**Burlington Action Plan for Aging Well**

**OPTIMAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

**Goal**

Prioritizing optimal health and wellbeing among the older population of Burlington involves developing strategies that address all facets of a senior’s health needs. This includes optimizing access to and quality of health care, exercise, and nutrition resources. Older residents should receive, without discrimination, optimal physical, dental, mental, emotional, and spiritual health through the end of their lives. Holistic options for health, exercise, counseling, and good nutrition should be both affordable and accessible. Access to coordinated, competent, and high-quality care should be provided at all levels and in all settings.

**Recommended Objectives:**

1. All older residents in Burlington can safely access a variety of affordable opportunities for exercise within an inclusive environment. (State Age Strong Goal: By 2033, increase non-leisure physical activity among older adults 65+ to meet or exceed the “Healthy Vermonters” goal).
2. All older residents in Burlington can access comprehensive mental health care from qualified providers, including trauma-informed mental health professionals, without fear of stigma or discrimination. In this, decrease the proportion of Burlington residents ages 60+ who “Rarely or never gets the social and emotional support they need” by 25%. (Data provided by Chittenden County BRFSS Survey)
   1. Individuals 60-69 from 6% to 4.5%
   2. Individuals 70-79 from 8% to 6%
   3. Individuals 80+ from 16% to 12%
3. All older residents in Burlington are food secure. Decrease the proportion of older individuals experiencing food insecurity or at-risk of experiencing food insecurity by increasing access to and knowledge about meal service providers.
4. All older residents in Burlington have equitable access to primary health care. Decrease the proportion of older Burlington residents who have not seen a healthcare provider in the past year by 25%. (Data provided by Chittenden County BRFSS Survey)
   1. Individuals 60-69 from 21% to 16%
   2. Individuals 70-79 from 12% to 9%
   3. Individuals 80+ from 10% to 7.5%
5. All older residents in Burlington can live safely in their home. Decrease the proportion of older Burlington residents who have experienced a fall in the last year by 25%. (Data provided by Chittenden County BRFSS Survey)
   1. Individuals 60-69 from 35% to 26%
   2. Individuals 70-79 from 29% to 22%
   3. Individuals 80+ from 39% to 29%
6. Stop suicide (State Goal: By 2033, decrease to 21 (from 26.4 in 2021) the rate of suicide deaths per 100,000 male Vermonters age 65+ in alignment with the VT Suicide Prevention Plan to be launched in 2024).

**Recommended Strategies:**

1. Expand the provision of resources and educational materials related to keeping older Burlington residents safely in their homes, such as in-home assessments and adaptations to prevent falls offered by AgeWell. Materials should be provided in multiple formats and translated into a variety of languages.
2. Improve accessibility of Burlington-area public transportation to ease ability of older Burlington residents to attend exercise opportunities and get to medical appointments. This includes making sidewalks safer, especially for those with limited mobility, increasing frequency of busing routes to UVMMC satellite locations, and maintaining low-cost fare options for older users of public transportation. Fares need to be income sensitive and encourage increased use, not decreased or non-use for older residents.
3. Expansion of on-site mental health services at Burlington senior housing sites, with an emphasis on increasing the number of trauma-informed and culturally-informed mental health providers.
4. Work with local community groups, especially in BIPOC and New American communities, to provide resources that work to dismantle the stigma against accessing and receiving mental health support with focus on older residents.
5. Work with AgeWell’s Meals on Wheels Program, Feeding Chittenden, and Burlington Free Meals and local senior centers to support an increase of supplemental free meal programs. Ensure that knowledge about the availability of such programs is accessible, with print and translated options available. Support and publicize the availability of culturally appropriate meals that represent the dietary needs and preferences of Burlington’s diverse cultural and ethnic groups.
6. Increase accessibility of pre-existing educational materials and resources relating to health and wellness by requiring the provision of translated and in-print options. Developing media kits to provide community partner organizations with information on services and educational materials.
7. Work with local community organizations and institutions, such as the UVMMC Emergency Department and the Burlington Police Department, to identify older individuals at risk of experiencing homelessness (or experiencing homelessness) so that they can more effectively connected with resources. This can also help to reduce emergency calls.
8. Create a centralized and comprehensive dashboard of Burlington-based exercise and wellness related services provided by Senior Centers and other community groups. These resources will also be available in print format and translated into a variety of languages.
9. Work with partners to support the development of a part-time care facility in Burlington to assist older adults with higher intensity care needs and provide respite to family caregivers.
10. Work with Healthcare Organizations to recruit BIPOC doctors, nurses, and other health care practitioners to Burlington. Encourage organizations to provide ongoing education and training to all local health care providers regarding the impact of systemic racism on an individual’s physical and mental health, and ongoing education and training to all local health care providers about the ways implicit bias and systemic racism affects their own beliefs and practices. Partner to increase access to medical interpreters, including ASL.

