

# Growing Old in Uncertain Times: Aging Services Protection Initiative

---

**2013 Legislative Priorities  
February 12, 2013**

**New York State Coalition on the Aging  
Council of Senior Centers & Services of New York City, Inc.**

*For further information, please contact Bobbie Sackman, Director of Public Policy, Council of Senior Centers and Services, (212) 398-6565 x226, [bsackman@cscs-ny.org](mailto:bsackman@cscs-ny.org) or Ann Marie Cook, President/CEO, Lifespan, (585) 244-8400 x 109, [amcook@lifespan-roch.org](mailto:amcook@lifespan-roch.org).*







## **GROWING OLD IN UNCERTAIN TIMES: AGING SERVICES PROTECTION INITIATIVE**

A continuum of community-based services that provides lifeline programs is the key to helping older adults age with independence and dignity. To that end, we have chosen to prioritize the following budgetary and legislative recommendations:

- ✓ **Case management – Increase funding by \$5 million**
- ✓ **Elder abuse services –**
  - **Fund at \$5 million** (includes full restoration \$450,000 for Lifespan and then disseminate rest statewide. NYC gets about 40% of funds usually based on population size)
  - **Legislative changes to address financial elder abuse**
- ✓ **Adult Day Services – Fund at \$1.5 million**
- ✓ **Transportation – Fund at \$2 million**
- ✓ **Census correction – Restore funding for Census Adjustment for Expanded In Home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP) - \$809,500 and Community Services for the Elderly (CSE) - \$325,150**
- ✓ **Emergency preparedness- Recommendations to include the aging services network in emergency preparedness planning and allocate necessary funds**

### ***Need***

The population of older adults living with financial insecurity is growing. The current economic recession, coupled with a dramatic expected increase in adults over the age of 65 by 2030, poses an enormous challenge to seniors' abilities to remain in their homes and communities. Further, because income for older adults remains fixed, or worse, declines, many older adults experience increased difficulty live with independence and dignity. According to the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity, 1 in 3 New Yorkers over the age of 65 live in poverty. CSCS' landmark Senior Center Study shows that over 40% of older adults attending senior centers have annual household incomes of less than \$10,000 and 90% have annual household incomes of less than \$30,000. Poverty and near-poverty conditions are particularly prevalent among minority populations where Latino, Asian and African-American seniors subsist on income levels well below the median. Data on homebound seniors suggest frail and immobile elderly live on even less income and have even fewer resources. The dire realities of elder poverty, which are complicated by elder hunger and lack of affordable housing, severely jeopardize the lives of NYC's elderly.

Further compounding these needs are the recent State budget cuts that threaten the infrastructure of community-based senior services which provide lifeline programs including meals on wheels, senior centers, case management, elder abuse programs, transportation and social adult day care. Although community based services are both needed and cost effective, they continue to come under budgetary attack.

**The purpose of the *Aging Services Protection Initiative* to support community-based aging services which sustain the lives of older New Yorkers every day in these uncertain times. This document will outline the needed funding to protect aging services as well as provide background on why such programs are necessary for older New Yorkers.**



## **Background**

### **Why are these uncertain times?**

- Government on all levels is reducing funds available for long term care services.
- Older New Yorkers above the Medicaid level have shrinking availability of services to depend upon.
- Expected cuts from the federal government could devastate already oversubscribed services designed to allow seniors to remain in their homes and communities.
- A call to action for NYS to meet the growing crisis of elder abuse head on is needed. Who are the champions to prevent and address elder abuse? Difficult fiscal times can lead to increased elder abuse. The need for community-based elder abuse services is already staggering compared to the meagerness of state funding. Strengthening state law to protect elder abuse victims and make NY a safe place for older adults to live is the responsible, common sense direction to take.
- Increasing number of natural disasters such as Hurricanes Irene and Sandy. Emergency preparation and disaster relief which includes older adults is critical. Community-based organizations are first responders for thousands of older New Yorkers in crises.
- As services are cut or not available, family caregivers have to fill in the gaps. Caregivers are already often stretched emotionally, physically, financially and time-wise. Many caregivers are also elderly. Family caregivers provide the equivalent of \$32 billion of services if it was paid for by the market rate.

