

# **LOOKING TOWARD 2020: THE FUTURE FOR SENIOR CITIZENS**

## **A Report of the Mason District Senior Citizen Task Force**

**January 2002**

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By 2020, the number of people older than age 65 in our region will increase 107 percent. That means we will have more than double the number of senior citizens we have today. The government, as well as the private sector, must start to plan now and work together on how our community will serve our senior citizen population on issues such as housing, transportation, safety and security, communication, and legal services.

In the spring of 2000, I appealed for volunteers to serve on a Mason District Senior Citizen Task Force who would analyze projected needs of senior citizens in Mason District. I asked them to prepare an action plan, with short-term and long-term achievable goals, that could serve as the basis for new or enhanced policies on senior citizen issues. This report is the culmination of the Task Force's work during the last 18 months.

I want to thank all the members of the Task Force for their good work on this important issue. Their foresight and thoughtful deliberations provide some excellent suggestions to guide our work in the future. I hope you will find the report interesting and informative.

If you have questions about the report, or would like to obtain additional copies, please call my office at 703/256-7717 or e-mail at [mason@co.fairfax.va.us](mailto:mason@co.fairfax.va.us).

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

Penelope A. Gross  
Mason District Supervisor

## Executive Summary

In Fairfax County, the population of persons aged 65 and older is expected to double over the next 20 years. The population 85 and older is expected to grow faster than any other age group. Now is the time to start developing plans aimed at meeting the special needs of this population group.

Under the direction of Mason District Supervisor Penny Gross, a Task Force was formed to investigate this situation. The Task Force was asked to put together a report analyzing the current status of senior citizen assistance within the County and to make recommendations as to how the level of this assistance can best be organized and expanded to handle the expected growth of this population group.

In carrying out its work, the Task Force divided senior citizen services into the following components:

- Communication
- Housing
- Legal Services
- Transportation
- Safety and Security

It quickly became apparent that all of these services are linked together:

**The basic services -- such as housing, legal services, safety and security -- are of no value if**

**there is no communication -- the senior citizen and their caregivers don't know they exist--**

**or the services are there, the seniors know about them -- but they have no transportation to get to the service.**

### Communication

Communication means the ability to successfully convey information about such topics as elder rights, benefits, services, and care to the senior citizens and their caregivers. As these topics grow in size and complexity, the means of communicating information and answering queries becomes of critical importance.

In addition to the traditional means such as TV, telephone and libraries, the Internet quickly is a prime source for providing information. Fairfax County has an outstanding web page where much of this information is provided through links to Federal, State and private sector Internet sites.

## **Housing**

Our goal is to enable Fairfax County senior citizens to live comfortably, safely and independently in their own homes as they age, regardless of income or ability level. This is referred to as Aging in Place.

We are beginning to think of our older communities as villages or Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRC) to a degree. Many seniors prefer to stay in the neighborhoods with which they are familiar and also like the vibrancy of new families living nearby. We have to adjust to accommodate an aging population instead of encouraging flight.

## **Legal Services**

In addition to routine legal services, senior citizens will require additional legal services related to issues of health, income, and increased need for assistance. However, older persons often are less able to protect themselves, and many are undereducated about the legal services available to them. Furthermore, in Mason District, many senior citizens feel even more vulnerable because English is not their primary or native language.

Over the next 20 years, the need for legal services for older persons will grow rapidly for at least three reasons:

1. The over-65 population is expected to double in Fairfax County.
2. The number and complexity of laws affecting the lives of this population will increase.
3. Advances in technology, particularly in medicine and communications, will raise new issues in legal, privacy, and ethical areas for which senior citizens will need legal advice and counseling to resolve.

## **Transportation**

The ability to move freely from place to place, while often taken for granted, is crucial to the well being of the senior citizen. Any other plans that are developed, such as health care, counseling, social activities or education are of no value if senior citizens cannot get from their home to the facility.

Lack of transportation is strongly associated with income level, loneliness, and self-care problems. As the average age of our population increases, particularly the “senior” senior citizens (those over 85), contemporary transportation solutions will become less and less adequate and additional options and alternatives will be required. Transportation is the critical link that assures access to a range of vital services, from health care to grocery shopping.

