

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF

HEALTH & SENIOR SERVICES

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MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & SENIOR SERVICES

AGING WITH DIGNITY
Missouri's Master Plan on Aging

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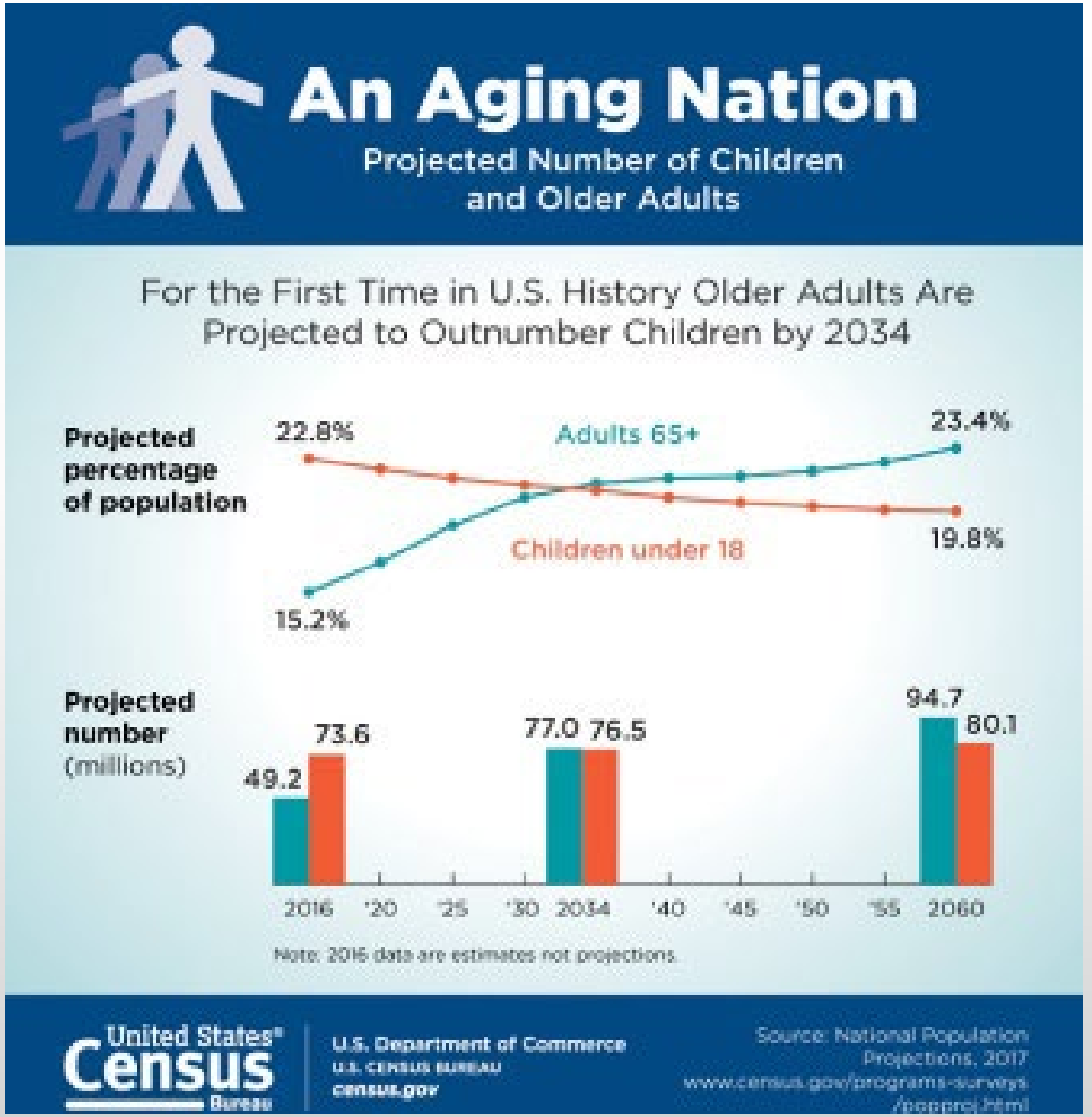
Chief, Bureau of Senior Programs

Section 01

Why a Master Plan on Aging?


An Aging Nation
Projected Number of Children and Older Adults
For the First Time in U.S. History Older Adults Are Projected to Outnumber Children by 2034
Projected percentage of population
22.8%
Adults 65+
23.4%
Children under 18
19.8%
15.2%
Projected number (millions)
49.2
73.6
77.0
76.5
94.7
80.1
2016
'20
'25
'30
2034
'40
'45
'50
'55
2060
Note: 2016 data are estimates not projections.
United States Census Bureau
U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov
Source: National Population Projections, 2017
www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popproj.html

Why a Master Plan on Aging

Governor Michael L. Parson's Executive Order 23-01
In January 2023, Missouri Governor Michael L. Parson issued Executive Order 23-01 that called on state agencies, private and non-profit leaders, and other key stakeholders and community members to develop an MPA to support Missourians to age with dignity. Specifically, it required the DHSS and its Advisory Council to do the following:

- Review and assess the current state of aging services in Missouri.
- Coordinate and complete at least 10 listening sessions with stakeholders in the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) regions, with at least two listening sessions available statewide.
- Conduct a statewide senior citizen and adults with disabilities needs assessment.
- Establish priorities for each state agency and communicate these priorities to key stakeholders.
- Develop a Master Plan on Aging.

Why a Master Plan on Aging?

An MPA Benefits the State and Missouri Residents

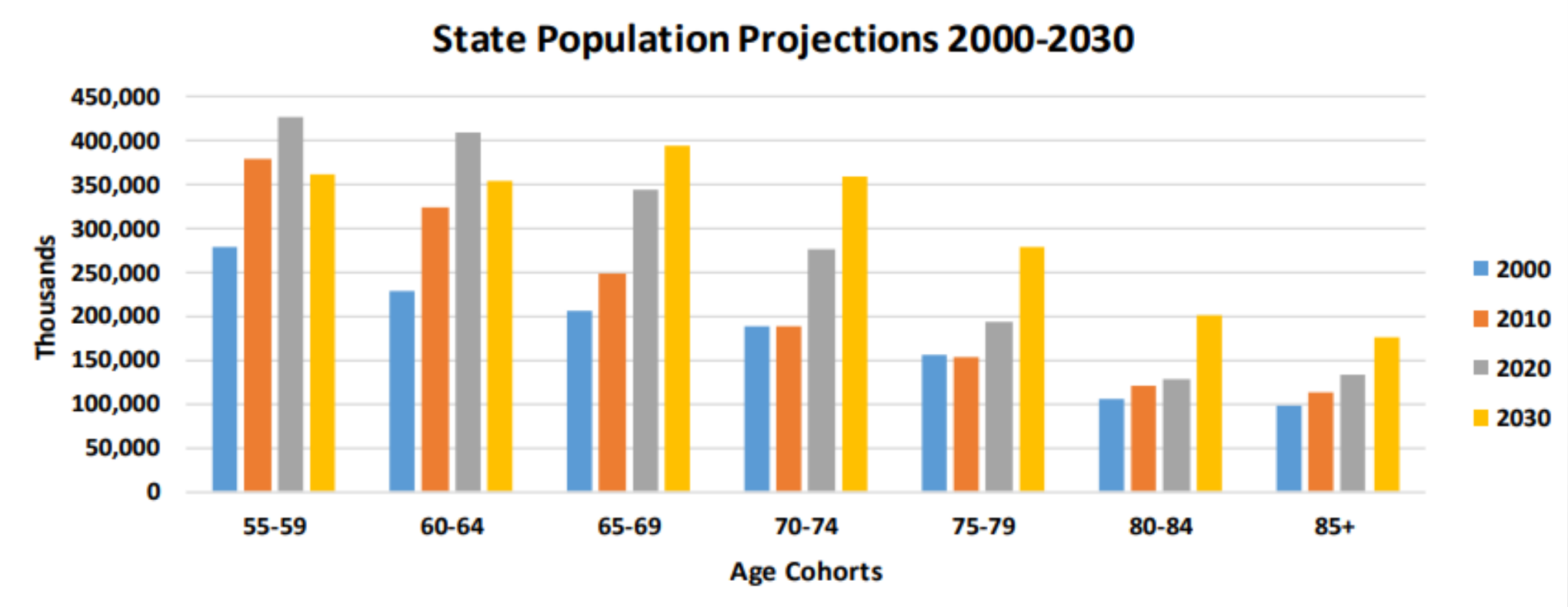
It provides a comprehensive 10-year roadmap for state, local, private, and non-profit leaders and community members to follow as Missouri re-envisions aging across the lifespan.

