## SECTION 2
**CAREGIVER & CONSUMER SUPPORT**

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2-1-1 INFORMATION AND REFERRAL HELPLINE

In most parts of Florida, contacting the 2-1-1 information and referral helpline can help you find services that assist with food, shelter, employment, seniors, children, mental health, substance abuse, and many other issues. 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember and universally recognizable number that makes a critical connection between individuals and families in need and the appropriate community-based organizations and government agencies.

2-1-1 is a free and confidential service that can offer access to the following types of services:

- Basic Human Needs Resources: food banks, clothing, shelters, rent assistance, utility assistance.
- Physical and Mental Health Resources: medical information lines, crisis intervention services, support groups, counseling, drug and alcohol intervention, rehabilitation, health insurance programs, Medicaid and Medicare, maternal health, and children’s health insurance programs.
- Employment Support: unemployment benefits financial assistance, job training, transportation assistance, and education programs.
- Support for Children, Youth, and Families: childcare, Success by 6, after-school programs, Head Start, family resource centers, summer camps and recreation programs, mentoring, tutoring, and protective services.
- Volunteer opportunities and donations.

More information is available by dialing 2-1-1 or by going online to 211.org.
ADULT DAY CARE

Adult day care is a structured activity program designed to offer a safe environment for frail or disabled elders who are unable to remain at home alone during the day.

By law, adult day care facilities must be licensed by the state. Florida’s Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) has regulatory and licensing responsibility for adult day care facilities in Florida. All employees working at adult day care facilities are required to undergo a criminal background check. Adult day care services are traditionally offered by centers five days a week during daytime hours. Seniors are either dropped off at the facility by a loved one or picked up through special transportation arrangements.

Adult day care programs are structured to allow elders to socialize with others and remain as independent as possible. These programs also allow caregivers to receive respite on a regular basis.

The Department of Elder Affairs administers several federal and state sponsored programs that provide subsidized benefits to eligible recipients (age 60 or older) in need of adult day care services.

Contact your Aging and Disability Resource Center for more information on adult day care services or call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337).
ADULT DAY HEALTH CARE

Adult day health care programs are adult day care programs that provide health care (medical) services in an outpatient setting.

Services under an adult day health care program support adults with physical and mental disabilities. The prescribed level of care is designed to restore and maintain individuals’ capacity to care for themselves while under professional supervision. The care facility’s staff, in consultation with the individual’s doctor or case manager, develops the plan of care. Services under the program are available for four or more hours a day from Monday through Friday. Transportation is also provided to and from the facility.

Individuals recovering from heart failure, stroke, or a traumatic incident, where rehabilitative therapy is required under a doctor’s order, can be referred to an adult day health care facility. Skilled nursing services, as well as physical, speech, and occupational therapy, may be provided in an adult day health care environment. The Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) is responsible for licensing and regulating adult day health care facilities. Adult day health care services are available a minimum of five (5) hours a day, five (5) days a week, excluding legal holidays.

For more information on adult day health care, contact your Aging and Disability Resource Center, or call the Elder Helpline toll-free at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337).
ASSISTANCE WITH DAILY ACTIVITIES

As we age, everyday tasks – things we often take for granted – can become more difficult. If you or someone you know is one of the millions of older Americans who need help with everyday activities, such as basic hygiene and personal care, do not be afraid to ask for assistance.

Everyday tasks, often referred to as activities of daily living (ADLs), include bathing, dressing, eating and drinking, and transferring to and from a bed or chair. It is not unusual that some seniors need help with one or more of these basic physical tasks. The more advanced activities of daily living needed to successfully live independently, referred to as instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), include managing finances, handling transportation (driving or navigating public transit), shopping, preparing meals, using the telephone, managing medications, and performing light housework and heavy chores. In some instances, receiving a little help may prevent the need for more intensive assistance in the future, thus preserving independence. Family members, friends, professional caregivers, in-home nurses, and/or volunteers often combine to provide the total amount of assistance an individual needs with ADLs and IADLs.

The Department, through its Aging and Disability Resource Centers, offers several programs that provide assistance with ADLs and IADLs. In order to develop an appropriate care plan, an assessor will conduct an assessment to identify the person’s long-term care needs.

To get more information about assistance programs for help with activities of daily living, contact your Aging and Disability Resource Center, or call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337). Other sources of information may include your doctor or local health clinic.

ADL Activities
- Bathing
- Dressing
- Eating and drinking
- Toileting
- Transferring
- Walking

IADL Activities
- Preparing meals
- Performing light housekeeping
- Performing heavy chores
- Shopping
- Managing finances
- Managing Medication
- Using the phone
- Using transportation
As individuals get older, they experience functional limitations associated with physical and/or medical conditions brought on by a disability or age-related decline in physical function. In 2010, there were 40.3 million people aged 65 and over in the United States, representing 13.2 percent of the total population. Among this older population, about 15.7 million, or 38.7 percent, reported having one or more disabilities. Assistive technologies help elders and individuals with disabilities conduct the activities they have always done but must now do differently. Assistive technologies help individuals to live independently in their homes and avoid the need for long-term nursing or home healthcare.

**Assistive Technology**  Also known as assistive or adaptive devices, assistive technology is any service, product, or tools that people use to increase their independence and quality of life.

**QUICK FACT:**
Assistive devices are usually prescribed by an occupational therapist.

Assistive technology products can either be high-tech or low-tech and range in price from a few dollars to several thousand dollars. While low-tech assistive devices have no complex electronic components, they can still meet the functional needs of the user. These devices can be effective tools in helping elders face and overcome difficult challenges associated with their disabilities.

**QUESTION:**
My mother is a 70-year-old widow living alone. Is it possible to integrate assistive devices while modifying her home?

**ANSWER:**
Yes, many assistive devices are incorporated into the home when repairs or modifications are made. For example, grab bars or hand railings for the shower could be installed.

**Common Assistive Devices**
- Reachers
- Magnifiers
- Telephones
- Ring amplifiers
- Flashing light ringers
- Medication organizers
- Grab bars/grips
- Bath chairs/ stools
- Book holders
- Memory cue cards
Many types of assistive devices are available to help elders. Some of the most common devices are designed for people with impairments to their vision or hearing. Assistive devices are also available to help with mobility and normal everyday tasks, such as bathing and using the restroom.

While you may decide to purchase assistive technology on your own, there may be instances when your doctor will prescribe assistive technologies for home use to aid in the recovery of an illness or injury. In these cases, your insurance may help pay for the cost of the assistive technology prescribed. These assistive technologies are often referred to as durable medical equipment or home medical equipment.

**Durable/Home Medical Equipment**  This equipment can provide therapeutic benefits or help elders perform tasks they would otherwise be unable to perform. As defined by Medicare and Medicaid, durable medical equipment is equipment that:

- Can stand repeated use,
- Serves a recognized medical purpose,
- Is not useful to someone without an injury,
- Is appropriate for home use, and
- Is prescribed by a doctor as medically necessary.