## **Safety and Security**

In the past, people usually stayed in the same house or neighborhood and interacted with their neighbors – a kind of “extended family” situation. Neighbors took responsibility for their neighborhood and community.

The present situation no longer reflects that type of security felt and seen by citizens in the past. The residential neighborhoods in Mason District now reflect the diverse makeup of persons and lifestyles. Many of the persons 65 years and older are choosing to live out their lives in their own homes instead of moving to alternative housing. That leaves Mason District with a significant senior citizen population that should feel and be safe within their community.

The types of safety and safety issues include consumer protection (fraud); neglect; physical and mental abuse; and theft not only of physical property, but also the theft of personal information, known today as “identity theft.”

Mason District, as part of Fairfax County, has an extensive and impressive number of public and private programs available which assist citizens, seniors in particular, to live in their homes and function in the community safely.

## Major Recommendations

The Task Force came up with several recommendations for each major category investigated. All of these recommendations are key for the well being of senior citizens living in Mason District. However, recognizing the limits of funding and staffing, the Task Force considers the following recommendations to be of prime importance and worthy of immediate consideration:

### 1. Communication

Rather than follow the present plan of the National Partnership for Reinventing Government to install computer kiosks in shopping centers, the Task Force recommends neighborhood libraries, most of which already have computer facilities for their patrons. Our specific recommendation is:

Fairfax County or a relevant organization should apply for a grant from a foundation in order to set up a pilot computer facility in a neighborhood library in Mason District specifically to provide seniors with all of the above existing and planned services and information.

For instance, the pilot facility could be staffed by volunteers one day per week, when seniors would be encouraged to come in for assistance, such as:

- Downloading or submitting forms
- Finding the proper agency contacts at the federal, state or local level
- Finding out their expected benefits, etc.
- Find out about volunteer opportunities.
- The Fairfax County web page has some excellent links to all of the senior citizen services available in the area. It should also be included on this pilot system.

Some of this assistance actually could be provided by telephone for seniors who have no transportation or cannot leave their residence.

With careful planning and management, this pilot site could serve as a model for similar library installations throughout the country.

### 2. Housing

Fairfax County should promote cooperation with private industry like Home Depot or Lowes to offer qualified personnel to install upgrades into seniors' homes to help make life more controllable. Home Depot has programs in place in other areas like Atlanta, GA, and Annapolis, MD, but not in Fairfax County.

### 3. Legal Services

**Develop programs staffed by attorneys, paralegals, and trained seniors to provide elder law services to senior citizens.**

Several local attorneys confirmed that paralegals or other non-attorney sources could handle much of the legal services and legal education required for the elderly. To encourage and assist individuals to enter this program, the Task Force recommends the following:

- Congress should enact a law providing for tuition assistance for qualified individuals who enter a paralegal program specializing in elder law. This could be in the form of tax credits, subsidized loans, interest-free loans or outright grants. Special consideration should be given to the "Young Seniors" (generally considered to be from 60 to 70). We should contact AARP Management and solicit their interest and support in getting such a law enacted.
- Develop programs in consultation with our area legal services organizations to identify specific short-term and long-term needs (i.e. types of assistance and support needed). Prepare materials describing potential internships with the various County legal service organizations, such as Legal Services of Northern Virginia, in consultation with these organizations, and distributed to the identified colleges and universities. This information could also be designed and maintained as part of Fairfax County's website.
- Work with one or two local colleges/universities to design and promote a Seniors for Seniors legal learning program, with a focus on elder law. This program would be designed to encourage seniors to go back to school to learn about elder law to help their fellow seniors.

### 3. Transportation

Establish a shuttle bus service in Mason District so that Seniors can get from one area to another, for instance, Annandale to Bailey's Crossroads, or other communities within Mason District. These could be small vans that run in the daylight hours on a regular schedule. Monthly passes could be purchased to cover some of the expenses. Progress is already being made in this effort. Through a grant from the Baileys Crossroads Revitalization program, a focus group is being formed to investigate this type of service.

### 4. Safety and Security

Mason District should coordinate an effort with the Fairfax TRIAD, Department of Family Services, and District civic associations to extend their programs and services to the neighborhood level.