It also focuses on a broader set of needs for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and family caregivers, covering all facets of life, including the caregiver support network, employment resources, affordable, safe and healthy housing accommodations, transportation services and options, and access to a health care system that is age- and disability- friendly.

Section 02

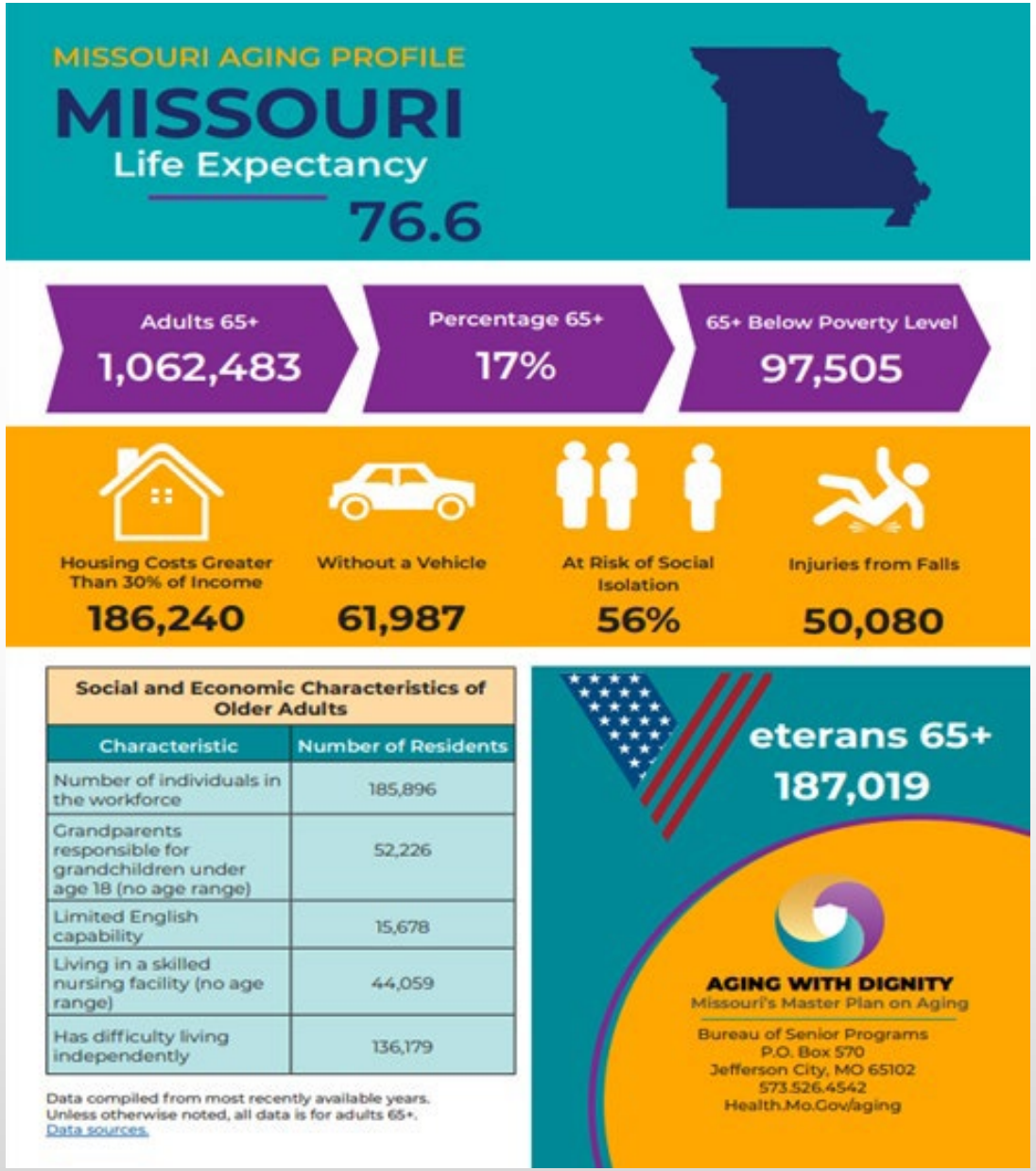
Aging Profiles

Missouri's Aging Profile



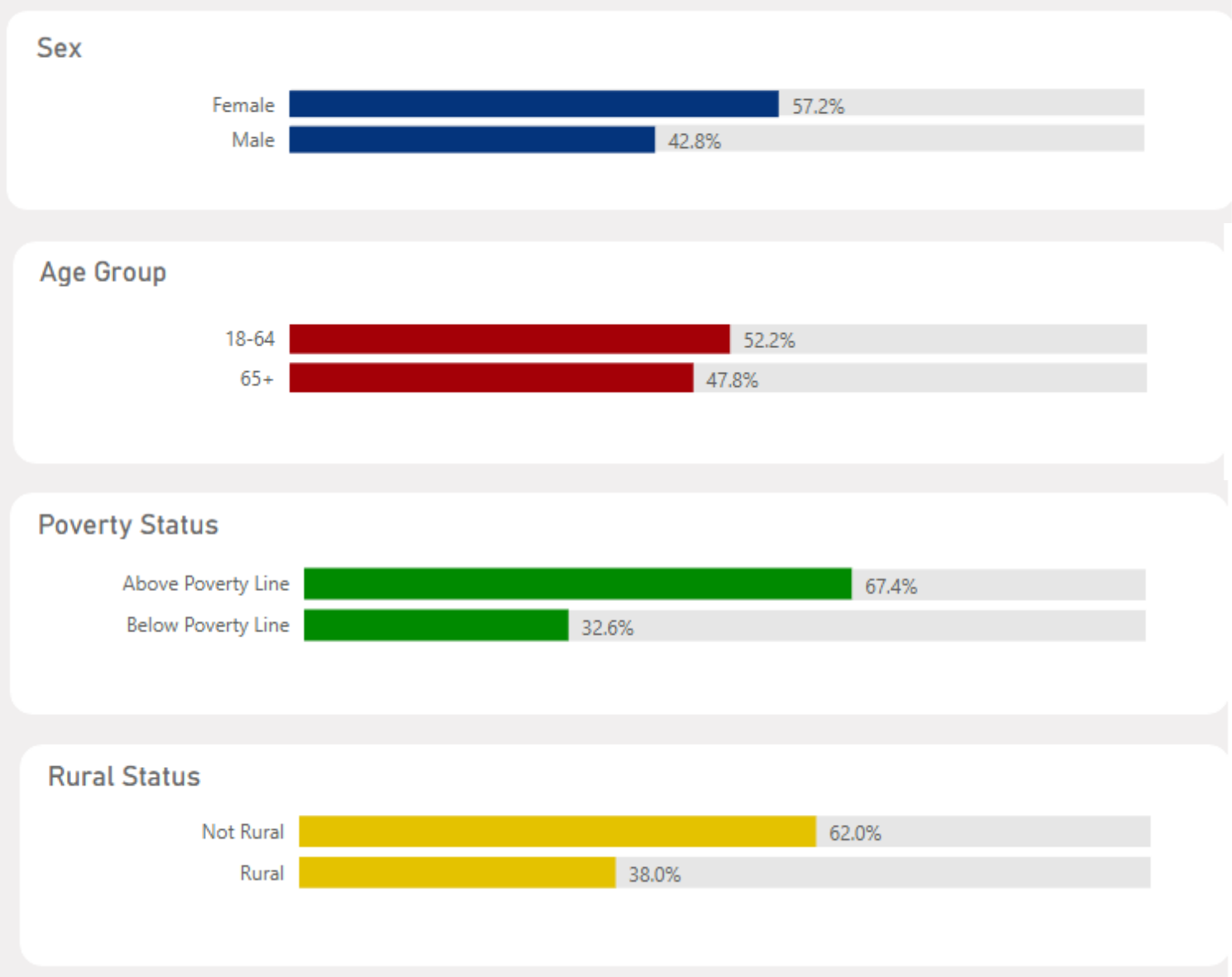
Missouri Population Projections for Older Adults, 2000-2030. Source: Missouri Office of Administration, 2020