### **Why Protect Community-Based Aging Services? Funding request: \$14.6 million budget initiative**

- *The desire to age-in-place:* As people face frailty, it is one of those self-evident truths that they prefer to live and receive services in their own residences. It is, simply put, what we would all want for ourselves and loved ones. We want to stay connected in the community in which we live. We want to be safe from elder abuse. When we do need help we want to have support in the least intrusive and less costly way. Remaining home and, to the highest degree possible, in control of one's life, is good for us and it is good for society. This basic human condition, the need to control one's world, to live as independently as possible is *"at the heart of human rights in old age"*. Independent control slips away as political and fiscal uncertainty place thousands of older New Yorkers in quick sand. *Whose responsibility is "protecting" frail, older New Yorkers?* Not an easy task, but the answer to that is key to the lives of thousands of frail elderly New Yorkers and their family caregivers.
- *Senior concerns are community concerns:* Social isolation, poverty, frailty, and elder abuse are all increasing as NY State's population grays. Aging is an uncertain process as one may experience physical, cognitive and emotional changes. Family caregivers are already stretched in the care they provide for their loved ones. Government espouses austerity – "we can't afford it" is commonly heard. Yet, the lives of vulnerable older New Yorkers march on despite an eroding safety net and looming funding cuts. Protection is needed. As the State moves towards person-centered long term care, will the capacity of community-based aging services be strengthened? Recognition of the special needs of a frail, vulnerable elderly population needs to be translated into funding and policy. *Is NYS committed to allowing all older adults to age in place in their homes and communities? Whose responsibility is this? What resources do the State, local communities, families and older adults need to provide a foundation of stability to grow old in NY? Are older New Yorkers not eligible for Medicaid receiving their fair share of services to remain home?*
- *The answers are mixed:* NYS does provide sufficient Medicaid funding for home and community-based services. Medicaid is undergoing enormous changes right now. It is unclear at this time what the impact of Medicaid redesign will be on frail seniors as less dollars are available and new service



delivery systems are implemented. Services funded through the State Office for the Aging do not nearly meet the needs of non-Medicaid eligible seniors. How will NY State apply the Olmstead decision, making it a civil right to remain in the community, a reality for all frail older New Yorkers who are Medicaid and non-Medicaid eligible?



## **INCREASE FUNDING FOR CASE MANAGEMENT FOR HOMEBOUND ELDERLY BY \$5 Million**

### ***THE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE ELDERLY CANNOT BE DETERMINED BY THE INADEQUACY OF THE SUPPORT SYSTEM***

#### ***Request***

Fund case management services that assist homebound older New Yorkers by \$5 Million.

#### ***What is case management?***

Funded by the State Office for the Aging, case managers are trained social workers operating out of community-based aging services organizations or Area Agencies on Aging who go into the homes of homebound elderly individuals to assess their physical, mental, nutritional, financial, and general living situation. Case managers follow up to assist these frail seniors to ensure they can remain home safely and with supportive services. Case management agencies also address crises as they arise.

The EISEP case management program has high caseloads and waiting lists in many parts of the state. For example, in NYC, caseloads average 80-90, with many on waiting lists. Growing need and pressure will only intensify in the coming years.

#### ***Background***

##### ***Why provide case management services?***

- ***The average age of a case management client is 85. Their average annual incomes range from only \$12,000-\$20,000 – too high to be eligible for Medicaid, but clearly too low to privately pay for care, plus they are frail, homebound and isolated. Case management can prevent seniors from utilizing Medicaid.***
- ***Frail elders*** - Imagine someone you know or a constituent who is 85-90 years old, lives alone, doesn't have a lot of money, and needs a social worker to make sure they are safe and not alone if they need help. It is the responsibility of each of us to make this invisible population visible and to provide them with the supports they need to remain home.
- ***No family supports*** - Imagine someone you know or a constituent who is "unfamiliar" – you have outlived your family, or they live far away, or for whatever reason they cannot care for you. This makes the case manager, frequently, the only person you have to depend upon.
- ***Many elders in need*** - There are about 52,000 older homebound New Yorkers statewide, average age 85, who are fortunate enough to receive case management services.
- ***Supports family caregivers*** - Imagine you are a family caregiver, caring for your parents, spouse, grandparents or another loved one, who is overwhelmed and anxious about whether or not you are doing the right thing to take care of your parents or need help.
- ***Need for a robust case management system integral to emergency preparedness – Case managers are first responders to homebound elderly New Yorkers wherever disaster strikes*** - During and after Hurricane Sandy, according to the NYC Department for the Aging, 11,000 calls were made by case managers to at-risk, frail homebound seniors. Numerous stories appeared in the media regarding the isolation of older adults, especially in high-rise buildings including private buildings and NYC Housing Authority buildings. Already high caseloads make it impossible to adequately take on new



clients who are in crisis and continue to do follow up work – although case managers will do their best to help.