-- Query each civic association in Mason District to find out what each is doing to promote/advocate the safety of seniors in their neighborhoods. Analyze this information to determine which parts of the community would benefit from additional assistance in this effort (for example, help a neighborhood organization develop a "Senior Friendship" program of its own)

-- Conduct focus groups on senior concerns regarding safety and security issues at the neighborhood level on a regular basis (twice yearly) and use the information to keep County organizations current on these issues.

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## **Introduction**

### **Mission of the Task Force**

The population of persons aged 65 and older is expected to double over the next 20 years. The population 85 and older is expected to grow faster than any other age group.<sup>1</sup> Now is the time to start developing plans aimed at meeting the special needs of this population group.

What should be the goals of such long-term plans? In defining its mission, the Task Force adopted these goals<sup>2</sup>:

- Develop community-level systems of services that meet the unique needs of the over-65 population and their caregivers, over the next 20 years.
- Enhance the capacity of the over-65 population to remain self-sufficient and continue to live in their homes and communities.
- Give priority to those with the greatest economic and social need, particularly low-income, minority persons.

### **Task Force Approach**

Federal, State, and County Government agencies, as well as the private and non-profit sectors, already provide a vast array of services and assistance to the older population. The Task Force first wanted to become acquainted with the services currently available. In addition to being an education for the Task Force, the Task Force felt it could also provide a service to Fairfax County and its senior citizens by putting together a comprehensive, in-depth compilation of what is currently available.

The Task Force divided the services into the following components:

- **Communication**
- **Housing**
- **Legal Services**
- **Transportation**
- **Safety and Security**

Subcommittees were assigned responsibility for each segment. Task Force members chose the subcommittees they wanted to participate in. Each subcommittee named a chairman and the subcommittees set their own meeting times and place. The Task Force met as a group on the first Thursday of each month, from June, 2000, through November, 2001.

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, Older Americans 2000: Key Indicators of Well-Being, Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, August 2000. Also available at [www.agingstats.gov](http://www.agingstats.gov).

<sup>2</sup> This was adopted from the Administration on Aging: "Title III-State and Community Programs":

For each segment, the subcommittee organized its findings in the following fashion:

**Overview:** An introduction to the service being discussed and a description as to how it applies to senior citizens in Fairfax County in general and Mason District in particular.

**Services Currently Available:** A comprehensive listing and description of services currently available including phone numbers, references, Internet sites and contacts for obtaining additional information about each service.

**Additional or Modified Services Recommended:** What services are needed, with particular emphasis on the long term (10 to 20 years), recognizing that the senior citizen population of Fairfax County will most likely double in that time period.

To find out about services currently available, members of the Task Force did research on the Internet and at libraries, made phone calls, and invited representatives of groups providing services and assistance to meet with the Task Force. The latter were extremely helpful and were an important source of information.

Over the course of its research, it became apparent to the Task Force that all of these senior citizen services are linked together:

**The basic services -- such as housing, legal services, safety and security -- are of no value if**

**there is no communication -- the senior citizen and their caregivers don't know they exist--**

**or the services are there, the seniors know about them -- but they have no transportation to get to the service.**

**Task Force Membership**

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**Acknowledgements**

The Task Force wishes to thank the following for their invaluable assistance. This consisted of presentations to the Task Force and the subcommittees, providing us with literature and descriptive material, patiently answering questions and returning phone calls. This report could not have been put together without their input.

Beverly Mullis, "*Seniors on the Go Program*"

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## Findings and Recommendations

### Communication

#### Overview

Communication is something we each do every day. Successful communication, for any purpose, and in any manner, continues to be one of the basic, day-to-day challenges of our lives.

In the context of the Task Force's mission, the definition of 'communication' means the ability to successfully convey information about elder rights, benefits, services, and care to the senior citizens and their caregivers of Mason District. As the subject of elder rights, benefits and care grows in size and complexity, the means of communicating information and answering queries becomes of critical importance. In addition, outreach programs have to be developed and expanded, particularly to reach minorities and the indigent.