Missouri's Aging Profile



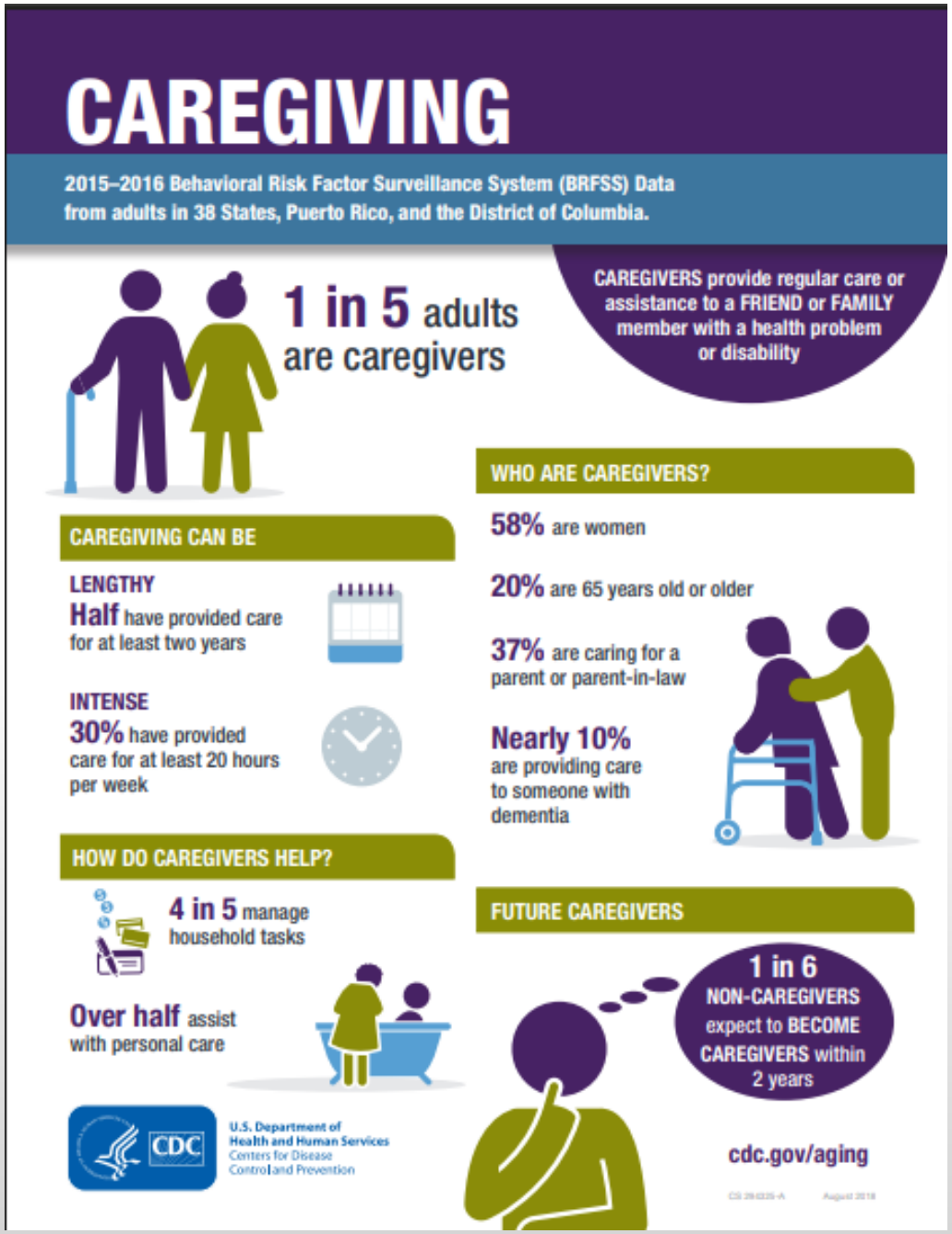
https://health.mo.gov/partners-providers/missouri-master-plan-aging/data-progress

Missouri's Adults with Disabilities Profile



https://heller.brandeis.edu/community-living-policy/clec/who-needs-ltss.html

Missouri's Caregiver Profile



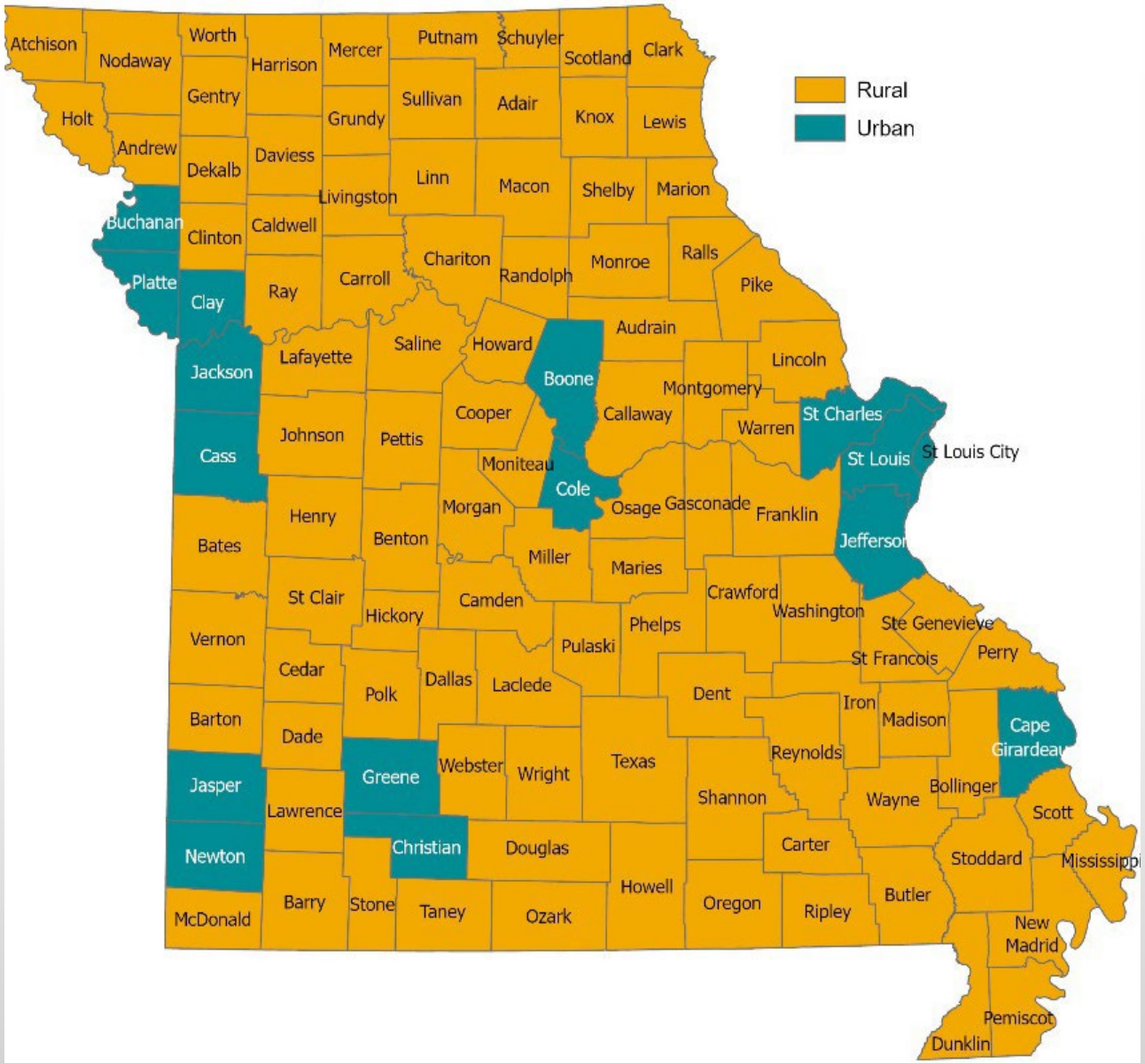
https://www.cdc.gov/caregiving/index.html