**QUICK FACT:**
Durable medical equipment is prescribed by a doctor.

Although durable medical equipment and assistive devices are often used interchangeably for insurance coverage purposes, they are considered two different product categories. Medicare Part B and Medicaid cover most durable medical equipment used for elder care. However, Medicare Part B requires you to pay 20 percent of the Medicare-approved amount, and the Part B deductible applies.
If you have private or supplemental insurance, be sure to contact your insurance provider to determine if they will pay for the adaptive technology you require. To find out if Medicare will cover the cost of a particular piece of durable medical equipment, visit Medicare’s website at medicare.gov, or contact the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337) and ask for a SHINE counselor. For additional information on assistive technology products, contact the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST) at 850-487-3278 or online at faast.org. FAAST may also be able to provide you with information about their Device Loan Program, which is a way for people with disabilities of all ages to try out different assistive devices to best determine which are most helpful.
CAREGIVER & CONSUMER SUPPORT

CAREGIVER RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

A caregiver is someone who provides paid or unpaid assistance to another person.

With busy lifestyles, caregiving poses special challenges for today’s families. In spite of these challenges, family and friends account for approximately three-fifths of the caregiving needs of elders. Almost half of caregivers are employed in a job other than full-time caregiving, but one in five of them eventually quits that job. Adult children make up the largest group of family caregivers, representing 42 percent, followed by spouses at 25 percent. Most caregivers are unpaid and lack the resources, training, and support essential to caregiving. This can lead to unforeseen caregiver stress. This stress can affect the quality of the relationship between the recipient and the caregiver. The stress can also have a negative impact on the caregiver’s health. Caregiver stress has been shown to have a major impact on a caregiver’s well-being and ability to provide care.

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<td>• Anger</td>
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<td>• Irritability</td>
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<td>• Anxiety</td>
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<td>• Social withdrawal</td>
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<td>• Depression</td>
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<td>• Loneliness</td>
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<td>• Inattentiveness</td>
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<td>• Lack of concentration</td>
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<td>• Health problems</td>
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Caregiver Support Network If you are a caregiver, or are about to become one, it is a good idea to identify potential sources of support you can call upon. Caregiver support resources may include family members, friends, church members, neighbors, and others. You may also reach out to your Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) for assistance. Many ADRCs offer caregiver assistance programs that may help supplement your caregiver support network. Do not be afraid to ask for help, particularly from those you trust and know you can depend on. After identifying the individuals who will make up your support network or team, begin matching each person with a specific caregiver task. If you are one of several adult children caring for an older parent, ask your siblings to share some of the responsibilities. It may be more practical to designate a family member as the primary care provider, with other members providing backup and financial assistance. To
effectively use your support network, you may find the following list of common caregiver activities helpful.

![Caregiving Activities Table]

**QUESTION:**
What should I do if I start to exhibit any symptoms of caregiver stress?

**ANSWER:**
If you see any symptoms of caregiver stress in yourself, reach out to your caregiver support network to help ease your burden. If you do not have a caregiver support network, your ADRC may be able to assist by providing respite care and companion services.
QUICK FACT:
Caregiving can be very demanding. Studies show that up to 58 percent of caregivers exhibit symptoms of clinical depression. Build a caregiver support network that works for you and ask: Who can help with what?

The Florida Department of Elder Affairs administers several home and community-based caregiver/consumer assistance programs. Most of these programs are federally funded and focus on elders with limited resources who are most in need of economic assistance.

Caregiver Support Companion Resources Provided Through DOEA

- Chore services
- Companion services
- Respite services
- Congregate meals
- Transportation to medical appointments
- Home-delivered meals

If you are a caregiver and need help, assistance may be available in your community. The Department of Elder Affairs, through its network of Area Agencies on Aging and service providers, sponsors several caregiver support initiatives. These services are provided in selected counties throughout Florida and are designated for the most frail and needy elders.

For additional information on caregiver support programs, contact the Aging and Disability Resource Center nearest to you or call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96 ELDER (1-800-963-5337).
CHORE/HOMEMAKER SERVICES

Chronic diseases – arthritis, for example – can make it difficult for some seniors to manage certain routine chores around the house. Several state and federally funded programs are available through the Department of Elder Affairs to assist older adults with these tasks. These programs are designed to help elders stay independent and in their homes for as long as possible.

Chore and homemaker services are provided to eligible seniors in compliance with the regulations of the Agency for Health Care Administration, as mandated by Florida law. Homemaker services include housekeeping, laundry, clothing repair, minor home repairs, and assistance with bill paying. Other homemaker services may include transportation, meal preparation, and shopping assistance. Chore services may consist of any housework or yard work needed to keep your home clean, sanitary, and safe.

These services differ from companion and escort services in that they tend to be more intense and time-consuming. The service provider usually covers the cost of any necessary cleaning supplies, tools, or equipment.

QUESTION:
How can I qualify for chore or homemaker services?

ANSWER:
Eligibility for services is determined by economic need. Contact your Aging and Disability Resource Center for specific details to see if you qualify.

For additional information on chore or homemaker services, contact your local Aging and Disability Resource Center, or call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337).

QUICK FACT:
Homemakers must meet background-screening requirements in accordance with Florida laws and regulations.
COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES

Community action agencies (CAAs) are non-profit organizations committed to helping people in crisis make ends meet while assisting those in poverty become independent and self-sufficient. Every county in Florida is supported by a CAA. CAAs assist individuals with gaining access to emergency financial assistance, job training, employment services, and/or counseling services. As each CAA is locally governed, the specific types of programs offered by each agency will vary.

To find your local CAA see the community action agency listing in the Resource Directory or visit faca.org. The following list highlights the most common services provided by Florida’s CAAs.

Career Resource Centers  Career Resource Centers help unemployed individuals, as well as people with low and moderate incomes, with assistance finding employment. Career opportunity areas may include agribusiness, energy, health services, and transportation.

Credit Counseling and Budget Management  Working closely with credit and housing counselors in Florida, this CAA program provides education and support services related to credit management, budgeting, identity theft, and financial fraud. In addition, the CAAs may offer foreclosure prevention workshops; housing specialists can work directly with your bank or mortgage servicers to find a solution.

Day Care Centers  Featuring full-day, full-year daycare by licensed childcare workers, the CAA Day Care Centers provide childcare for parents who are attending job training, working, and/or are seeking jobs.

Emergency Food and Shelter Assistance  This resource provides emergency assistance to families with critical housing needs. The types of assistance can include utility, rental, and mortgage assistance. The program can also provide temporary shelter and food to Florida families.