How do we successfully convey information about elder rights, benefits, services, volunteer opportunities, and care in Mason District? There are traditional methods of conveying information: verbal; one-to-one; groups (*i.e.* classes, speeches, meetings, information fairs); and technological methods of conveying information.

There are several basic requirements for every method of communication

- It must be multi-lingual; the precise languages that are needed should be identified.
- It should be available through traditional and technological methods
- It should be available to everyone who needs it without regard to financial situation
- It should be available to the physically challenged (*i.e.* sight, hearing, etc.)

#### 'Traditional' Methods

**Verbal:** one-to-one (informal visiting, organized outreach programs), group (classes, speeches, meetings)

**Written:** letters (one-to-one), direct mail (mass mailings), flyers/brochures/written information located in public places for people to take

The traditional methods of communications will always be with us. There will always be members of our community who rely on this method of communication to gather information – in this case, our senior citizens gathering information about their rights, benefits, services, and care. Mason District should be planning to work on reaching out to seniors both by traditional methods and technological methods.

#### First Contact

Regardless of the method, the first ingredient to a successful effort to communicate the information of rights, benefits, services, and care, is **FIRST CONTACT**. When a senior needs information, where does he or she turn **first**? Ask 10 people, most likely there will be 5-10 different answers. Does this signal a plethora of resources, the natural differences found in individuals, or a clue that there may be some confusion on this point?

## **‘Technological’ Methods**

**Telephone** - believe it or not, though we’ve been using it for several generations (800 numbers to contact organizations for information (uses technology to extend the abilities of verbal communication both in distance and speed).

For those in the county who choose to turn first to the telephone to communicate - to get questions answered or make requests pertaining to senior citizen issues, it would be useful to:

- **Publicize** the “Information & Referral Senior Citizen Services” telephone numbers (English - (703) 222-0880; Spanish - (703) 631-3366; TTY - (703) 803-7914.
- **Create a new section** within the Fairfax County blue pages in the telephone book that groups together and details the telephone numbers for the array of senior citizen services now available.

## **Television**

Many senior citizens of Fairfax County and Mason District will continue to meet some of their information needs through the medium of television.

Fairfax County and Mason District are already utilizing television to communicate with their citizens on a variety of issues. Indeed, Channel 16, the Fairfax County government cable channel, has received a number of awards for its efforts. Currently, it carries two programs that can be identified as “senior-focused”: Health Care Choices for our Senior Population (30-minute program airs 5 times per week) and Senior Times (30-minute program airs 6 times per week). A third program, Mason Matters (30-minute program airs 3 times per week), focuses on issues that are of specific interest to residents of Mason District, but may or may not of specific interest to seniors. It is not known whether these programs air in languages other than English, or are modified/enhanced for those with audio or visual impairments.

The amount of programming that could be identified as being specifically pertinent to seniors is negligible. These are natural avenues for further development of information dissemination to the seniors in our area.

### **The Task Force identified several suggestions in this programming area:**

1. We should “grow” the programming specifically targeted to the senior citizen, developing programs to address current, ongoing, and upcoming issues in detail. Would it be feasible to have a regular call-in program for Medicare questions? Medicaid questions? Other legal issues seniors confront?
2. Could the programs created/developed for one cable channel be “re-run” on another cable channel under cooperative agreements between the cable-running entities?
3. The programs now available should be more easily accessible. In print, the weekly TV guide produced by *The Washington Post* has a one-page listing (the last page) that includes only Channel 16. Through the Internet, one can find complete and detailed information about the program schedules. Help seniors to know that these programs exist.
4. To dovetail the effort to communicate information seniors need with the exciting opportunity the Internet offers, investigate the costs/benefits of archiving community programs aimed at

seniors in a format accessible for playing through personal computers --- build another type of online reference file.

### **Computers and the Internet**

There exist various Centers, both Federal and State, and use of the Internet is growing rapidly. The challenge is to keep elders informed of the information sites and provide the means and education to access them.

A recent study<sup>3</sup> showed that 87 percent of those aged 65 and over do not have access to the Internet.

There is now some public access to computer/Internet resources --- through the library system, and for the children who attend Fairfax County schools, through the schools.