Geographic Distribution

99 Rural Counties
16 Urban Counties

2/3 of the older adult population lives in urban areas.

1/3 of older adults live in rural areas.



Section 03

MPA Development

Components of the Master Plan on Aging

Master Plan on Aging

A coordinated state-wide plan to prepare state, county, and local governments for the aging population.

The final plan is due to the governor and legislature by December 31, 2025

Advisory Council
Appointed by DHSS Director Paula Nickelson.

New Needs Assessment
A state-wide assessment of older adults, adults with disabilities and caregivers (Happening now!!)

Subcommittees
Will focus on key issues identified by needs assessments, surveys, and town halls.

Town Halls
Ten in-person and two virtual town halls will be held to gather input.

Current Needs Scan
This will include a scan of currently completed needs assessments state-wide.

State Department Scan
A scan of current programs and services to determine overlaps and gaps in services.

Media Outreach
Procured media to help us reach every Missourian to educate them and invite participation.

Ad Hoc Lived Experience Advisory Committee
A committee of Older Adults, Adults with Disabilities, and Caregivers.

What the Plan Covers

Missouri's Seven Domains for Aging Well

The Missouri Master Plan on Aging (MPA) is built around seven key domains, each representing an essential part of life that supports aging and living with a disability with dignity, safety, and connection.

Each domain reflects what Missourians said matters most - from health and housing to caregiving and community life - and outlines clear recommendations and action steps to strengthen those areas statewide.

These domains were developed through the work of statewide subcommittees made up of older adults, caregivers, advocates, and subject-matter experts.



Input from over 10,000 Missourians

Event	Total Involved
Town Halls (1st Round)	1,767
Statewide Needs Assessment	7,621
Volunteers (Town Halls)	311
Subcommittees	350
Advisory Council	40
Ad Hoc Advisory Council	12
Town Halls (2nd Round)	395
Public Comment on Draft MPA	207

Section 04

Final MPA

What the Plan Covers

Shared Visions and Focus Areas for Action

Each domain's subcommittee developed a clear vision for the future and a set of statewide priorities to guide progress.

The subcommittee's vision statements and priorities reflect what Missourians said matters most to creating communities where people can live with safety, connection, independence, and purpose at every age.

These statements also provided the foundation for statewide action and identified areas where collaboration can make the greatest impact.



	Vision Statements	Priorities
Daily Life & Employment	Missouri is a national leader and center of innovation in engaging all people, regardless of age, ability level, or personal circumstances in employment, volunteerism and community participation opportunities to strengthen their social/civic ties and enhance their sense of purpose in daily life.	Improve employment opportunities and financial security, expand volunteerism and recreation access, promote encompassing , community-driven design, and support lifelong learning.
Family Caregivers	Family caregivers in Missouri will have knowledge of and access to adequate training and resources to provide effective care in support of the care recipient's choices and their own physical and mental well-being.	Increase access to caregiver resources and community supports, invest in the caregiving workforce, support working caregivers across sectors, and strengthen kinship caregiving supports.
Housing and Aging in Place	Missouri is a state where every person has access to safe, affordable, quality, accessible, and housing suitable for all ages and abilities in a caring community that provides the necessary support and services to meet the needs of all citizens.	Strengthen leadership, funding, and legal frameworks, improve program administration, and promote public awareness and education.
Long-Term Services & Supports	Missourians will have the knowledge and resources to make informed and person-centered choices regarding the setting in which quality long-term services and supports are available for delivery, including home and community-based services and congregate care options, that maximize independence, health, and quality of life.	Promote affordability and supports planning, maintain and expand service options, address workforce challenges, and improve navigation across the system.
Safety & Security	Missourians will have education and resources available to keep them safe and free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation and to help them plan for their financial security in retirement.	Strengthen legal protections and awareness, improve professional training and accountability, foster interagency collaboration, and enhance data-sharing and system oversight.
Transportation	Missourians can access safe and reliable transportation and mobility options to get to the places they need or desire to go.	Expand transportation access, especially in rural areas, align infrastructure and planning with aging and disability needs, strengthen statewide coordination, invest in the transportation workforce, and support flexible, person-centered mobility solutions.
Whole Person Health	Missourians will have access to the care and services needed to help them live a safe, healthy life with maximum independence as they age.	Improve access to preventive and comprehensive care, strengthen health literacy, expand use of technology in care delivery, grow the specialized health workforce, and secure sustainable funding for health and wellness services.

Final MPA by the Numbers

Recommendations: 35
Action Items: 276

Subcommittee	Recs/Action Items
Daily Life & Employment	4/31
Family Caregivers	4/13
Housing & Aging in Place	5/46
Long-Term Services & Supports	5/45
Safety & Security	5/27
Transportation & Mobility	7/42
Whole Person Health	5/72

How Action Items are Labeled

Level of Effort

Level of Effort	Type of Action Proposed
Lower Effort L	Outreach, education, promotional, awareness, or work already in progress
Medium Effort M	Coordination across agencies or partners, moderate resource allocation, some programmatic changes but achievable within existing structures
Complex Effort C	New legislation, large-scale funding, major system change, multi-year implementation, extensive stakeholder engagement

Cross-Over between Subcommittees

Abbreviations	Subcommittee
DLE	Daily Life & Employment
FC	Family Caregivers
HAIP	Housing & Aging in Place
LTSS	Long-Term Services and Supports
SS	Safety & Security
TM	Transportation & Mobility
WPH	Whole Person Health

Examples and Promising Practices

Daily Life and Employment:

- Give 5 is a free volunteer engagement program launched in Springfield, Missouri, that matches retirees with local nonprofits based on their skills and interests. The program educates participants about key community challenges and connects them with opportunities to make a meaningful impact. It addresses two major needs in Missouri: reducing social isolation among older adults and helping nonprofits find skilled volunteers. Recognizing its success, the Missouri Legislature has expanded the program statewide. https://give5program.com/learn/

Housing and Aging In Place

- Moberly Junior High School repurposed into senior housing in long-awaited $14 million project. https://krcgtv.com/news/local/moberly-junior-high-school-repurposed-into-senior-housing-in-long-awaited-14m-project