***Case managers assess for the following:***

- Can the elder cook, feed themselves, bathe, dress and otherwise care for themselves?
- Does the elder have a caregiver or support system available and capable of assisting in their care consistently? Is the family caregiver overwhelmed requiring relief?
- Are the financial resources of the elder sufficient to live on? Is the elder receiving all the benefits and entitlements they are qualified for?
- Does the elder have sufficient nutritious food?
- Is the elder a known or suspected victim of elder abuse or neglect?
- Has the elder been diagnosed or demonstrate symptoms of Alzheimer's/dementia or mental illness.
- Is the elder regularly seeing their doctor and complying with treatment and medication?
- Does the elder have access to affordable transportation for medical visits?
- Does the elder have any unstable complex, medical conditions that need to be monitored? i.e. falling?
- Has the elder had two or more hospitalizations and/or ER visits in the past year?
- Is the elder's home reasonably safe, clean, and comfortable? Is the home dirty, pest-infested and/or disorderly threatening the elder's health and safety?
- Is the elder at risk for eviction or foreclosure? Does their home lack sufficient heat in the winter or air conditioning in the summer?
- Can the elder or their support system manage their finances such as paying their bills on time?
- Is the elder abusing alcohol or drugs?
- Is the elder at risk for suicide or self-mutilation?
- Does the elder have vital advance directives in place such as a living will, health care proxy, and power of attorney?



## **ESTABLISH A FUND FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ELDER ABUSE SERVICES AT \$5 MILLION**

***THE TIME IS NOW TO TACKLE THE HIDDEN CRISIS OF ELDER ABUSE IN NEW YORK STATE***

### ***Policy Request***

Take a comprehensive approach to addressing elder abuse by:

- Funding community-based elder abuse victim services at \$5 Million
- Enacting legislation to require banks to disclose information regarding financial abuse of its elderly customers. Legislation would include liability protection for the banks
- Enhancing education and outreach regarding the recognition of elder abuse and how to receive help to older New Yorkers, appropriate professionals, family caregivers and others
- Addressing elder abuse in emergency preparedness and disaster relief programs

### ***Recommended Funding***

Increase funding to the Elder Abuse Victim Services funding stream administered by the NY State Office for the Aging to \$5 Million

- Full funding for Lifespan, based in Rochester needs to be fully restored as it received a devastating 50%, \$245,000 cut in state funding in 2011. Lifespan serves ten surrounding counties and coordinates the NYS Coalition on Elder Abuse. This is the only state funding dedicated for elder abuse victim services.
- The NYS Elder Abuse Prevalence study estimates that 260,000 older New Yorkers statewide are experiencing elder abuse that goes unreported. State funding barely funds \$1 per elder abuse victim right now – clearly inadequate.

### ***What are Elder Abuse Services and why should the Aging Service Network provide support?***

The community-based aging service network is a critical partner in the fight against elder abuse and elder mistreatment for two important reasons:

- *CBO's are on the frontlines:* The aging service network interacts with older adults and understands their needs. Because of the shame of elder abuse, elders often times do not want the “authorities” involved. They want the abuse to stop. We put in supportive services to reduce the risk factors and reduce isolation which can lead to abuse.
- *Adult Protective Services does not accept all elder abuse victims:* The aging service network can intervene in cases of abuse that don't meet the strict definition of Adult Protective Services (APS). APS can only intervene when there is a physical and mental impairment, i.e. – a lack of competency to make decisions. Often times, the abuse may not rise to that strict definition. For example, in NYC, about 30% of all referrals to APS are accepted based on their criteria. What about the other 70%? The aging service network has the flexibility to take those cases where an individual is “competent” to make her own decisions, but is still trapped in an abusive situation. According to APS, what happens most often is that if APS suspects someone else is using a client's money, they will implement financial management. That way, at least bills are paid and the money is in safe hands. However, they lose the opportunity to document, to report, and to refer for prosecution – and restitution, if possible.
- *Actual services provided by community-based elder abuse providers in order to serve the full array of elder abuse victims include:* Encouraging victims of elder abuse to follow through the whole



process of seeking legal and social services assistance is a sensitive and labor intensive task undertaken by a host of professionals. They must possess the particular skills and experience necessary in working with these older adults. Funding to support these services is critical to addressing the growing number of elder abuse victims.

- ✓ Trainings of professionals including social workers, health care workers, law enforcement, bank personnel, government employees, and other appropriate workers.
- ✓ Outreach and education to older adults at senior centers and other locations to educate them on the signs of elder abuse and where to get help.
- ✓ Support groups, assistance with access to benefits, working with families and other social service supports as necessary.
- ✓ Transportation and escort to family court, housing court, social worker or lawyer's office, senior residences and anywhere necessary during the entire process including going before a judge.
- ✓ Advocate for both individual victims of elder abuse and to strengthen legal protections and services.