Emergency Services and/or Financial Aid  This service supports low income and working poor individuals in addressing obstacles to self-sufficiency and homelessness prevention. As a potential condition for benefits, which may include one-time cash grant payments, emergency rental assistance, or money for energy bills,
recipients may be required to participate in ongoing case management. This can include, but is not limited to, budgeting classes, career counseling, and self-sufficiency type services and programs.

**Family Self-Sufficiency Program**  This program allows people to work with case managers to become less dependent on government assistance and achieve self-sufficiency. Specific services offered by your CAA can include employment and professional development, education, health management, and financial management. Some locations may also provide income tax filing assistance and access to food and nutrition.

**First Time Home Buyer Programs**  This program is for first time homebuyers. Workshops, classes, and individual sessions can assist individuals in obtaining affordable housing. Individuals can learn about the home buying process, how to obtain a low interest rate mortgage, and even apply for down payment and closing cost assistance or grants. Resources are limited, and any funds for a down payment are distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis to income-qualified families.

**Food, Meals, and Government Commodities**  CAAs distribute food, meals, and government commodities to low income families on a regular basis. Seniors and families with children receive special consideration. The commodities provided may include rice, vegetables, beans, applesauce, macaroni, and canned fruits. Surplus vegetables and fresh fruits are also available during peak farming season.

**Head Start Programs**  This resource is for low-income and working poor families with newborn children through children age 6, including those who are disabled and/or with special needs. Participants receive education services, meals, free health care, and similar social services.

**Home Repairs and Rehabilitation Programs**  This program assists current homeowners with the repairs necessary to help maintain a safe home. Provided through grants or low interest loans, funds are intended to address safety and building code issues. Most of the support is for lower to moderate-income senior citizens and individuals with disabilities in Florida.

**Job Training Programs**  Job Training is offered through programs such as the federal government Workforce Investment Act.
Florida WorkForce Job Centers These locations provide a number of free services to qualified residents. Individuals can use the centers to access resources such as computers and job opportunity databases. Specialists from the centers will also provide career counseling, information on training resources, federal government and state employment programs, educational services, and more.

Adult Services This program delivers a number of services, including on-the-job training, supportive services, classroom training, and case management. Working with a member of your CAA, you will be able to access an assortment of resources, get the latest job information, receive skill set and aptitude assessments, and get help with resume preparation and interview skills.

Intensive Services and Training Available for individuals who need additional support to obtain or retain employment, the services provided through this program can include literacy training, resume review, and coordinated case management. These services are designed to complement the skills that an individual already possesses.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) LIHEAP provides assistance with home energy bills for income-qualified clients. Other services include weatherization-assistance, which will help people save money by obtaining a lower energy bill. The standard Home Energy Assistance can provide up to $300 once every 12 months. Crisis benefits can pay up to $600 twice a year for a past due bill, final notice, or disconnection.

Meals on Wheels This program focuses on senior citizens and the elderly in Florida. Some homebound individuals who are trying to maintain independent lifestyles may qualify for free, or low cost, nutritious, hot meals.

Migrant Head Start This program is for immigrants and farm workers in Florida. The program provides the children of migrant worker families with fully comprehensive, holistic, and inclusive services including free dental, medical, nutrition, mental health, meals, and education. The parents of these families can take advantage of job training and employment services.

Prescription Discount Cards Many agencies provide information about free discount cards that can provide a savings up to 40% for prescription drugs.
**Specialized Senior Centers** Operating throughout the state of Florida, these centers may coordinate with a CAA to provide older adults with various social and recreational activities, meals, and companionship.

**Summer Food Program for Children and Youth** Offered during the summer when children do not have access to free school lunches or breakfasts, this program provides wholesome balanced meals at sites accessible to most economically eligible youths up to 18 years of age. These sites may include churches, parks, libraries, and other public centers in Florida.

**Transportation** Frequently provided in partnership with other organizations, such as the Salvation Army or Area Agency on Aging, CAAs may provide low-cost transportation assistance to senior citizens needing to get to doctor appointments, job interviews, or local stores for supplies.

**Veteran Assistance** CAAs offer support and guidance to Florida’s veterans in a variety of ways. Through their local CAA, veterans may receive help with completing applications and submitting claims for health care, disability compensation, pensions, rental and housing assistance, burial benefits, and education. Veterans may also be able to access job training programs focused on veterans.

**Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)** This program helps low-income individuals, seniors, and families prepare their tax returns. Highly trained staff, some of whom are bilingual, provide this service.

**Weatherization Assistance Program** This program helps reduce energy costs for low-income families and the elderly or disabled. It can provide for updates or free repairs to your home. It may include repair or replacement of inefficient heating and cooling units, replacement of windows and doors, attic and floor insulation, and more.

Be sure to contact your local CAA for a complete list of the services provided. To locate the CAA nearest you or for additional information, contact your local Aging and Disability Resource Center or call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337).
COMPANION SERVICES

Seniors can become isolated through no fault of their own. Companion services are designed to help relieve the loneliness and isolation that some seniors face on a daily basis. A companion can help seniors with reading, writing letters, traveling to doctors’ appointments, playing games, and shopping. Other companion services may include casual help with cosmetics, meal preparation, light housekeeping, and other small tasks.

Many companions are seniors themselves and look forward to making new friends their age.

QUESTION:
I am not sure I will feel comfortable with someone I do not know. What requirements must someone complete in order to become a companion?

ANSWER:
Companion services are provided in compliance with the regulations of home health agencies as mandated by Florida law. All companions are trained and must pass criminal background screenings before they are allowed to assist elders in their homes.

For additional information on companion services contact your Aging and Disability Resource Center, or call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337).

Typical Senior Companion Services

- Assistance with meal preparation
- Laundry and shopping
- Transportation to and from the doctor, therapist, or dentist
COMPUTER AND INTERNET SERVICES

Every day people use the Internet to communicate with friends and family; shop for products or services; get information about health care or medical issues; catch up on the news; look for bargains; listen to music, or watch TV shows, movies, and videos. Whatever the reason, there is no denying that the Internet has changed the way many people access information, apply for jobs, and communicate with friends and family.

Many seniors would like to use a computer at home to surf the Internet, but do not have the income to add another monthly bill for Internet service. There are low-cost Internet service options available for those who are eligible. Additionally, some Internet service providers have programs that provide low-cost computers. Contact the Internet service providers in your area to see if they have a low-income Internet program for which you qualify.

Instruction on how to use a computer and the Internet is also available. Many of Florida’s senior centers offer free computer use and classes for seniors. In addition to basic computer use, you can also learn how to use the Internet, email, social media, and how to use the Internet safely. In addition, all of Florida’s public libraries offer free computer and Internet access, and many offer computer classes.

Additionally, throughout Florida, there are free Wi-Fi hotspots, or physical locations that offer Internet access. These locations can be found at city and county government offices, public schools, public libraries, medical facilities, senior centers, and shopping malls where you may use your laptop, tablet, or smartphone to access the Internet without charge or use of your data plan. Additionally, many local and national restaurants, hotels, gas stations, and grocery stores offer free Wi-Fi. You may need to ask for the password in some of these locations in order to access the free Wi-Fi.

