WASHTENAW HEALTH INITIATIVE

Senior Services Group: Root Cause Analysis Summary

Introduction

Washtenaw County is rich in resources to serve seniors but, in order to meet the needs of this growing population, it will need to address challenges both seniors and caregivers have in accessing information about these resources. The WHI Senior Services group emerged after an environmental scan and assessment of currently existing senior services, identified the coordination and dissemination of information about senior services as the top priority to address.

The WHI Senior Services group convened in late 2016 to more specifically define the problem and root causes of gaps in information around accessing senior services, particularly for consumers. To date, the group has completed its root cause analysis and has discovered several key findings and some next steps to move forward with a potential project.

Methods

Current resources
Literature scan and reviews

Consumers
Older Adult Resource Survey

Front-line staff
Key informant interviews

Survey
Physician office and senior center

Key Findings

- **83% aged 65+ have a computer**. The majority have internet access.
- More than 10,000 aged 65+ do not have consistent access to find health information. A top reason of those who do not use the internet to find information is, lack of access (Older Adult Resource Survey)
- **Those who use the internet for information, by age group**:
  - 78% aged 55-64 years old
  - 61% aged 75-84 years
  - 14% aged 85+

Challenges

- **50%** of older adults searching for information on services reported they were either **planning ahead or had an immediate need.**

- Often times an older adult is in a **crisis situation** when they call for services and will describe a scenario or situation, rather than identify a specific service.

- Older adults **don't know where to begin a search** or what specific resources are needed.

Gaps

- **Accessibility** of resource information to rural communities and physician offices.

- **Slow updates** of information.

- **Availability** of information on housing and home modifications for low income populations.

Preferences

- Many older adults prefer a **telephone call center or paper list of resources** as methods to get information about services.

- A larger proportion of respondents aged 55-64 or 65-74 prefer a **searchable online database**, compared to older age groups. 38 % of those aged 75-84 and 12 % of those aged 85+ would prefer a searchable online database.

Sources

- **Top sources of information** for older adults are:

  - Family/friends

  - Senior centers

  - Internet/Web

  - Physician offices

Top services that older adults and caregivers look for information about most frequently

Food

Personal care services

Caregiver support

Transportation

Medical services

Home safety modifications

Financial services