### ***Background***

#### ***The problem of elder abuse, taken from a 2011 study, Under the Radar: New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence:***

- 76 out of every 1,000 older New Yorkers are victims of elder abuse in a one year period.
- Dramatic gap between rate of elder abuse events reported by older New Yorkers and the number of cases referred to and served in the formal EA service system. For every one case reported to social services, law enforcement or other legal authorities, 24 cases go unreported.
- Applying this incidence rate, an estimated 260,000 older New Yorkers have been victims of at least one form of elder abuse in the past year.
- Elder abuse can be physical, psychological, sexual and financial abuse and neglect. The most common form is financial abuse.
- For a full copy of Under the Radar: New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study go to <http://www.lifespan-roch.org/documents/UndertheRadar051211.pdf>.

#### ***Elder Abuse is a hidden and devastating crisis:***

Much work remains to prevent and address these crimes while supporting elder abuse survivors financially, legally and with social services – a comprehensive approach. The majority of elder abuse perpetrators are family members – adult children, grandchildren, spouse and other relatives. This is a primary reason that older adults won't report elder abuse – it's embarrassing and shameful and they are afraid. Often, whether perceived or real, the abuser can be the only caregiver available to take care of the elder individual – and as they fear, being placed in a nursing home.

While elder abuse may seem difficult to detect, many people refuse to acknowledge it even when it occurs before our eyes. Ageism is pervasive. Society's prejudice towards viewing the elderly as helpless and incapable of making good decisions or managing their own affairs often turns deaf ears to what an older adult is saying. Blind eyes refuse to see abuse perpetrated by family members. Unfortunately, this ageism pervades not only the public at large, but many of the institutions, organizations and service systems which are best placed to observe, detect and report cases of elder abuse.



In times of emergencies, such as hurricanes, the potential for increased elder abuse certainly exists and families move in with each other and share financial resources. Local and state disaster planning needs to include strengthening programs that work with elder abuse victims and provide outreach and education to seniors and professionals to recognize when elder abuse is occurring and what resources exist.

***There is an economic cost to financial elder abuse beyond the funds stolen.***

When money is taken from an older adult, it often results in rent not being paid and the victim facing eviction. If a senior loses his/her life savings or home to an abuser, he/she becomes eligible for Medicaid - either sooner than expected, or in some cases completely unexpectedly.

- Many states have established banks as mandated reporters in situations of financial elder abuse. This includes statute about disclosure of information and liability protection for the financial institutions. It is reported that mandated bank reporting has greatly facilitated the process of stopping financial elder abuse and has worked well for all parties concerned.
- ***Serving all elder abuse victims*** - APS can work with older adults deemed to be “incompetent” whether through dementia or other cognitive impairments. Community-based social services organizations and local Area Agencies on Aging already play a role in assisting financial EA victims, including those who are “competent”, but using poor judgment for a variety of reasons.
- The New York State Penal Law doesn't address thefts from impaired adults, including elders.

***Recommended Legislation***

Legislation addressing financial elder abuse should:

- Allow financial institutions to disclose information to governmental agencies that are investigating financial elder abuse; and provide immunity protection to the financial institutions for reporting and disclosing elder abuse related information.
- Create a standard protocol for the reporting of financial abuse and exploitation in financial institutions.
- Require that banking personnel are trained on the identification and reporting of financial elder abuse.

***Tackling elder abuse is a crisis whose time has come. We look forward to working with you on the changes necessary to protect older New Yorkers from these heinous situations and crimes.***



## ADULT DAY SERVICES

- Adult Day Services/Social Model (ADS/social model) - The Governor's proposed budget maintains funding for social model adult day services at the 2012-13 level (\$872,000). This appropriation allows NYSOFA to invest in 17 programs across New York State enabling the frail elderly and those with Alzheimer's/related dementia to remain in the community while providing respite for families and caregivers so that they may continue to maintain employment. We respectfully request **an increase in funding to \$1.5 million** which will support additional programs to ensure caregivers have access to ADS/social model programs in every region of the State as well as increase capacity at existing programs.
- Social Adult Day Training and Technical Assistance - We support Governor Cuomo's Budget Proposal within the State Office for the Aging (SOFA) budget to allocate \$122,500 to provide training and technical assistance to social adult day service providers in regard to the SOFA rules and regulations which govern social model programs in New York State.