For additional information on Internet service providers, contact your local Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) or call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337). The ADRC will be able to provide you with the contact information for Internet service providers in your area and a brief description of the services they offer. If you are interested in taking classes on how to use a computer or the Internet, your ADRC will also be able to provide you with information on senior centers near you.
DISCOUNT PROGRAMS FOR SENIORS

Many companies have begun to recognize the immense buying power of seniors and offer senior discount programs. Most retail and service establishments, particularly those affiliated with larger national chains, offer some type of price discount to seniors.

In Florida, many golf courses, parks, hotels, restaurants, and other facilities offer discounts to persons age 60 and older, or 65 and older. If you are age 55 or older, the best way to see if you can receive a discount is to ask. Some smaller businesses may not widely advertise their discounts for seniors even though they provide them when asked. Remember that, even if an establishment does not have a discount program for seniors, many do offer membership discounts.

With the high costs of prescription drugs, many “discount drug programs” are actively marketing to elders. Please note that most pharmacies already offer notable discounts and are willing to accept discount cards from other programs. It is important to remember that discount drug programs are not drug coverage. There are several ways to cut costs on your medications, such as pharmaceutical assistance programs (PAP), the Florida Discount Drug Card, and others. For assistance reviewing safe discounts, call a SHINE Counselor at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337), to receive free and unbiased prescription drug coverage assistance.

QUESTION:
I get solicitations in the mail all the time. How can I tell if these offers are reputable?

ANSWER:
You can always conduct research to determine if the discount is valid, and be especially careful with offers that sound too good to be true.

If you are not sure about a business, contact your local Better Business Bureau to check the reputation of that business. Also refer to the “Scams” segment in Elder Rights/Abuse & Fraud in Section 7 of this guide for additional steps and precautions that you can take.
You can also contact the Florida Division of Consumer Services at 1-800-435-7352; the Florida Attorney General’s fraud hotline at 1-866-9-NO-SCAM (1-866-966-7226); and the Florida Department of Financial Services at 1-877-MY-FL-CFO (1-877-693-5236).

**QUICK FACT:**
Caution: Do your homework before signing up for discounts and giveaways or providing any personal information. Elders are frequently the targets of sophisticated schemes disguised as discount/savings programs.
ELDER HELPLINE

There are many reasons people needing assistance might not be able to access helpful services, and one of the most common is that they cannot get the information they need to take advantage of programs offered. Studies have shown that this predicament is especially true for homebound elders, minorities, elders living in rural areas, and elders who represent the oldest of the old. Too often, elders need assistance but have no idea how or whom to ask for help.

If you need assistance but do not know where to start, call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337). This is Florida's toll-free resource to get valuable information into the hands of elders and their caregivers. The Elder Helpline gives callers immediate access to a statewide network of telephone information and referral specialists. These specialists have been trained to know about specific services offered to elders in their respective communities.

Florida's 11 Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) and 52 community lead agencies provide services in all of the state's 67 counties. If you are calling from outside Florida and are seeking information about services for a parent or relative living in Florida, you can call the local helpline directly for the county that your relative lives in. The telephone number of each of the local Elder Helplines is listed in the Resource Directory section of this guide. The directory also lists telephone numbers and addresses for all ADRCs and community lead agencies.

Local Helplines in Florida
Counties with Largest Elder Populations

- Miami-Dade
  305-670-4357
- Palm Beach
  561-214-8600
- Broward
  954-745-9779
- Pinellas
  727-217-8111
- Hillsborough
  1-800-336-2226
- Lee
  239-652-6901
- Sarasota
  1-866-413-5337
- Brevard
  407-514-0019
- Orange
  407-514-0019
- Duval
  1-888-242-4464
**QUESTION:**
When I contacted the Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA), I was told to call DCF. Does Elder Affairs not run all programs dealing with elders?

**ANSWER:**
Not all programs dealing with elders are administered by DOEA. Although the Department is the primary agency responsible for coordinating and planning services for elders, it routinely works with four sister state agencies – DCF, AHCA, DOH, and the Department of Veterans' Affairs on programs affecting Florida's elders (see the “Inter-Agency Programs/ Services” section in Getting the Help You Need).

Call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337), or contact your Aging and Disability Resource Center for information on services. Referrals to other state agencies will be provided as needed. Please refer to the Resource Directory at the back of this guide for a listing of names, addresses, and phone numbers for many of the agencies or organizations that provide services to elders.
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) serves unemployed low-income adults who are age 55 and older and have poor employment prospects. SCSEP trains these individuals in part-time community service assignments and assists them in developing skills and experience to facilitate their transition to unsubsidized employment. The purpose of the program is to increase participants’ economic self-sufficiency and to increase the number of seniors who may benefit from unsubsidized employment.

Program participants earn the minimum wage while they are working in their community service assignment for up to 20 hours a week. They can also receive job training or related educational opportunities designed to help them find an unsubsidized job.

Since 1965, SCSEP has enabled individuals with economic disadvantages age 55 and older to help themselves while also helping communities throughout America. Public and private nonprofit community agencies benefit from the valuable experience, skills, work ethic, and productivity that SCSEP participants bring to the work environment.

Community service assignments are available at various locations including schools, hospitals, senior centers, day care centers, nutrition centers, conservation and beautification projects, restoration projects, and many other program sites.

The program helps address urgent employment needs that might otherwise go unmet. It also empowers participants to become self-sufficient, thus avoiding public assistance, as they provide essential community services and gain the necessary confidence and job skills to obtain unsubsidized employment.

**What SCSEP Offers:**
- Orientation
- Assessment
- Training
- Community service assignments
- Work experience
- Wages/benefits
- Unsubsidized employment
More than 2,667 SCSEP positions are available in Florida through both national sponsors and local providers.

To qualify for enrollment in SCSEP, applicants must be unemployed and meet age, income, and residency eligibility criteria. Applicants must be age 55 or older, and their individual and family income cannot exceed low-income standards as defined annually by the U.S. Department of Labor. A person with disabilities may be treated as a “family of one” for income eligibility purposes. Upon initial enrollment, applicants must live in Florida to receive the benefits of the state’s SCSEP program.

**QUESTION:**
Is there a time limit for participation in the program?

**ANSWER:**
Yes, eligible individuals may participate in the program for a maximum duration of 48 months in the aggregate (whether or not consecutive), from the date of the individual’s enrollment in the program.

For additional information on the Senior Community Service Employment Program, contact the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337). You can also go to the agency website at [elderaffairs.org](http://elderaffairs.org), or contact the Department of Elder Affairs SCSEP unit at 850-414-2000.