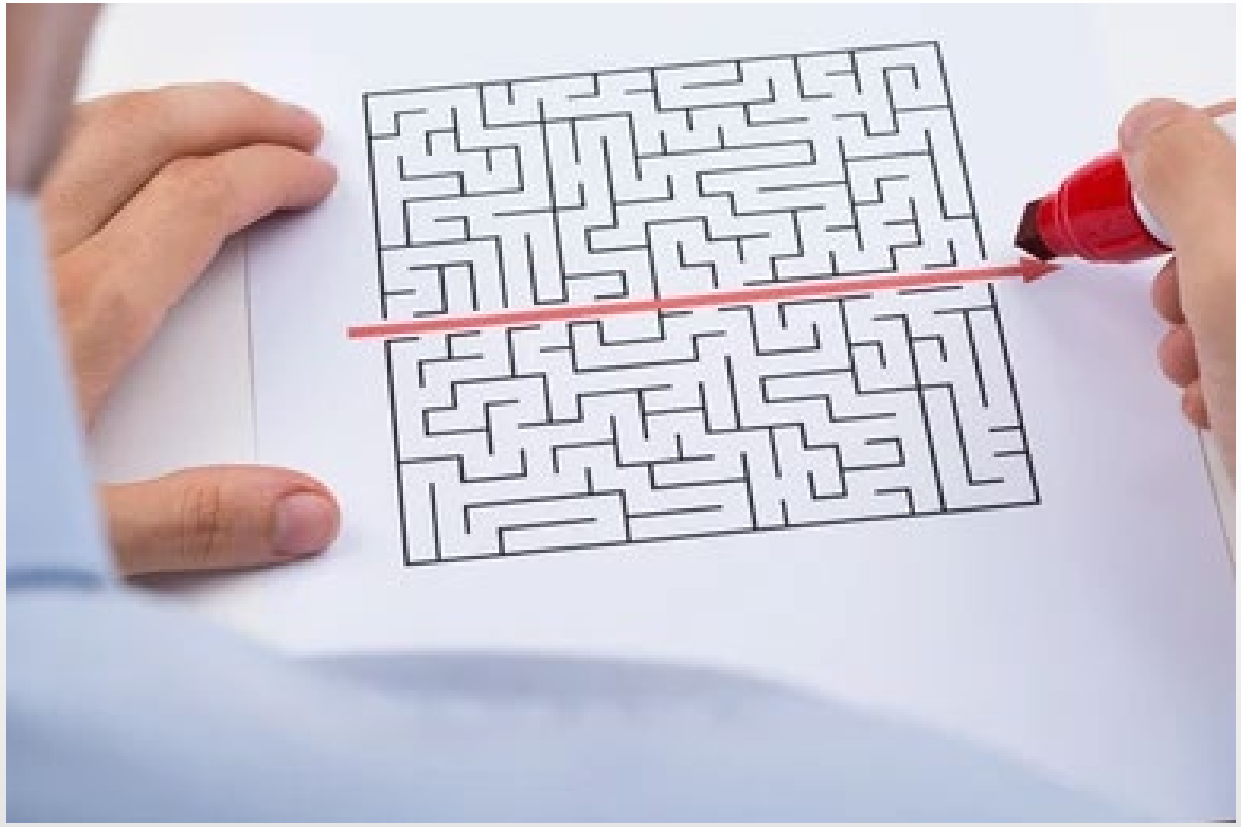
Cross Cutting Priorities

What Missourians Said Matters Most

During statewide engagement, Missourians identified several issues that touch every part of the aging experience. These cross-cutting priorities connect the seven domains and highlight where collaboration can make the biggest impact.



No Wrong Door



Missouri NWD Regional Link & Learn Series

Enhancing Person-Centered Supports Across the Lifespan

Featuring the LifeCourse Nexus

Join partners across aging, disability, and other service systems for a free, full-day interactive event focused on strengthening person-centered supports and cross-system connections across Missouri.

- **Learn** about Missouri's No Wrong Door (NWD) vision
- **Explore** Charting the LifeCourse principles and tools
- **Connect** with local partners and identify opportunities for cross-system collaboration

Who Should Attend?

This event is for anyone who supports, plans with, advocates alongside, or helps individuals and families access LTSS across the lifespan.

Regional Locations

- Hannibal - Sept 16
- Columbia - Sept 17
- St. Joseph - Sept 25
- Kansas City - Sept 28



- St. Charles - Oct 13
- Springfield - Oct 23
- St. Louis - Oct 14
- Cape Girardeau - Oct 27

Want to Learn More?

Scan or click the QR code to learn more about the regional events and to fill out the Interest Form. For questions or support, contact kamrynrice@umkc.edu

Project funding information can be found on the project information page.

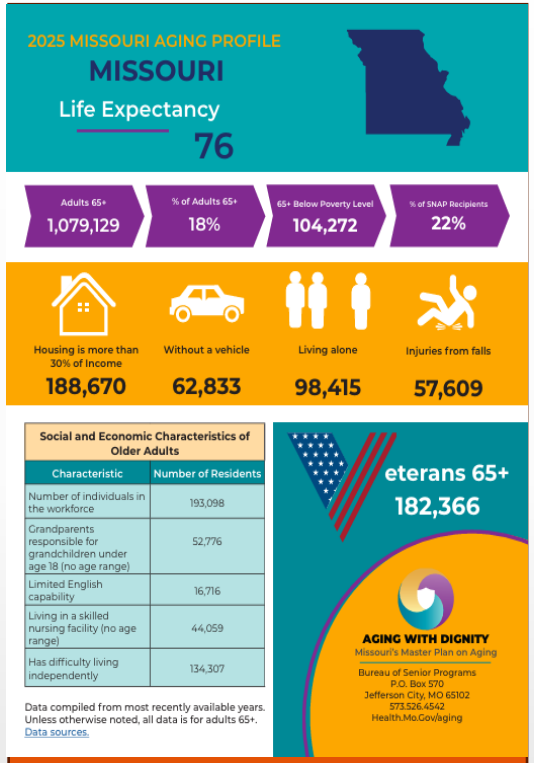
No Wrong Door Link and Learn Series

- 8 Regional Meetings
- Cross System Collaboration
- Using Charting the LifeCourse for intake
- Basing referrals on actual needs

Section 05

Next Steps for Implementing the MPA

Next Steps for Implementation



Continue to build a data dashboard to show progress.



Release Local MPA Implementation Guide



Seven ongoing subcommittees to continue to monitor progress, update recommendations and action items, and inform on new or emerging priorities.

What's Next for the MPA?

From Statewide Vision to Local Implementation

The Missouri Master Plan on Aging sets the direction for the decade ahead. The next step is helping local communities bring that vision to life.

To support this, the MPA Local Playbook provides practical tools and guidance for translating statewide priorities into local action. It helps Area Agencies on Aging, local governments, providers, and advocates identify relevant recommendations, plan local initiatives, and measure progress.

Through continued collaboration, Missouri will ensure the MPA remains a living plan that grows through local innovation, partnerships, and community engagement.

Be sure to review the full **Missouri Master Plan** on Aging before proceeding with the next step.



"Together, we can make aging in Missouri stronger, safer, and more connected, community by community."

Five Step Process for Local Implementation

Turning the Missouri Master Plan on Aging into Local Action

01 Identify Champions



Engage trusted local leaders and organizations to guide the process, coordinate efforts, and keep momentum at the community level.

02 Assess Local Needs



Gather data, listen to residents and providers, and identify top priorities that matter most to older adults and caregivers.

03 Develop Recommendations



Translate needs into actionable ideas that align with the statewide Missouri MPA and reflect community goals.

04 Prioritize



Use local input to decide which actions to tackle first based on impact, effort, and available resources.

05 Take Action



Turn priorities into measurable steps, assign leads, set timelines, track progress, and communicate results to the community and DHSS.

Promising Practices

Examples of Innovation from Missouri and Beyond



Across Missouri and the nation, organizations are developing creative and effective approaches to improve quality of life for older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers, and communities.

This section highlights promising practices that demonstrate how Master Plan on Aging goals are already being put into action. Each example reflects real-world efforts to strengthen inclusion, independence, and connection at every level, from community programs to state initiatives and national models.

These examples can spark new ideas, partnerships, and solutions for your own community. The following slides are organized by source and scale:

- **Missouri Promising Practices** – Local and statewide initiatives advancing aging-friendly communities.
- **Lessons from Other States** – Innovative approaches from peers across the country that offer replicable ideas.
- **National and Federal Models** – Broader frameworks and programs shaping aging policy and systems nationwide.