## **RESTORE TRANSPORTATION FUNDING TO \$2 MILLION**

### ***TRANSPORTATION IS THE KEY TO INDEPENDENCE OF OLDER ADULTS***

#### ***Request***

- \$2 million of dedicated funding for transportation operating expenses. This would restore full funding through the NY State Office for the Aging which currently is funded at \$945,000.
- A dedicated funding stream to help pay for 20% match in Fed 5310 program. (Section 5310 - Funding Pursuant to Section 5310 of the Federal Transportation Act, the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) administers a federal funding stream for the purchase of vehicles for transporting the elderly and disabled. This funding is for vehicle purchase only, and does not provide any funding to cover operating expenses. The funding is distributed as a grant through an annual Request for Proposal process to private, non-profit agencies. Grants are for 80% of the cost for a new bus/van with a 20% match by the programs. Programs are notified of their award in the fall.)

#### ***What are transportation services?***

The use of vehicles is the underpinning for many of the programs serving older adults in communities throughout New York State. Transportation services provided included: meal deliveries; transportation to and from senior centers and adult day programs; medical appointments; pharmacy; dialysis; bank, post office, Social Security, library, cemetery visits; voting; and grocery shopping and recreation trips. A van is crucial in preventing unnecessary isolation of the elderly. An operational van can mean the difference between a homebound elderly person receiving a meal or not, a caregiver being able to ensure that their loved one attends day care, or an individual being able to make a doctor's or dentist's appointment.

#### ***Background***

##### ***Assessment survey results to understand the need:***

- Two transportation operating expense surveys have been done in 2001 and 2006. Council of Senior Centers and Services (CSCS) conducted surveys in 2001 and 2006 and former Assembly Aging Committee Chair Steve Englebright conducted a survey in 2006 (in collaboration with CSCS.) This information is a good portrayal of the rising costs and demand for transportation by older New Yorkers residing in urban, suburban and rural communities. Costs have increased over the past six years while transportation funds have been decreased. Transportation and transportation-related issues continue to be one of the most pressing societal and public policy issues that senior citizens and community providers face in New York State. Seniors cannot receive the services they need to remain independent without transportation and service providers frequently cannot serve seniors if they cannot reach their place of business.
- Survey results (see chart on p.12): The surveys revealed valiant efforts by aging providers to cobble together funding from a multitude of sources to cover the significant costs of operating transportation. As the state of New York shifts its emphasis is on the long-term arena on providing more affordable services in the community, transportation will continue to top the list of areas that need to be invested in so that seniors can actually access the services that help them remain independent and off of the Medicaid program.



- ***Emphasis on cost results:*** In 2006, the total operating expenses for one vehicle ranged from approximately \$7,000 to \$54,000 per year. Providers at the low end of the range were able to lower costs by reducing or eliminating expenses in one category. For example, programs reduced maintenance costs by having local businesses donate parts and/or labor. Similarly, the insurance costs for some programs were covered by a town's umbrella policy, while other providers eliminated salary costs by using volunteers for drivers. It should be noted, however, that many programs found that using volunteers as drivers substantially increased the cost of insurance.

***Current barriers to providing transportation services:***

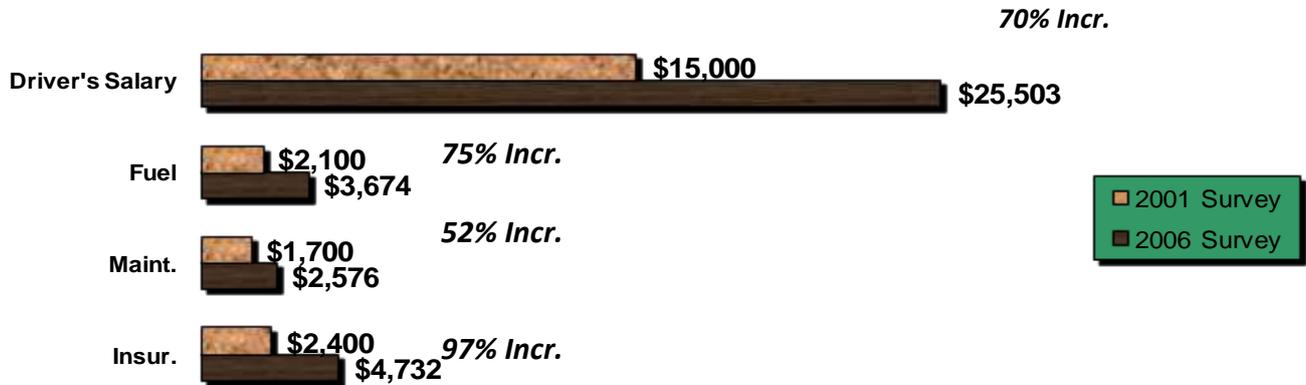
The aging network's ability to provide these transportation services has been hampered significantly over the years due to the rising costs of insurance, maintenance, fuel and driver's salaries while at the same time there has never been State support for the operation of these vital community services. While many aging providers may be able to purchase a vehicle through the generosity of elected officials or from federal funding, the cost of operating the vehicle is substantial and there is no dedicated funding available to cover those expenses. The high operating costs have, in some cases, resulted in vehicles standing unused. Additional specific barriers include:

- Demand outpaces availability of operating vehicles
- Insufficient funds to purchase vehicles needed and/or operate vehicles
- Vehicles are left standing due to lack of operating funds
- The difficulty in paying drivers a sufficient salary, resulting in high turnover of drivers and a need for an increased number of drivers and hours.
- Seniors do not attend their center or programs because of a lack of transportation services.

***Disaster response:***

Community-based aging services organizations utilized vans to deliver meals-on-wheels, reach isolated elderly, and transport supplies in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. This situation is the same around the state when disaster hits.

## Cost per Vehicle for New York State 2006 Survey vs. 2001 Survey



	Insur.	Maint.	Fuel	Driver's Salary
2001 Survey	\$2,400	\$1,700	\$2,100	\$15,000
2006 Survey	\$4,732	\$2,576	\$3,674	\$25,503

Difference	\$2,332	\$876	\$1,574	\$10,500
% Increase	97%	52%	75%	70%

The difference from 2001 to 2006 shows how cost per vehicle has grown. Driver's salary has increased by \$10,500 or 70% followed by insurance costs \$2,332 or 97% then fuel \$1,574 or 75% and maintenance \$876 or 52%. On average, providers covered each cost of operating their vehicles. Drivers' salaries accounted for the most expensive cost, averaging approximately \$24,364 a year, followed by insurance costs \$4,839 fuel \$3,652 and maintenance \$2,608.



**RESTORE \$1.1 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR CENSUS ADJUSTMENT FOR EXPANDED IN HOME SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY PROGRAM (EISEP) - \$809,500 AND COMMUNITY SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY (CSE) - \$325,150**

**Funding History:**

	EISEP	CSE
Proposed 2013-14:	0	0
Enacted 2012-13:	\$809,500	\$325,150
Enacted 2011-12:	0	0

**Services Funded:**

Senior Centers, Transportation, Care management, Home Care, Housekeeping and related services

**Background:**

In New York City there are 1.3 million adults aged 60 or over, 20% of whom need some kind of assistance with daily living activities such as using the bathroom, preparing meals, getting dressed or taking a shower. EISEP funding supports New York City's ability to provide these supportive services and case management to a limited amount of low-income seniors at a subsidized rate, 18,000 annually. CSE funding supports programs based in the community setting, for example- transportation and senior centers. It is a flexible funding stream that has allowed the NYC Department for the Aging to fill gaps in services where other cuts have been made.

While the EISEP and CSE funding was not cut in FY2012-13, certain counties, including New York City, would have experienced a decrease in funding as a result of a 2010 Census. To rectify the potential loss of funding, the Legislature added \$809,500 to support the EISEP program and \$325,150 to the CSE. The Governor's proposed budget does not include these legislative additions. It is essential to restore and make permanent, the CSE and EISEP Census adjustment funding so life-sustaining programs like home care and case management can continue to operate without disruption.



## **RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR THE SENIOR NETWORK**

Experiencing Hurricane Irene, Hurricane Sandy, ice storms, and other natural disasters have taught us many critical lessons on how the state and localities can assist its older residents to prepare and deal with the aftermath of these crises. Many older adults are capable of handling disaster situations as they've lived through many. They can also be integral parts of community teams to assist others impacted by a disaster. The role of community-based aging services providers is a cornerstone to a comprehensive plan to ensure the safety of older New Yorkers.

On October 29, 2012, Superstorm Sandy hit the Tri-State region, the second 100 year storm to hit New York in two years. In the wake of the storm, CSCS's members - community-based senior service agencies - represented a different type of first responder, bringing needed food, supplies and help through acts of heroism that saved countless lives of New York's elders. For example, home-delivered meals providers delivered multiple meals before the storm hit and were back out on the street without missing a day of delivery. The network committed to the well being of older New Yorkers pulled together – just as it had after Irene and other disasters across New York State.

Many of these community-based aging service organizations suffered damages and loss while still serving the needs of older adults. To understand the immediate, ongoing and future needs of older adults in the wake of disasters, we conducted a needs assessment. The assessment is querying the immediate impact of the storm and the ongoing needs. This information is constantly being updated and will continue to evolve over time. As we move forward, the goal of the aging services network is to serve the immediate and long term needs of older New Yorkers who too often have not where else to turn as well as to embed a culture of emergency preparedness within each senior service program so that more seniors can receive needed assistance.