**QUICK FACT:**
In 2013, more than 67,000 SCSEP participants—older women and men—were employed in a wide range of programs, including those serving other older adults, in nearly every county in every state.
ESCORT SERVICES

Escort services provide personal accompaniment and assistance to seniors who have physical or cognitive difficulties that limit their ability to use regular vehicular transportation. These services can help seniors get to and from service providers, medical appointments, or other important destinations. Escorts may also help interpret for individuals who have hearing or speech impairments, or who speak languages other than English.

All escort services are required to have equipment available to assist seniors who have physical or cognitive difficulties with their mobility. Providers are also required to be certified in first aid.

For additional information on escort services contact your Aging and Disability Resource Center, or call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337).

QUICK FACT:
Escort service vehicles are required to have equipment available to assist with mobility of individuals with disabilities and escorts must have the capacity to operate the equipment.
FOOD ASSISTANCE

Older Americans are often faced with the challenge of making ends meet on a fixed or limited income. Unexpected expenses can lead to difficult decisions such as having to choose to pay for either medicine, food, or utilities. Unfortunately, the decision is often to choose less nutritious, though cheaper, food options.

However, this choice is not without risks; limited access to nutritious food can lead to negative health conditions. Unlike seniors with reliable access to nutritious foods, seniors who do not have this access are:

- 60 percent more likely to experience depression
- 53 percent more likely to report a heart attack
- 52 percent more likely to develop asthma
- 40 percent more likely to report an experience of congestive heart failure

QUICK FACT:
Current research shows that 81% of older adult households lack reliable access to affordable, nutritious food.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
If you are living on a fixed income and face difficulties meeting your nutritional needs, you can apply for food assistance under the SNAP Program (formerly known as Food Stamps). Although some elders rely on food assistance, they represent only a small portion of total households eligible for this assistance. This situation suggests that many needy elders are not using the food assistance program to meet their nutritional needs. Historically, low-income elders have the lowest participation rates among eligible food assistance recipients.

To apply for food assistance, the first step is to file an application with the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF). You can apply online at myflorida.com/accessflorida or in person at an ACCESS Service Center near you. After submitting your application, you or another member of your household will be interviewed. If your application is approved and you are determined to be eligible, you will receive a food assistance identification card in
the mail within 30 days. You will access the benefits in your SNAP account using your Florida Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. Florida uses the EBT card rather than a monthly allowance of stamps or vouchers. The EBT card is used when you checkout the same way you would use a debit card.

**QUICK FACT:**
EBT cards have an expiration date. They expire on the last day of the month listed as the “Good Thru” date on the front of the card.

**QUESTION:**
Since I own my home, will I run the risk of losing it to the government if I accept food assistance?

**ANSWER:**
No, your home is not counted as a resource when you apply for SNAP.

**SUNCAP**
The SUNCAP Program is a food assistance program for individuals who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Florida implemented the SUNCAP Program in 2005 and is part of the federal Combined Application Project (CAP), a government partnership among states, the Food and Nutrition Service, and Social Security Administration.

You may be eligible to receive food assistance benefits through the SUNCAP Program without any additional application, paperwork, or interviews. If you already receive SNAP benefits, you may be automatically put in the SUNCAP Program when you become SSI eligible.

For more information regarding SNAP or the SUNCOM Program, contact DCF at 1-866-762-2237 or online at myflfamilies.com. To find an Access Service Center near you, go to dcf.state.fl.us/programs/access/map.shtml and select a county or click on a dot near your region on the map. From here, you can also access local community partner agencies that help DCF provide access to public assistance services.
QUICK FACT:
Households can receive SNAP and still receive home-delivered meals.

Food Banks and Pantries
Florida residents can get free or low cost food, groceries, meals, and perishable items from pantries and food banks located across the state. Florida’s food banks work with local businesses to gather, store, and distribute food to food pantries in the community for distribution to low-income and needy families.

In addition to collecting, housing, and distributing food, Florida’s food banks offer programs to assist individuals and families in need apply for services. The programs available vary depending on the needs and resources of the community. Some of the programs available through Florida’s food banks include:

Benefits Connection  This program helps to inform and navigate the process of applying for benefits like SNAP, which is an effective way to help provide food to seniors in need. In addition to SNAP, individuals can receive assistance in applying for Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and the Medicare Savings Program, which benefits seniors and persons with disabilities.

Wellness Box Program  A selection of fresh produce and frozen meat is provided for individuals with dietary restrictions due to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, or diabetes.

Second Helpings  Donations of food that have been prepared but never served are collected by food banks from hotels, restaurants, theme parks, and convention centers. These donations are delivered directly to partner agencies and food pantries that serve a variety of clients, including seniors.

Mobile Pantries  Several food banks and pantries operate mobile pantries as a method of direct client distribution to reach areas that may not be served by a community partner. Mobile pantries focus on communities where children and seniors are at high risk of food insecurity. The mobile pantry allows for higher quantity and quality of food to be delivered to struggling families.
Senior Grocery Program  Food banks partner with local agencies and churches through the Senior Grocery Program to provide a variety of fresh and shelf stable foods to low income seniors.

To learn more about the food bank programs in your area or to find a food bank near you, call 1-855-FLA-FOOD (1-855-352-3663) or visit fafb.org. A listing of food banks is also located in the Resource Directory located in the back of this guide. You can also dial 2-1-1, call your local Aging and Disability Resource Center, or call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337) for information on food banks and food pantries in your area.
With more than 54,000 square miles of land, a mild climate, and a richly diverse population, the Sunshine State is endowed with many great things to enjoy year-round.

Retirement should be looked upon as a new beginning for seniors. Florida has a great deal to offer retirees regardless of their financial circumstances. If you enjoy the outdoors, consider gardening, camping, or boating. If you like traveling and seeing new things, consider visiting a theme/amusement park, a zoo, or an aquarium. If you are interested in the performing arts, consider participating in a community theater, seeing a play, or attending a concert.

**QUESTION:**
I live on a limited budget. How can I enjoy what Florida has to offer?

**ANSWER:**
Plan events and leisure activities in advance, and shop around for the best rates. You can also check local community calendars for activities. Many tourist activities and major entertainment attractions offer senior discounts (see Senior Discount Programs section).

For additional information on hobbies, leisure, and recreational activities, contact Visit Florida by calling the state information line at 850-488-1234. You can also contact your Aging and Disability Resource Center, or call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337).

**QUICK FACT:**
More than 7 million cruise passengers pass through Florida’s ports every year. The Port of Miami is the busiest cruise port in the world.
LIFELINE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The federal Lifeline Assistance program provides discounts on monthly telephone service for eligible low-income subscribers. The program’s purpose is to help ensure that eligible customers can connect to the nation’s communications networks, find jobs, access health care services, communicate with family and their children’s schools, and call for help in an emergency.

