - f. Developing guidelines for ethical issues related to the delivery of activities and services;
 - g. Identifying resources needed to complement, modify or increase senior center programs;
 - h. Developing a program delivery plan that will ensure that it is accessible to those in need of its services or activities; and
 - i. Setting up monitoring and evaluation procedures for use as a basis for program modification and future planning.

B. Program Implementation

1. In order to serve the diverse group of older people, a senior center should examine various methods and locations for delivering its programs and services. Ideas to be considered are:
 - a. Program delivery at various times (early morning, evening and weekends).
 - b. Program delivery at places other than the senior center (housing units, malls, book stores, other gathering places, in homes).
 - c. Collaboration with other organizations to provide program or services at the senior center.
 - d. Acceptance of referrals from other agencies to provide services or programs to participants.
2. A senior center's programs shall respond to participants' interrelated yet diverse needs and interests.
3. Program and services should take a holistic approach and consider the whole person.
4. Programs should take a proactive approach to meeting participant's needs.
5. Activities shall promote personal growth by providing opportunities for:
 - a. Socialization through activities that promote working in a group setting;
 - b. Mental stimulation through intellectual activities;
 - c. Increased cognitive functioning by learning new skills;
 - d. The opportunity for choices;
 - e. Provision of information so participant can make their own decisions.

- f. Skill development for employment or personal growth;
 - g. Development of self-efficacy that leads to independence;
 - h. Leadership development;
 - i. Development of creative capacities and engagement in creative and artistic endeavors;
 - j. Exploration of various racial and ethnic cultures and geographic regions of the world;
 - k. Participation in delivering and promoting activities that improve one's community;
 - l. Participation in physical activity appropriate to the broad spectrum of individual capabilities and interests; and
 - m. Intergenerational activities that promote understanding across generational cohorts.
6. A senior center's program shall respond to individual differences such as lifestyle, ethnicity, values, experiences, needs, interests, abilities, skills, age and health status by providing opportunities for a variety of types and levels of involvement, including:
- a. Small and large group activities
 - b. High and low activity levels
 - c. Spectator and participatory activities
 - d. Intergenerational activities

C. Program Availability

1. A senior center shall have programs and services available at least 30 hours per week, either at a main site or in an off-site location.
2. This could include activities made available during morning, afternoon or evening hours.
3. The senior center should seek input from participants as well as age-eligible individuals regarding time and location of program delivery.
4. Facilities can be made available outside normal business hours by using unpaid staff to oversee building.
5. Senior center program hours can be expanded and a new audience served by sponsoring activities at a site where seniors live or gather (mall, local coffee shop, senior living facility or care facility).

ITEMS FOR ON-SITE REVIEW NOTEBOOK

- Description of programs and services that show senior center meets the standard criteria as outlined in **B Program implementation #1, 5 and 6.**
- List of hours when programs or services are available and where they are available.

STANDARDS REQUIRED FOR ACCREDITATION

- Program delivery shall be of a diverse nature in order to meet at least one (1) of the following:
 - Meeting at various times of the day and week, including evening or weekends;
 - Delivery of programs or services at locations other than the senior center facility; and/or
 - Collaborating with other agency/organization to deliver their programs/services at the senior center facility.

- Program/service activities shall promote personal growth by providing opportunities to develop in twelve (12) of these areas:
(Programs must have taken place in the past year.)
 - Socialization
 - Mental stimulation
 - Improve cognitive function
 - Opportunity to make choices
 - Presentation of information necessary to make decisions regarding lifestyle
 - Skill development
 - Self-efficacy
 - Practice and learn leadership skills
 - Creative aptitude
 - Exploration of different cultures
 - Exploration of different geographic regions of the world
 - Community pride and ability to create change in the community
 - Physical ability through organized movement classes
 - Intergenerational activities

- It is required that a senior center makes programs/services available for a minimum of 30 hours per week.