### ***RECOMMENDATIONS***

- Better coordinate the aging service system which could lead to sharing of gas, food orders and delivery logistics. It is also important to incorporate food that is healthy and accessible for older adults be distributed, ie – low sodium, boxes those with arthritis or other impediments can open, and writing on the box that is legible.
- Evaluate the arrangements within evacuation centers as to their appropriateness for older adults. For example, cots which are easier to get into and out of, access to medication, and other daily needs.
- Utilize a cloud-based phone and communication system, this system ran continuously, without disruption, throughout the duration of Superstorm Sandy.
- Capital improvements to incorporate universal design to ensure that senior service agencies are accessible to all is critically important to make sure that older adults with varying levels of abilities can access emergency services. Providing funds to ensure that community-based aging services organizations can purchase and operate wheelchair accessible vehicles is also key.
- Funding to ensure emergency preparedness for the senior service network
- Creation of a first of its kind, First Alert Communication System for NYC Senior Services which could be used as a model throughout the State



***Results of Needs Assessment/Survey on the Aging Network Post-Hurricane Sandy:  
Immediate negative program or organizational impact of the Storm***

Before, during or after Hurricane Sandy, agencies experienced varying degrees of difficulty providing food to elderly New Yorkers. Based on our assessment major impacts were felt from four specific issues:

- **Policies of First Responders** – The state and localities should designate aging services providers as “first responders”. NYC did not classify senior service organizations as “first responders”. As such, they do not have access to emergency gas, water and food supplies. Even though the network of aging service organizations lacks this status, it functions and serves elderly individuals on the front line and is in fact part of the first responder network. This misalignment between policy and reality caused negative impacts to the food-related service and other assistance for older New Yorkers.
- **Coordination Problems** – Many of the food-related disruptions occurred because multiple layers of service (local City government, agencies and their programs, community agencies within neighborhoods) were not coordinated for emergencies. Because the nature of the storm affected every neighborhood of NYC, as Hurricane Irene did across upstate communities, the problems of coordination were citywide or throughout the upstate region. The lack of coordination played out in the following ways:
  - Communication with staff was an immediate concern, as not all staff had emergency number on file or did not have access to phones or email.
  - Food delivery and phone calls to older clients required both paper and electronic versions of files which were not immediately available remotely.
  - Volunteers were not able to be fully utilized, as agencies did not know how to best contact volunteers or maintain their relationships over days or weeks.
  - Agencies that serve children or other populations groups were not in contact with their local senior center so that food deliveries and resources could not be shared.
  - News and updates about resources were sparse throughout the city and senior service agencies did not receive ongoing communications about policies and ideas to expedite their receipt of gas, water and food.
- **Communication Issues** – An additional immediate concern of many programs is the inability to contact staff who normally prepare or deliver food. Even senior service agencies whose facilities were untouched by the storm did not have an emergency plan for staff communication. Outages of cell towers, email access and electricity made communication difficult for those who did have emergency plans in place. Beyond staffing, organizations did not have an emergency communication plan to reach food vendors which were needed to supply shelf-stable meals and water during and after the storm. Additionally, the ready availability of volunteers could not be utilized by many agencies who did not prepare communications plan which could have directed resources in a streamlined way. All of these communication programs caused major disruptions to the lifeline food programs that serve elderly New Yorkers.
- **Gas Shortages** – By working with colleagues, CSCS was able to provide real time mapping information of gas stations with available gas located near senior service agencies. The immediate and ongoing shortage of gas posed a serious threat to senior service agencies’ abilities to deliver meals-on-wheels, obtain food for congregate meals programs and transport staff to work to prepare food. The gas shortage was felt throughout the city but home-delivered meal providers bringing meals to homebound elderly, the gas shortages majorly affected their ability to serve. Designation of the aging services network as “first responders”, as stated previously, would ameliorate this problem.



- Office and Equipment Damages – Hurricane related damage to buildings, offices, meals-on-wheels vans, senior transportation vans and kitchen equipment caused disruptions in food-related service throughout New York City’s five boroughs but was concentrated in Zone A areas. The damages were compounded by electricity outages and power surges which damaged equipment such as refrigerators, boilers, computers, etc.
- Reimbursement for costs - Committed senior service staff worked 24/7, home-delivered meals vans and other vans operated by the aging service network were used to reach and transport supplies where needed, as well as other expenses were experienced by this nonprofit network of aging services. As with “first responders”, already stretched budgets should be reimbursed by FEMA or other Hurricane Sandy disaster relief dollars.