The Lifeline Assistance program provides a $9.25 credit towards the monthly telephone bill that saves up to a $111.00 a year for eligible customers. If you are eligible, you may choose either a home phone or a cell phone.

In Florida, eligible customers include those who either have an income that is at or below 150% of the federal poverty guideline or receive state or federal government benefits from one or more of the following programs:

- Medicaid
- Temporary Cash Assistance
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/Food Stamps
- Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Supplemental Social Security Income (SSI)
- National School Lunch (NSL) Program’s free lunch program
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)

All Lifeline Assistance subscribers will be contacted annually by their service provider to reconfirm their program eligibility.

QUICK FACT:
Eligible customers may ONLY receive one discount per household.

Residents of Florida’s federally recognized Tribal lands, who are eligible for benefits through the Bureau of Indian Affairs for Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Head Start subsidy, or the NSL, also qualify for expanded Lifeline Assistance through the Tribal Lands Lifeline and Link Up Programs. Tribal Lands Lifeline
provides up to an additional $25 in addition to the $9.25 credit mentioned above, to eligible low-income subscribers living on Tribal lands. Tribal Lands Link Up provides qualified subscribers living on Tribal lands with a one-time discount of up to $100 on the initial installation or activation of a home or cell phone for the primary residence.

**Signing Up**
Whether you receive state or federal help or meet the income guidelines, you must have phone service established in order to apply for the Lifeline Assistance program.

If you do not have home phone service, you will need to contact a local phone company in your area and establish service. You can also apply for the Lifeline Assistance program at that time through the service provider. If you choose to get cell phone service, you will need to contact a cellphone carrier and establish service. The cell phone carrier will also be able to assist you with applying for Lifeline Assistance. If you already have home or cell phone service, you can call your phone service provider and ask for help signing up.

**If you receive state or federal help:**
If you are receiving state or federal assistance, you may also call the Public Service Commission at 1-800-342-3552. The Commission can answer questions you have about the program, provide information about home and cell phone service providers, or help you to apply for Lifeline Assistance. Visit the Public Service Commission’s Lifeline Web page at floridapsc.com/utilities/telecomm/lifeline to apply online or obtain a printed application. When you submit your application for the program, you must provide documentation verifying state and/or federal program participation.

Additionally, you can choose to be automatically enrolled for the Lifeline Assistance program when you apply at the Florida Department of Children and Families if you are a new applicant or are re-certifying your eligibility for any of the following programs:

- Temporary Cash Assistance
- SNAP
- Medicaid

**If you do not receive state or federal help:**
If you are not receiving state or federal assistance but meet the
income guidelines, you may still qualify for Lifeline Assistance. To verify whether you meet the income guidelines contact the Office of Public Counsel 1-800-540-7039 or visit the Counsel’s web page at floridaopc.gov. The Office of Public Counsel will also be able to provide you with information on both home and cell phone providers as well as sign you up for the program if you are eligible.
LIFELONG LEARNING

Lifelong learning is encouraged by many geriatricians as being very beneficial to older adults’ mental and physical well-being. Many older Floridians would like to continue their education through lifelong learning programs in their communities. Most, if not all, of Florida’s public colleges, universities, and community colleges offer various classes geared for adults 50 and older who wish to continue learning throughout their lives. In addition, local school districts may offer adult education classes in academics and certification courses for medical and other technicians. Some classes are more geared to crafting, hobbies, and personal growth, such as exercise and other health and wellness courses.

**Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI)** OLLI is a program of the Bernard Osher Foundation, which supports and funds 119 lifelong learning programs on university and college campuses across the country. OLLI collaborates with universities throughout Florida to provide adult enrichment courses. The program is administered by university staff, OLLI board members, and the memberships of various community groups. In Florida, OLLI is a membership-based organization of adults over age 50 who come together to form a community of learners. Many of the OLLI programs throughout Florida help you stay engaged mentally and socially with cultural events and tours, as well as with personal enrichment courses in literature, art and music, current events, languages, personal growth, and much more.

**QUICK FACT:**

In 2013, the Florida Legislature recognized OLLI for its leadership in “engaging older Floridians and enriching lives” by designating April 8, as Osher Lifelong Learning Institute Day at the Capitol.

To find an OLLI program near you, visit the OLLI National Resource Center’s website at nrc.northwestern.edu/find-an-olli-near-you.

**Road Scholar** Road Scholar is the name for the programs of Elderhostel, a not-for-profit organization, that offers adults many opportunities for educational travel and adventure. Today’s Road Scholar programs include an extraordinary range of topics, formats, and locations in every state in the U.S., in 150 countries, and aboard
ships and sailing vessels on waterways throughout the world. At the heart of the Road Scholar program are the participants, who are lifelong learners engaged in programs that foster camaraderie and a sense of community.

Road Scholar also offers intergenerational programs, such as travel with your grandchildren, in many locations. Programs available include biking/hiking/walking, tours, arts, history, health and wellness, cooking, music, science and nature, theatre, and many more. For additional information, visit the Road Scholar website at roadscholar.org.
MEALS - CONGREGATE/ HOME-DELIVERED

If you are a senior who cannot prepare or secure your daily meals, you may qualify for a Department of Elder Affairs sponsored program that provides nutritious meals. Providing food at a congregate meal site or having meals brought to your home are two ways the Department of Elder Affairs ensures that Florida’s neediest seniors receive well-balanced meals.

Eligible seniors are assigned to congregate meal sites within their communities and receive transportation to their assigned meal sites each day. Meals provided at congregate meal sites – for example, senior centers – allow seniors the opportunity to socialize with their peers, participate in educational programs, and take advantage of health screening opportunities while enjoying their food. Facilities used as congregate meal sites are required by law to be clean, have adequate lighting and ventilation, and comply with applicable food safety and hygiene regulations.

Nutritional meals may also be provided to seniors through Meals on Wheels, a home-delivery meal program designed to assist elders who are homebound. Meals are delivered to program participants between 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Meals are not delivered on weekends or major holidays. All meals are individually packaged and stored in insulated food containers to ensure freshness and prevent the spread of food-borne illnesses.

Benefits of Congregate and Home-Delivered Meals

- Help maintain independence
- Improve physical health through nutritional meals
- Provide an opportunity to socialize with others
- Improve morale of recipients
- Lead to referrals to other community services
Meals served at congregate meal sites, as well as those delivered to individual seniors’ homes, are prepared and cooked daily. Registered and licensed dietitians develop menus well in advance, and these are posted at the meal sites and delivered to homebound seniors regularly.

**QUESTION:**
I suffer from high blood pressure and require a special diet. Do these programs offer special diets?

**ANSWER:**
Yes. Diet plans available include regular, diabetic, and low-fat/low-cholesterol meals. All meals are low in sodium (salt).

**QUICK FACT:**
Those who apply for home-delivered meals are assessed to determine their eligibility for other services they may need to help them live as independently as possible.