**Summary Chart**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategy** | **Short-term**  **(1-3 years)** | **Medium-term**  **(3-6 years)** | **Long-term**  **(7-10 years)** |
| 1. Resources to keep older residents in their homes | X |  |  |
| 2. Increasing transportation accessibility | X |  |  |
| 3. Expansion of MH services in Senior housing |  | X |  |
| 4. Education on dismantling MH stigma | X |  |  |
| 5. Expanded accessibility of existing material | X |  |  |
| 6. Services to identify at-risk individuals | X |  |  |
| 7. Dashboard of health and wellness services | X |  |  |
| 8. Expansion of meal services | X | X |  |
| 9. Part-time facility for high-need care |  |  | X |

**Additional Questions**

How do the above objectives and strategies advance equity and inclusion? Please list any specific groups who are left out of these strategies.

* While these strategies attempt to be all-encompassing, additional resources should be made to account for groups that may have reduced access, including: Non-native English speakers and those who do not speak English, those without access to the internet, those with disabilities, community members from cultural or ethnic minority groups, low-income residents, those experiencing and at-risk of homelessness and food insecurity, and those experiencing Alzheimer’s dementia or related disorders.
* It is critical that items within the action plan are flexible to the changing needs of diverse groups, with special attention to historically marginalized groups and minorities.

Who are the key partners to accomplish these strategies?

* Vermont Health Equity Initiative, AgeWell, UVMMC/CHCB, Housing Providers, BIPOC and New American associations (AALV/USCRI/Somali/Bhutanese/Congolese associations) (TS has list), Feeding Chittenden, Burlington Free Meals, Senior Center
* UVM Center on Aging – UVM has “Age Friendly University” designation.

What funding or resources will be needed to accomplish these strategies?

* Funding from the City of Burlington for staff time
* Funding from the City of Burlington for communication materials (postage for mass mailing, bulletin board prints, etc.)
* Funding from the City of Burlington for website and other coordinated electronic methods
* Funding for Senior pass on public transport
* Funding for development of Adult Day Center

What legislation or policy change (local or state) will be needed to accomplish these strategies?

* Support for Adult Day Center functions with a business model that works.
* State funding for more transit and paratransit options for seniors.

What data could be used to measure success of these strategies?

* Usage numbers of specific services, programs, senior centers
* Number of in-print resources/materials used
* Number of visits to resource webpage

What existing programs or initiatives support these strategies?

* SASH/Howard Center Embedded Mental Health Program, Senior centers, AgeWell, and other community organizations have older adult exercise classes and programs
* AgeWell has a program for providing assistance and volunteer services to older adults in assessing and modifying their homes to reduce risk factors for falls.
* Health and Wellness clinics – foot care, vaccinations, screening, etc.
* Meals on Wheels via AgeWell provides culturally appropriate, weekly meal deliveries from a consistent and singular delivery volunteer, with brief home check upon visits

How do these strategies reflect the input and priorities of Older Vermonters?

* Older Vermonters and related stakeholders in their health and wellbeing are consulted in the drafting, development, and implementation of such programs.

Additional Suggestions and Comments:

* 5 food insecurity questions – 47% of active meals on wheels participants are medium to high risk on food security
  + Chittenden County specific / Burlington specific
* Congregate clients versus Meals on Wheels clients
* Burlington hub route for Meals on Wheels – meals are dropped at hubs and volunteers come to pick up meals for delivery, 8 Burlington routes
* Report on age, location, race, ethnicity, above or below poverty
* Burlington specific for 2019, 2020, 2023 – active client count Burlington
  + Number of meals served (versus number of people)
* Thinking about funding ($10/meal) – Older Americans Act funding (~$3), participant donations (0.88 cents)
  + Look to towns for funding – need help funding programs more like this
  + Provide 33% of DRI, 8 tailored meals
* Keep track of who is not at home – participants need to demonstrate that they cannot make or prepare their own meals, mechanisms for safety check if client is not at home
  + Keep track of how many safety checks occur each year
  + 2484 safety checks, 901 individual clients last year (county wide)
* Survey of grab and go clients – ask prioritization questions
  + - Randomized survey – 14-17% worried about food security in the last 12 months