Who knows, your next idea may be Missouri's next promising practice.

Daily Life and Employment

Missouri Promising Practices



Give 5

Give 5 is a free volunteer engagement program launched in Springfield, Missouri, that matches retirees with local nonprofits based on their skills and interests. The program educates participants about key community challenges and connects them with opportunities to make a meaningful impact. It addresses two major needs in Missouri: reducing social isolation among older adults and helping nonprofits find skilled volunteers. Recognizing its success, the Missouri Legislature has expanded the program statewide.
https://give5program.com/learn/



MO Disability Benefits 101

Missouri Disability Benefits 101 is a free, anonymous online tool that helps users understand how employment income may affect disability-related benefits like SNAP, Social Security, health care, and housing. It is maintained by the World Institute on Disabilities.
http://mo.db101.org/



MO Employee Leaders Network

The Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council (MODDC) and Department of Mental Health (DMH) are collaborating through the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) to evaluate and improve state policies that support employment for individuals with developmental disabilities.
https://moddcouncil.org/our-work/employment/



Employment First

Employment First Missouri, led by the Institute for Community Inclusion, provides technical assistance to promote integrated community employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities across the state.
https://www.employmentfirstmo.org/

Local Implementation of Master Plan on Aging

Clay County Senior Services partnered with MARC and the Master Plan on Aging to help local providers implement parts of the plan that would work best for their agency/area.

In total 5 grants were funded at 5k each:



Applicant	Proposal	MPA
Excelsior Springs Senior Center	Fund a mobile tech lab to provide digital education for older adults.	DLE & SS
Pleasant Valley Civic Organization	Replace an outdated ramp to the upper level.	DLE & LTSS
Smithville Senior Services	Installation of a commercial-grade automatic door operator and ADA-compliant push-button controls at the most frequently used entrance.	DLE & TM
Mid-America Regional Council	MARC will recruit up to 15 volunteers age 60+ to provide weekly meal delivery, friendly visits, and basic assistance to up to 15 older adults	DLE
Northland Healthcare Access	Provide “Shop Smart, Eat Well” grocery store tours to help older adults make healthier, more affordable food choices that support chronic disease management and healthy aging.	WPH

Section 06

1st Year Accomplishments

Advisory Council Voted on Priorities for Calendar Year 2026

With no dedicated funding source for the Master Plan on Aging, the Advisory Council really focused on Low Complexity Action Items.

- **The Advisory Council focused primarily on items regarding resource building**
- **Access to Services**
- **Education for Missourians on current services and supports available**
- **Research and dissemination of best practices or information from other states, countries, etc.**
- **Educating employers about value of older workers, workers with disabilities, and caregivers**
- **Providing employees information about retirement; volunteer opportunities; civic engagement**

Domain	2026 Priority Action Items
DLE	4
FCG	2
HAIP	2
LTSS	5
SS	4
TM	6
WPH	4

Priorities for Calendar Year 2026

Domain	Priorities for 2026
DLE	DLE1.2: Discuss and disseminate best practices in recruiting and supporting older adult volunteers.
	DLE2.2: Educate employers on the benefits of pursuing various workplace programs, such as the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP's) Employer Pledge Program, which demonstrates commitment to older workers.
	DLE3.1: Work with Missouri State Parks and the Missouri Parks Association to increase Seniors to Parks programs within the state.
	DLE4.1: Assess existing governmental, non-profit, and for-profit programs that offer technology education to older adults and adults with disabilities and identify additional programs and/or activities to increase availability, awareness, and usage.
FCG	FC1.1: Leverage existing infrastructure (e.g., 211) and emerging technology (e.g., electronic medical record systems, Community Information Exchange) to improve visibility and utilization of resources.
	FC2.3: Leverage and centralize available training and education for professional care providers and family caregivers to improve care.
HAIP	HAIP4.1: Centralize information and resources for Missouri residents to access information on affordable housing.
	HAIP5.1: Promote examples of existing programs and resources for home maintenance, modifications, and repairs in Missouri and other states to highlight different approaches that could be replicated or expanded in Missouri.