For additional information on congregate meal sites or home-delivered meals, contact your Aging and Disability Resource Center, or call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337).
MEDICAL ALERT SYSTEMS

As you age, being able to stay in your home feeling safe, secure, and comfortable is key to your health and happiness. Having peace of mind in the event of an emergency can make living independently a possibility. Medical alert systems can offer you this peace of mind while allowing you to maintain your independence. While you can purchase a medical alert system for yourself, they are often purchased by family members for aging relatives who live alone.

Medical alert systems provide fast access to emergency assistance when needed. The type of service and device provided depends on the medical alert system company you or your loved one chooses. The services and devices range from simple alarms to sophisticated Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and motion detecting systems. Most alert systems provide 24-hour monitoring and a waterproof neck pendant or bracelet. Some are useful only in the home or within a certain range surrounding the home. Others are equipped with GPS software that works anywhere and can pinpoint the exact location of the device. This option is especially useful for those who may wander far from home. Some of the alert services offer a mobile 911 phone, which can place a call to local 911 if you have an emergency, and are out of your normal service area. Certain medical alert systems can be used for non-emergencies. Individuals can use this service to call for aid when they need someone to come to their assistance but an ambulance is not needed. Additionally, some companies offer motion-sensitive pendants that can detect falls and call for help; however, they cannot detect 100% of falls.

Make sure that you select a system that suits your particular disability, that the system offers a battery back-up in case of a power outage, and that the system allows multiple choices for whom to contact in case of an emergency or non-emergency, including local emergency medical services, local relatives, and/or friends. If you are concerned about potential falls in the house, check to see if the provider you select can mount help buttons near the floor in various rooms of the house, in the event that you fall and are not wearing the bracelet/pendant.
**QUESTION:**
I live alone and am prone to falling down. What is the best medical alert system that will allow me to continue to live independently without the fear of falling and not receiving any help?

**ANSWER:**
Selecting the medical alert system that best suits your needs will take some research. There are many consumer reports available that provide an unbiased comparison of the various products available. You can also ask people you know who may be using a medical alert system about their experiences with the devices and service providers.

Be sure you get any system specifications and costs in writing before signing a contract. If you have any questions or concerns about the company that you are thinking of selecting, check with the Better Business Bureau. You can also contact your local Aging and Disability Resource Center or call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337).
OLDER AMERICANS ACT PROGRAMS

The Older Americans Act is the federal legislation that sets forth the federal government’s master strategy for improving the lives of America’s elders (persons age 60 and older). The Act provides federal funding to all 50 states (and some territories) to support programs that benefit older Americans. Portions of the Act, known as Title III and Title VII, support State Units on Aging, including Florida’s Department of Elder Affairs.

Most of the programs serving elders throughout the United States are provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living (ACL), Administration on Aging (AoA). The Older Americans Act established AoA as the principal federal agency responsible for programs authorized under the Act. AoA, through ACL, provides funding and assistance to State Units on Aging to support community-based systems of comprehensive social services for the elderly. The Act focuses on older persons with the greatest economic and social needs.

QUESTION:
Is my Area Agency on Aging a part of the service network created by the Older Americans Act?

ANSWER:
Yes, the Area Agencies on Aging are an integral part of the service network created by the Older Americans Act. Most programs sponsored under the Act are handled through Florida’s 11 Area Agencies on Aging. Florida’s Area Agencies then contract with hundreds of service providers throughout the state to deliver services at the community level.

For more information on the Older Americans Act, contact the Administration for Community Living at 202-619-0724. Information on local services in Florida provided by the Act is available by contacting your Aging and Disability Resource Center, or calling the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337).

QUICK FACT:
The aim of the Older Americans Act is to foster maximum independence by providing a broad range of community-based services and protections.
PUBLICATIONS, NEWSLETTERS, AND BROCHURES

The Department of Elder Affairs uses a variety of methods to distribute information about programs and other significant issues of interest to elders. These include brochures, newsletters, informational packets, informational updates, and a bi-monthly newspaper. These resources are designed to help you become a better-informed consumer. The more you know, the easier it will be to access the programs and services you need.

Whether you need general information on programs or specific information on an issue that affects you personally, you can call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337) for a listing of the Department’s publications. You may also access some publications on the Department’s website at elderaffairs.org.

Elder Update Newspaper – A popular and widely circulated bi-monthly newspaper published by the Department’s communications office, Elder Update provides an effective forum for important information on programs and services. The newspaper features stories and articles on a wide range of topics and issues affecting elders. Common topics include articles on caregiver stress; hurricane and disaster preparedness; nutrition education; health risk and disease screening; Medicare and Medicaid; and elder rights, abuse, and fraud. You may subscribe by calling the Elder Helpline or visiting the Department’s website.

Newsletters – The Department periodically issues newsletters highlighting features and services offered by individual programs. Newsletters and fact sheets provide important information quickly to specific groups.

Brochures and Pamphlets – Brochures and pamphlets are readily available for most of the Department’s major initiatives. If you need information on a specific program or issue, you can ask to have a brochure sent to you by calling the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337). Materials are available for many programs, including:
• SHINE (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Elders),
• CARES (Comprehensive Assessment and Review for Long-term Care Services),
• Communities for a Lifetime,
• Elder Abuse Prevention,
• Senior Companion Program, and
• Statewide Public Guardianship Office.

**QUESTION:**
Once I sign up as a subscriber for *Elder Update*, when will I get my first delivery?

**ANSWER:**
It may take 8-10 weeks to receive your first newspaper issue.

For more information on Department of Elder Affairs publications, newsletters, brochures or pamphlets, call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337).
SERVING THE FRAIL/UNDERSERVED

The Department of Elder Affairs recognizes differences among elders who are in need of care. Consequently, the Department is particularly sensitive to the needs of elders who have historically been underserved. Individuals in this group would include rural residents, minorities, low-income individuals, and those assessed as the most frail and needy. In an effort to serve the most needy elders, the Department works with individuals and families to determine both frailty levels and needed levels of care.

**QUESTION:**
Is there a relationship between chronic diseases and frailty level?

**ANSWER:**
Yes, elders with multiple chronic diseases are likely to be less independent and more frail, and require more care, both immediate and long-term.

For additional information on outreach to frail and underserved populations, contact your Aging and Disability Resource Center, or call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337).

**QUICK FACT:**
86 percent of older Americans have at least one chronic diet-related disease.

**Factors that May Contribute to Frailty**

- Loneliness
- Isolation
- Absence of cooking skills
- Depression
- Economic concerns
- Lack of knowledge about assistance programs
- Fear of affordability of nutritious foods
SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security benefits are paid to retirees or individuals with disabilities who have a qualifying work history, and to their spouses and dependents, and/or survivors.