Older members of the Mason District community now need and will continue to need access to information about services pertinent to their lives that is available over the Internet. There should be an effort to determine the benefit of planning greater public access to the Internet in a greater variety of venues --- and what the venues might be (libraries, community centers, shopping centers):

- Identify, if possible that portion of the Mason District community that has personal access to a computer and the Internet.
- Define the proportion and characteristics of that part of the community that now uses publicly available computer/Internet resources.

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<sup>3</sup> Pew Internet & American Life, September 26, 2000

## Services Currently Available

### 1. Access America for Seniors (AAS)

The most ambitious and comprehensive service is Access America for Seniors (AAS). This is an Internet site that empowers citizens to obtain valuable health and security information and services at one location via the Internet. It was created under the direction of the National Partnership for Reinventing Government. The Social Security Administration (SSA) agreed to create, host and maintain AAS as a service geared toward senior citizens. The objective is to direct resources and efforts toward improving service delivery to senior citizens.

This site is located at [www.seniors.gov](http://www.seniors.gov).

As it currently operates, the AAS site helps users access all government sites that provide services for senior citizens, such as Social Security, Health Care Financing Administration, the Administration on Aging, the Department of Veterans Affairs, etc. There are also links to most federal agencies and all 50 States. Users can subscribe to an e-mail service that will alert them to new items. This service will allow users to remain current on news that affects them.

Future plans include:

- A Retirement Planner that will allow a user to do some financial planning by taking into account all of the federal benefits for which he or she may be eligible.
- A Disability Resource Guide that will bring together all of the various Federal Government programs and information sources related to disabilities.
- A Government Service Site Locator that will provide listings of all sites that might be relevant for a requested service and/or offices that are located near the requester.
- A Transaction Locator, which will be geared toward locating specific transactions that the user requires from government. The Transaction Locator will provide the name and address of the appropriate office in the user's State of residence, and, if there is a web site, provide the link for online contact.
- Installation of computer kiosks, for all of the above services, in shopping centers that will be available to all, and possibly staffed by volunteers. This would not be limited to seniors, but to any one seeking information or attempting to communicate with a particular government agency.

### 2. Senior Navigator

This is a unique new Internet guide designed to link seniors in Virginia, their families and caregivers with timely and useful health and aging information. It has a database ([www.SeniorNavigator.com](http://www.SeniorNavigator.com)) which contains nearly 14,000 resources available to all Virginians. Area Agencies on Aging, caregiver support groups, domestic violence shelters, geriatricians, insurance counseling, and senior centers are just a fraction of what can be found here.

The Virginia Health Care Foundation and the AOL Time Warner Foundation fund it. The Virginia Health Care Foundation was created in 1992 by Virginia's General Assembly and its Joint Commission on Health Care to increase access to primary care for Virginia's uninsured and



medically underserved. The Foundation currently funds 55 community-based projects throughout Virginia and operates several programs of its own including *The Pharmacy Connection* and the *Healthy Communities Loan Fund*. SeniorNavigator.com is the Foundation's most recent initiative.

The AOL Time Warner Foundation is dedicated to ensuring that all people realize the benefits promised by the Internet Revolution as fully and quickly as possible. Foundation programs currently focus on using the Internet to enhance civic discourse, improve the delivery of health care services and information, strengthen philanthropy, improve education and youth services, and provide digital opportunity to underserved communities. The Foundation recently launched Helping.org, a nonprofit, one-stop philanthropy portal where people can sign up to volunteer or make donations to any of 650,000 charities, whether or not those organizations have an online presence.

### **3. Fairfax County Web Page**

Fairfax County has an outstanding web page that gives a complete list of area senior citizen services. (See [www.co.fairfax.va.us](http://www.co.fairfax.va.us).) Most of the relevant information is at:

[www.co.fairfax.va.us/service/aaa/homepage.html](http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/service/aaa/homepage.html)

### **4. Benefits Checkup**

This is a new site, [www.BenefitsCheckUp](http://www.BenefitsCheckUp), which was launched June 5, 2001. Sponsored by the National Council on the Aging, it is a free, easy-to-use service, which identifies federal and state assistance programs for older Americans. There is a questionnaire for the user, requesting information. No personal information, such as name and social security number, is used. After the user completes the questionnaire, the web site does an analysis of both Federal and State benefits, and produces a report listing what benefits the user may be eligible for. It also produces the necessary forms, if available, and contacts at the Federal, State and Local level for the user to get more information regarding specific benefits.