### ***Emerging demands on services or caseloads in this recovery period***

In immediate aftermath of the storm, according to the NYC Department for the Aging, case management staff citywide made 11,000 phone calls to at-risk, homebound elderly. There was little or no interruption of home-delivered meals across the city, including Zone A communities. The majority of senior centers were re-opened within the week following the storm. This is a heroic show of commitment and street smarts know-how by thousands of employees of the aging services network.

- During the recovery period, more services have been extended and caseloads added to address the growing demand for assistance. Disasters and displacement (even temporary) can be especially taxing on frail elders and can cause ongoing mental health and emotional disruptions. Ever increasing case management caseloads, now averaging 80-90, will present formidable challenges to addressing the needs of older adults impacted by the storm. High caseloads and waiting lists for EISEP case management are common throughout the state. Rethinking the financial commitment of the state and localities to ensuring the capacity of the case management system serving homebound elders, must be reconsidered and strengthened.
- Caregivers throughout New York City are also feeling pressure to take care of older relatives while they also may be suffering from storm damage.

### ***Recommendations for funding***

- Capital investments: Investing in capital improvements to ensure that senior service agencies are accessible to all is critically important to make sure that older adults with varying levels of abilities can access emergency services. In the recovery of infrastructure, investments should be made to ensure universal design is incorporated so that those older adults with mobility difficulties, including those in wheelchairs, can access food and other critical services. Providing funds to ensure that community-based aging services organizations can purchase and operate wheelchair accessible vehicles is also key. Transportation is integral to the ability of older adults leaving their homes and receiving life sustaining food and services.
- Operating Funds: Since the fiscal crisis, public funding for senior services has been substantially reduced or left flat. Without adequate operating dollars to fund basic emergency preparedness and coordination, the system will continue to lack efficiency and reliability. Because the aging service system continues to serve on the front line of emergencies, it needs operating funds to continue to meet the growing needs. An investment of funds would allow for the following specific activities to ensure adequate access to food:



- *Ongoing education on the mental health and emotional affects of disasters:*
  - Trainings on emergency preparedness certification and skills
  - Funding to support a volunteer coordinator to handle screening, training and deploying volunteers in cases of emergency and recovery.
  - Purchasing of emergency packs (flashlights, batteries, hand warmers).
  - Purchasing of age friendly packages for shelf-stable meals.
  - Development of shelf-stable therapeutic meal options.
  - Marketing of the emerging needs of older adults. This might include a campaign to create a building “buddy system” where residents check in on older neighborhoods.
  - Creating a housing coordination system that would allow housing units to appropriately respond to elders’ needs.
  - Sustaining policy work to ensure aging services and specifically food delivery has “first responder” status.

### ***Technology investments***

As we survey the ongoing effects of the Hurricane, it is clear that the ongoing needs are not limited to disaster recovery. Indeed, this disaster has taught us that there is a growing need for a centralized first alert communication system that senior service providers can depend upon for preparedness information prior to such events, as well as being the one place everyone providing or dependent upon senior services can go for information during the disaster, and in both the short term and long term recovery phases to facilitate the sharing of problem solving.



## **New York State Coalition on the Aging**

The New York State Coalition for the Aging (NYSCA) and our members believe that older adults have the right to live as independently as possible, with dignity, in their homes and communities with the appropriate support services.

For over thirty years, NYSCA has provided strong advocacy, professional development, leadership skills and education for individuals and organizations serving older adults. We are dedicated to strengthening and expanding community based services.

## **Council of Senior Centers & Services of New York City, Inc.**

The mission of Council of Senior Centers and Services of New York City, Inc. (CSCS): To champion the rights of older adults to make New York City a better place to live.

Founded in 1979, CSCS grew out of a coalition of senior service organizations that had been meeting informally to share their views, expand their knowledge and discuss better ways to deal with government agencies and serve seniors. From this group and out of this need, CSCS was formally established as a citywide not-for-profit organization. Today, CSCS is recognized as the lead NYC-based organization representing senior services and aging issues, advocating for needed community based services which allow older adults to age with independence and dignity. With over 100 member organizations providing community based services through more than 600 programs, CSCS' members range from individual community-based centers to large multi-service, citywide organizations and serve over 300,000 older adults annually. CSCS' work ranges from economic justice, combating hunger and supportive housing to healthy aging, and community engagement. Through its network and initiatives, CSCS serves older New Yorkers from every community district and from virtually every socioeconomic background that comprise the population of NYC.