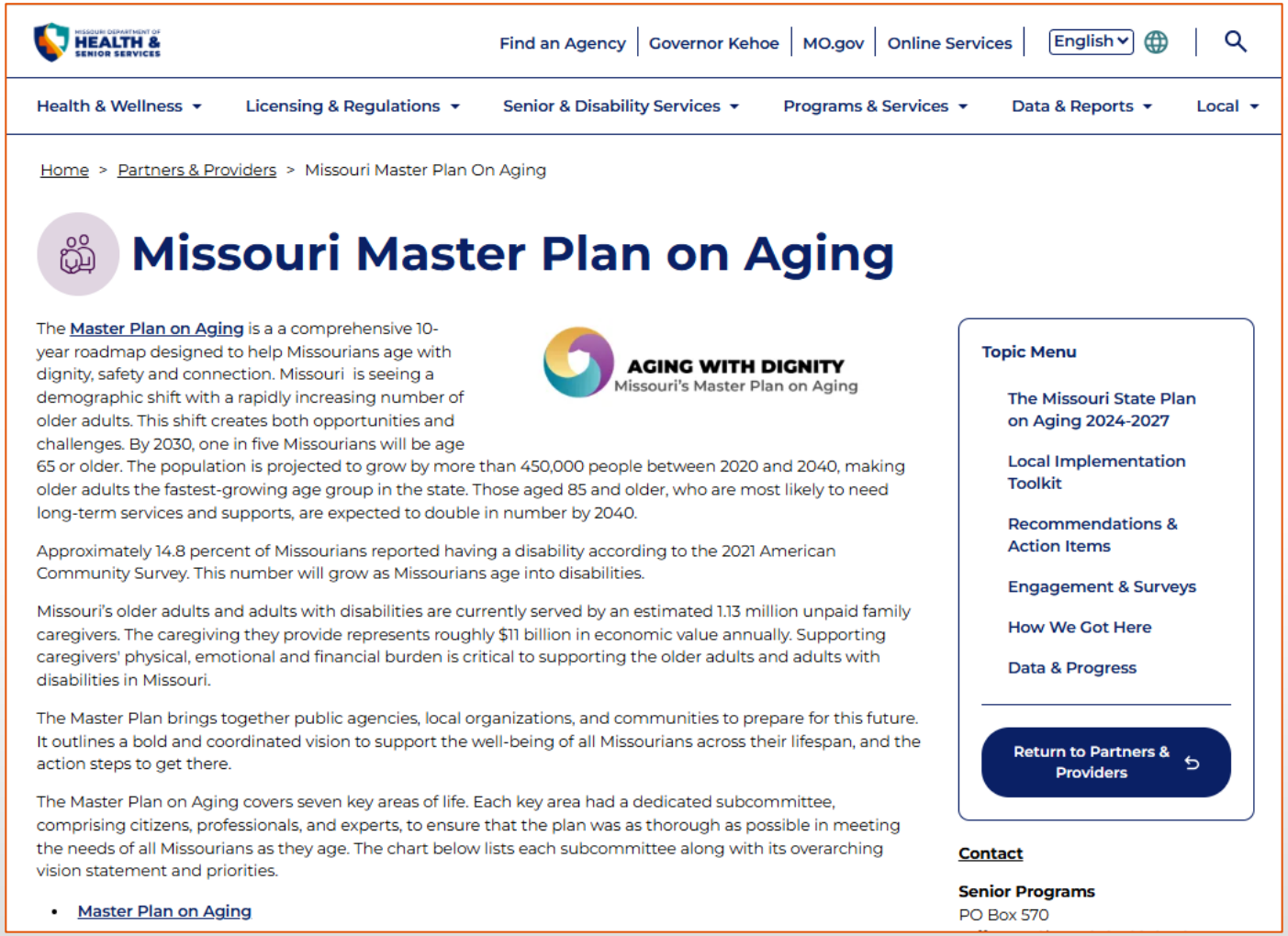
Priorities for Calendar Year 2026

Domain	Priorities for 2026
LTSS	LTSS1.1: Educate professionals and the general public about who pays for LTSS now, including limitations with current Medicare programs (both traditional and Advantage plans) and LTSS coverage.
	LTSS2.2: Explore opportunities available to advance quality and integrity of HCBS through oversight, education, and outreach.
	LTSS3.1: Analyze promising LTSS models of care identified by national health policy organizations and determine feasibility for implementation in Missouri's LTSS system.
	LTSS4.1: Develop a comprehensive crosswalk of entry level caregiver positions in Missouri, regardless of LTSS setting, and their associated responsibilities, training, and requirements. Crosswalk will contain, at a minimum, the following professions: direct service worker/personal care attendant, certified nurse aide, direct service professional (including apprenticeship option), medication aides, and community health workers.
	LTSS5.1: Establish an ongoing statewide LTSS Navigation Council.
SS	SS5.1: Explore RADAR card expansion and/or develop screening questions to improve financial safety. The RADAR card provides resources and information to law enforcement who may interact with an older person or a person with disabilities. Develop/adapt RADAR card for other stakeholders and those who are in contact with older adults and/or individuals with disabilities.
	SS2.2: Create/modify and provide relevant and engaging training related to scams, frauds and neighborhood watch information.
	SS2.3: Create and provide relevant and engaging training related to AI scams
	SS3.1: Create and/or modify and provide education and outreach materials to promote accurate understanding of aging and disability, highlighting strengths, contributions, and the value older adults and adults with disabilities bring to the community

Priorities for Calendar Year 2026

Domain	Priorities for 2026
TM	TM2.1: Conduct a statewide gap analysis to identify where providers do not have capacity to meet transportation needs, study other states' paratransit coordination models.
	TM2.2: Promote awareness and expansion of online and phone-based mobility management resources (e.g., MO Rides).
	TM3.2: Explore opportunities for transportation insurance cooperatives or other strategies to reduce costs for programs relying on volunteer drivers.
	TM4.2: Support volunteer driver programs that help fill service gaps, such as Jewish Family Services Jet Express, New Growth Transit in West Central MO, and ITN in St. Charles County.
	TM5.1: Improve outreach and publication of transit options so that residents are aware of available services.
	TM6.1: Train residents on how to identify and report environmental and infrastructure issues
WPH	WPH2.1: Incorporate elements into fitness programs to help engage a variety of participants (for example, including music in wellness classes)
	WPH3.19: Ensure education materials are available in multiple languages and/or have translation services.
	WPH4.1 Encourage older adults to attend “Welcome to Medicare” and Medicare Annual visits, along with all other preventive health care appointments (including vision/hearing/oral health) under any insurance provider.
	WPH5.1: Promote the use of electronic health referrals.

How Information Will Be Shared



Find an Agency | Governor Kehoe | MO.gov | Online Services | English

Health & Wellness | Licensing & Regulations | Senior & Disability Services | Programs & Services | Data & Reports | Local

Home > Partners & Providers > Missouri Master Plan On Aging

Missouri Master Plan on Aging

The Master Plan on Aging is a a comprehensive 10-year roadmap designed to help Missourians age with dignity, safety and connection. Missouri is seeing a demographic shift with a rapidly increasing number of older adults. This shift creates both opportunities and challenges. By 2030, one in five Missourians will be age 65 or older. The population is projected to grow by more than 450,000 people between 2020 and 2040, making older adults the fastest-growing age group in the state. Those aged 85 and older, who are most likely to need long-term services and supports, are expected to double in number by 2040.

AGING WITH DIGNITY
Missouri's Master Plan on Aging

Approximately 14.8 percent of Missourians reported having a disability according to the 2021 American Community Survey. This number will grow as Missourians age into disabilities.

Missouri's older adults and adults with disabilities are currently served by an estimated 1.13 million unpaid family caregivers. The caregiving they provide represents roughly $11 billion in economic value annually. Supporting caregivers' physical, emotional and financial burden is critical to supporting the older adults and adults with disabilities in Missouri.

The Master Plan brings together public agencies, local organizations, and communities to prepare for this future. It outlines a bold and coordinated vision to support the well-being of all Missourians across their lifespan, and the action steps to get there.

The Master Plan on Aging covers seven key areas of life. Each key area had a dedicated subcommittee, comprising citizens, professionals, and experts, to ensure that the plan was as thorough as possible in meeting the needs of all Missourians as they age. The chart below lists each subcommittee along with its overarching vision statement and priorities.

- Master Plan on Aging

Topic Menu

- The Missouri State Plan on Aging 2024-2027
- Local Implementation Toolkit
- Recommendations & Action Items
- Engagement & Surveys
- How We Got Here
- Data & Progress

Return to Partners & Providers

Contact

Senior Programs
PO Box 570

Topic Menu

Daily Life and Employment

Family Caregivers

Housing and Aging in Place

Long-Term Services and Supports

Safety and Security

Transportation and Mobility

Whole Person Health

Health.mo.gov/aging

Family Caregivers

- You Are or Will Be a Caregiver
- General Resources for All Caregivers
- Caregivers of Individuals with Substance Use Disorder
- Caregivers of Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities
- Caregivers of Individuals Age 60+
- Caregivers of Children with Special Healthcare Needs
- Caregivers of Individuals Alzheimer's or Dementia
- Caregivers of Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities
- Caregivers of People with Severe Mental Illness
- Caregivers for Children in Kinship Placement
- Caregivers of Veterans

You Are or Will Be a Caregiver



You Are or Will Be a Caregiver

Information

One of the first steps of helping caregivers is helping them realize they are a caregiver. Caregivers exist in all walks of life and throughout the entire lifespan. However, most caregivers don't recognize themselves as caregivers, they say they are just taking care of a loved one, a friend, or someone else they care about.

Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter famously said that there are only four kinds of people in the world: **those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers, and those who will need caregivers.**

Topic Menu

Different Types of Caregivers

Most Missourians have experienced caregiving at some point in their life. This can include, but is not limited to:

- babysitting siblings or other children as a teenager,
- being a parent, helping parents by watching children so they can get a break or attend to things they need to do,
- helping siblings or friends as they evolve through life,
- taking care of our parents or older relatives,
- caring for individuals with disabilities (physical, developmental, intellectual, etc.) throughout their lifespan,
- caring for a veteran who is ill, wounded, or aging
- caring for individuals who have Alzheimer's or related dementia,
- becoming a foster or kinship parent to a youth whose parents are involved with the Children's Division or the legal system,
- regularly helping take care of a friend, neighbor, or others who may need assistance.

Why Do I need to Recognize Myself as a Caregiver?

The biggest barrier to supporting caregivers isn't a lack of funding or programs—it's that millions of people say, *"I'm not a caregiver, I'm just her daughter,"* or *"I'm just doing what any husband would do."*

When someone fails to identify as a caregiver, it creates a dangerous ripple effect that impacts their health, finances, and the quality of care their loved one receives. Here is why self-identification is so critical:

1. It Unlocks Critical Resources & Funding
Until someone claims the title of "caregiver," they don't look for caregiver support. They don't search for **OAA respite programs**, **Kinship stipends**, or **DD Medicaid waivers** because they assume those programs are for "professionals" or "other people." Recognizing the role turns an isolated family member into an eligible participant for training, financial assistance, legal guidance, and temporary relief.

2. It Prevents "Caregiver Burnout" & Health Crises

When people view caregiving as simply "family duty," they tend to push past their physical and emotional limits. They skip their own doctor appointments, ignore chronic stress, and pull away from social connections. Family caregivers have higher rates of depression, anxiety, and physical decline than non-caregivers. Self-identification allows people to set boundaries, seek respite before a crisis hits, and recognize that their own health matters just as much as the person they are caring for.