### **5. Hispanic Groups**

#### **National Association for Hispanic Elderly (Asociación Nacional Por Personas Mayores)**

234 East Colorado Boulevard, Suite 300  
Pasadena, CA 91101

**Phone: 626-564-1988**

**Fax: 626-564-2659**

The Association is a national, private, nonprofit organization providing a variety of services for older Hispanic people. Resources include a national Hispanic research center, research and consultation for organizations seeking to reach older Spanish-speaking people, and dissemination of written and audiovisual materials in English and Spanish. The Association administers Project AYUDA, a program providing employment counseling and placement services.

#### **National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCōA)**

2713 Ontario Road, NW  
Washington, DC 20009

Phone: 202-265-1288

Fax: 202-745-2522

Email: [nhcoa@worldnet.att.net](mailto:nhcoa@worldnet.att.net)

Website: <http://www.nhcoa.org>

NHCoA is a national organization providing advocacy, education, and information for older Hispanic people. Contact the Council for facts and resources on health, employment, housing, strengthening families, and building communities, as well as referrals to local Council chapters. Publications in English and Spanish are available.

### **Project Aliento**

National Association for Hispanic Elderly (Asociación Nacional Pro Personas Mayores)

1452 West Temple Street, Suite 100

Los Angeles, CA 90026

**Phone: 213-487-1922**

**Fax: 213-202-5905**

Project Aliento works to make the Administration on Aging-funded network of State and Area Agencies on Aging accessible to older Hispanic people and their families. Contact Project Aliento for information, publications, and videos about community care and in-home support issues, as well as links to the formal aging network. Publications are available in English and Spanish.

### **Healthfinder español**

Health and Human Services has recently launched a web site to provide Spanish-speaking consumers with easy access to reliable health information. It includes an online library of health information, topics on health care and the latest health news.

[www.healthfinder.gov/espanol](http://www.healthfinder.gov/espanol)

(This site is also available in English: [www.healthfinder.gov](http://www.healthfinder.gov))

## **6. Other Ethnic Groups**

National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA)

**1511 3rd Avenue, Suite 914**

**Seattle, WA 98101-1626**

Phone: 206-624-1221

Fax: 206-624-1023

Email: [info@napca.org](mailto:info@napca.org)

Website: <http://www.napca.org>

NAPCA is a nonprofit agency dedicated to serving aging Asian and Pacific Islanders. It offers employment programs, multilingual community forums and health care education. The Center works with elders, policy makers, program administrators, and community leaders. Publications include a newsletter and translated health care materials.

Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA)

**1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 601**

**Washington, DC 20036**

Phone: 202-223-5500

Fax: 202-296-0540

Email: [oc@ocanatl.org](mailto:oc@ocanatl.org)

Website: <http://www.ocanatl.org>

OCA advocates for the rights of Chinese Americans. Contact OCA for referrals to legal specialists and legislative information on age discrimination, education, and employment opportunities for Chinese Americans, as well as access to health care and Social Security. OCA also publishes a national directory of Asian and Pacific American organizations.

## **7. Center for Elder Rights**

The Virginia Department for the Aging runs this Center. It brings together, under one umbrella, a variety of legal, consumer, aging and long-term care information and assistance for older Virginians and their families. The Center may be reached at 1-800-552-3402 and provides:

- Counseling for people with concerns about Medicare, Medicaid, and other health insurance;
- Counseling on pensions and retirement benefits;
- A public guardianship program for indigent and incapacitated people who have no other person suitable to serve as a guardian;
- A National Resource Center to develop strategies for educating rural and geographically isolated older citizens and their families about fraud, waste, and abuse in the Medicare and Medicaid programs;
- An ombudsman program to resolve problems encountered in long-term care facilities and community-based programs serving older Virginians;
- An attorney who prepares public and professional information, education and training materials, and oversees legal services provided by Virginia's Area Agencies on Aging;
- A registry of more than 100 attorneys from across the Commonwealth who can provide legal services to indigent and low-income older Virginians;
- Staff who can provide information, guidance, and counseling on a variety of aging and long-term care issues; and
- Partnerships with other organizations to ensure the rights of older Virginians.