Full Social Security benefits are payable at age 66, for individuals born between 1943 - 1954, with a smaller benefit amount payable at age 62. The age at which all benefits are payable increases gradually to age 67 for those born after 1954. Persons who are blind or disabled, and who worked for a certain number of years during which Social Security taxes were paid, are entitled to benefits. Dependents and survivors of such persons may also be entitled to Social Security benefits.

Social Security provides monthly assistance benefits. The benefit level is based on your average monthly income (adjusted for inflation) for which Social Security taxes were paid. Benefit recipients receiving Social Security also receive Medicare Insurance Coverage.

If you have little or no income and only a few assets, you may be eligible for cash benefits through the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Program. SSI is designed to assure a minimum level of income for persons in need who are age 65 and older, blind, or disabled.

QUESTION:
Can I keep a job after I start collecting Social Security?

ANSWER:
Yes, after you reach your full retirement age, you can earn any amount of money without losing benefits.

For additional information, contact your local Social Security office. You can get the phone number for your local office by calling the Social Security Administration’s toll-free number at 1-800-772-1213.

Who is Eligible to Collect Social Security?

- Workers once they reach their full retirement age
- Workers age 62 (early retirement means smaller benefits)
- Blind or disabled individuals
- Dependent or survivor of retired worker
SOCIAL WORKERS/CASE MANAGERS

Trained case managers or social workers provide case management services to help eligible seniors identify and receive a variety of services. With the help of the case manager, seniors can plan for, arrange, and coordinate appropriate community-based services. If you believe you need these services to help you at home, a case manager or social worker can be assigned to visit you and help determine what specific services might be available for you.

The case manager serves as the “gatekeeper” in the community care service system, with the knowledge and responsibility to identify senior clients who have needs and link them with the most beneficial services and resources. Case managers and social workers are required to make every effort to link clients with all appropriate formal and/or informal support systems available in their communities. Case managers coordinate services provided by various agencies and individuals.

QUESTION:
What can I expect to happen to me once I am assigned a case manager or social worker?

ANSWER:
An assigned case manager will conduct an interview with you and complete a comprehensive assessment of your situation. Once your assessment is complete, your case manager or social worker will develop a plan of care to help you obtain access to needed community resources.

For additional information regarding case management services and eligibility requirements, contact your local Aging and Disability Resource Center or call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337).

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Volunteer programs for seniors have been on the rise over the last three decades in the United States, in both the public and private sectors. Thousands of programs are specifically designed to provide seniors with opportunities to volunteer – through church and interfaith groups, health care institutions, and a broad range of cultural and social service organizations.

**QUESTION:**
I am retired. What kind of volunteer opportunities are in my city? What type of volunteer positions are currently available?

**ANSWER:**
If you are a senior interested in expanding your horizons, consider volunteering. AmeriCorps, the SHINE Program, LTCOP, RELIEF, and Senior Companion Program are among the senior volunteer programs that the Department sponsors.

Recognizing the role that volunteering plays in helping elders actively age in place, the Department of Elder Affairs offers several programs that promote and support senior volunteerism. These programs include:

**AmeriCorps** The Department’s AmeriCorps program engages community volunteers who receive a living allowance and commit to one year of service in exchange for an education award. The Department partners with Easter Seals South Florida and offers volunteer opportunities in Miami-Dade and Broward counties. AmeriCorps program services include in-home respite, education, and community outreach to elders, caregivers, and families.

For more information regarding volunteer opportunities with the AmeriCorps program, please contact the AmeriCorps coordinator at 850-414-2000.

**SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders)** The SHINE Program provides health insurance information and free, unbiased, and confidential counseling to Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers. To volunteer with SHINE visit [floridashine.org](http://floridashine.org) and click on the “Join Our Team” link. Simply fill out the online application, complete the online orientation, join other community members in completing SHINE Basic Training, and agree to uphold the integrity of the SHINE Program.
Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) If you wish to be involved in a resident-centered volunteer program, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program welcomes all adults wishing to serve as volunteers. Volunteers serving in this program range from student interns to retired seniors. For more information on volunteering with the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, call toll-free at 1-888-831-0404 or visit the website at ombudsman.myflorida.com.

Respite for Elders Living in Everyday Families (RELIEF) The RELIEF program offers respite services to caregivers of frail elders and those with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia. RELIEF respite is provided primarily during evenings and weekends, times that are not usually covered by other respite programs. Volunteers may spend up to four hours per visit providing companionship to a frail homebound elder, giving the caregiver an opportunity to take a much-needed break. Activities may include conversation, reading together, playing board games, or preparing a light snack. Volunteers receive training and some volunteers may receive stipends.

The RELIEF program currently provides services in Escambia, Duval, Brevard, Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade Counties. For more information about program information and volunteer opportunities, please contact the RELIEF Program Coordinator at 850-414-2000.

Senior Companion Program The Senior Companion Program is a national service peer-volunteer program funded by a grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service. Senior Companion volunteers provide services to elders at risk of institutionalization due to chronic illnesses, disabilities, or isolation. Volunteers receive pre-service and monthly training, a modest tax-free stipend to help defray expenses, local transportation reimbursement, accident and liability insurance while on duty, and an annual medical checkup. The Department’s Senior Companion Program partners with local volunteer stations in Duval, Citrus, Marion, and Palm Beach counties. Volunteers provide transportation to medical appointments, shopping assistance, meal preparation, companionship, and advocacy. They also provide respite to caregivers of frail elders.

For more information regarding volunteer opportunities with the Senior Companion Program, please contact the Senior Companion Coordinator at 850-414-2000.
Benefits of Intergenerational Programs

- Improved relations between youth and elders
- Enhanced family relations
- Empowered family relations
- Empowered communities
- Increased services to all age groups

QUICK FACT:
In State Fiscal Year 2013, 875,178 elder Floridians contributed a total of 175,923,563 hours of volunteer service, valued at more than $3.7 billion—equivalent to 91,626 full-time positions.

QUESTION:
“If I volunteer, what would be required of me?”

ANSWER:
Most agencies provide training as needed for their volunteers. At this training, specific expectations of the volunteers are explained. Volunteers do not receive pay, but they may be reimbursed for some expenses associated with their work duties.

For additional information on volunteer opportunities in your community, contact your local your Aging and Disability Resource Center, or call the Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337).

In addition to offering programs that support senior volunteerism, the Department’s Office of Volunteer and Community Services (OVCS) identifies, recognizes, highlights, and provides technical assistance to volunteer programs and activities statewide that offer valuable services by and for elders, as well as intergenerational volunteer opportunities. Intergenerational connections improve the relationships between all age groups, and draw on the strength and skills of the state’s older population.

Each year during National Volunteer Week, the OVCS recognizes more than a 1000 volunteers in the Department’s sponsored programs. Volunteers are also recognized year round throughout the state for service by and for older persons.

For more information on the Department’s Office of Volunteer & Communities Services, contact the OVCS Director at 850-414-2000.