3. It Connects Them to a Community
Caregiving can be profoundly isolating. When individuals realize they belong to a massive population—nearly **53 million adults in the U.S. alone**—the shame, guilt, and loneliness begin to drop away. It allows them to join support groups, learn practical hacks from peers who "get it," and stop feeling like they must figure everything out from scratch.

4. It Protects Their Financial & Career Security
Many caregivers quietly sacrifice their careers—reducing work hours, taking unpaid leave, or quitting entirely—without realizing there are workplace protections or legal rights available to them. Identifying as a caregiver prompts people to ask their employers about the **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**, flexible work arrangements, or Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).

Calling yourself a caregiver isn't about taking a fancy title or distancing yourself from love and family. **It is an act of self-preservation.** It's acknowledging that you are holding up another human life, and that you need—and deserve—a support structure to do it safely.

You Are or Will Be a Caregiver

"Am I a Caregiver?" Checklist

Most people don't wake up one day and decide to become a caregiver. It usually happens gradually—one extra favor, one extra doctor's appointment, or one emergency at a time.

If you regularly perform **two or more** of the activities below for a adult family member, child with special needs, partner, or neighbor, **you are a caregiver.**

1. Household & Life Management

- ☐ **Grocery Shopping & Meals:** Do you regularly shop for, cook, or deliver food for someone because they struggle to do it themselves?
- ☐ **Housework & Maintenance:** Are you cleaning, doing laundry, taking out trash, or managing household repairs for another person's home?
- ☐ **Transportation & Errands:** Do you drive them to doctor appointments, pharmacy runs, social outings, or church?
- ☐ **Pet Care:** Are you feeding, walking, or managing vet visits for their pets because they no longer can?

2. Medical & Health Support

- ☐ **Medication Management:** Do you sort pills into organizers, give reminders, pick up prescriptions, or order refills?
- ☐ **Doctor Visits:** Do you attend medical appointments to speak with doctors, take notes, or advocate on their behalf?
- ☐ **Monitoring & Vitals:** Are you checking blood pressure, managing blood sugar, changing dressings, or tracking daily symptoms?

3. Personal & Hands-On Care

- ☐ **Daily Mobility:** Do you help them get in and out of bed, up from chairs, or navigate stairs safely?
- ☐ **Personal Hygiene:** Do you assist with bathing, dressing, grooming, using the toilet, or managing incontinence?

I Know I am a Caregiver, Now What?

Realizing you are a caregiver can feel overwhelming, but it is also the key that unlocks help. You don't have to navigate this alone, and you don't have to figure it all out today. Start with these simple steps:

1. Give Yourself Credit

Take a breath and acknowledge what you are doing. Caring for a loved one is significant, demanding work. Recognizing your role isn't about stepping back from love, it's about stepping forward into support.

2. Connect with Local Resources

Programs exist specifically to support people in your shoes, often at no cost:

- Contact your local Area Agency on Aging. They are the gateway to **Older Americans Act (OAA)** funding, which offers free caregiver training, legal advice, and home-delivered meals.
- **If caring for someone with a developmental or intellectual disability:** Contact your DMH's Division of Developmental Disabilities to ask about Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waivers and family support programs.
- **If raising a relative's child:** Reach out Mo Kin-4-KID, the local Kinship Navigator Program or the Children's Division for support.
- **If caring for a veteran:** Reach out to the Veterans Service Program.
- **If caring for someone with Alzheimer's or related dementias:** Reach out to the Greater Missouri Alzheimer's Association, Memory Care Home Solutions, or the Missouri Caregiver Program.
- **Call** 2-1-1 or the Eldercare Locator for general support or program referrals.

3. Ask About "Respite Care"

Respite care simply means temporary relief. Whether it's respite provided by a friend, family member, a home health aide, an Adult Day Care Program, or another structured option, it is vital to allow yourself time each week to recharge, run errands, or see your own doctor.

4. Talk to Your Employer

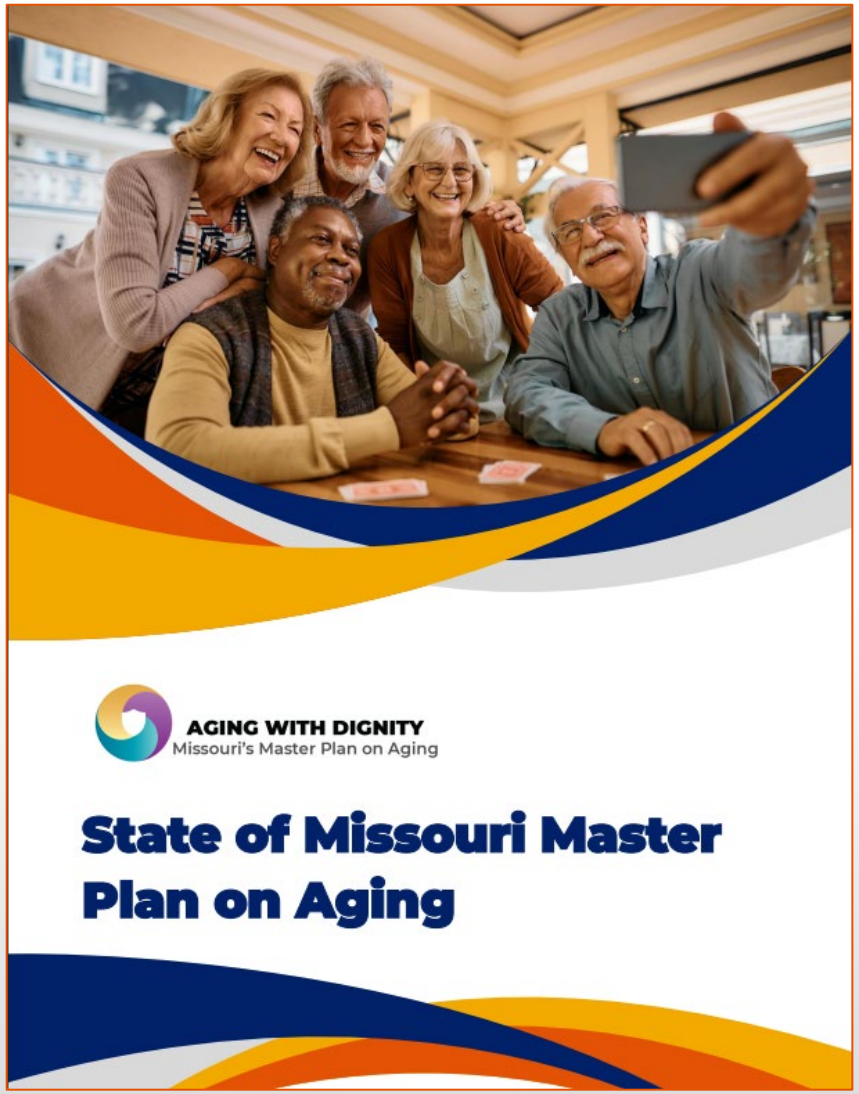
If you work, check with Human Resources about caregiver benefits. You may be eligible for job-protected leave under the **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**, flexible work schedules, or free counseling through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

5. Build Your Support Team

- **Say "yes" to specific help:** When friends or family ask how to help, give them a concrete task from your checklist (e.g., *"Can you pick up groceries on Tuesday?"*). Downloadable checklists like the one designed by the National Institute for Health's Worksheet: Coordinating Caregiving Responsibilities.
- **Join a** caregiver group**:** Connecting with others who "get it" is one of the fastest ways to reduce stress and learn practical hacks.

Remember: Taking care of yourself isn't selfish, it's part of taking care of your loved one. You can't pour from an empty cup.

Keeping up with MPA Progress



All updates to the Master Plan on Aging can be found by visiting www.health.mo.gov/aging

From this landing page, we will be adding additional information to keep the public informed and ensure transparency.



Want to join:

- **a Master Plan on Aging Subcommittees**
- **No Wrong Door Stakeholder Group?**

Grab one of my cards or email me at:
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