## **8. Eldercare Locator**

This service is run by the Administration on Aging. It can be reached at 1-800-677-1116. It is a nationwide, directory assistance service designed to help older persons and caregivers locate local support resources for aging Americans. It doesn't matter if you live in the same city or across the country.

## **9. Telephone Reassurance**

This service is run by the Department of Family Services of the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging. The program is a social calling program, whereby a volunteer is matched with an elderly person and calls once a week to visit by telephone. The Agency may be reached at (703) 324-5411.

## 10. Senior Corps

The Senior Corps is part of the Corporation for National Service, a federally funded program. It has a number of volunteer programs that seniors are encouraged to join.<sup>4</sup> The programs currently offered are:

- Foster Grandparent Program **Serving Children**  
Foster Grandparents devote their volunteer service to one population: children with special or exceptional needs.
- Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) **Serving the Community**  
RSVP matches the personal interests and skills of older Americans with opportunities to help solve community problems.
- Senior Companion Program **Serving Adults Needing Extra Assistance**  
Senior Companions reach out to adults, who need extra assistance to live independently in their own homes or communities.
- Seniors for Schools **Helping Children Read**  
Seniors for Schools helps children in need of extra literacy assistance to read independently by the end of the third grade.

All of the above services, with the exception of RSVP, provide reimbursement for transportation, some meals during service, an annual physical, and accident and liability insurance while on duty.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.seniorcorps.org/joining/finding\\_nssc.html](http://www.seniorcorps.org/joining/finding_nssc.html)

### Additional or Modified Services Recommended

#### 1. Expand and Improve Outreach of the Senior Corps

As the elderly population grows over the next 20 years, there will be a need for more extensive communication and outreach, particularly of seniors helping seniors. An extensive program exists today (see 10. above).

This program is not referenced on the Fairfax County web site. It should be added to the relevant web page. The County should also add a link to Access America for Seniors (see 1. above).

Arlington County has a Personal Advocate Service, a free program sponsored by the Arlington Agency on Aging and United Seniors Health Cooperative. The program's goal is "to promote maximum independence by linking Arlington residents age 60 and older with community resources." The County should investigate implementing a similar program.

#### 2. Alert Seniors and Interested Organizations in Fairfax County to New Developments

Create a FIRST CALL or ONE CALL presence in Fairfax County and PUBLICIZE IT so that it becomes as familiar to people as 411 and 911; use both a telephone number and a website address. Make them the 411 for senior citizen information.

There are constantly new developments that seniors and others would be interested in knowing, for instance, the recently announced Seniors On-The-Go taxi coupon plan. The Area on Aging segment of the Fairfax County web site should compile a list of e-mail addresses of interested parties that it can e-mail information concerning these developments. As many of the popular web sites do, it should set up its site so that anyone can submit an e-mail address to be informed of news regarding the site. ([www.co.fairfax.va.us/service/aaa/homepage.html](http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/service/aaa/homepage.html))

#### 3. Foundation Grants

Rather than follow the present plan of the National Partnership for Reinventing Government to install computer kiosks in shopping centers, the Task Force recommends neighborhood libraries, most of which already have computer facilities for their patrons. Our specific recommendation is:

Fairfax County or a relevant organization should apply for a grant from a foundation in order to set up a pilot computer facility in a neighborhood library in Mason District specifically to provide seniors with all of the above existing and planned services and information.

For instance, the pilot facility could be staffed by volunteers one day per week, when seniors would be encouraged to come in for assistance, such as:

- Downloading or submitting forms
- Finding the proper agency contacts at the federal, state or local level
- Finding out their expected benefits, etc.

- Find out about volunteer opportunities.
- The Fairfax County web page has some excellent links to all of the senior citizen services available in the area. It should also be included on this pilot system.

Some of this assistance could actually be provided by telephone for seniors who have no transportation or cannot leave their residence.

With careful planning and management, this pilot site could serve as a model for similar library installations throughout the country.

Two such foundations that award this type of grant are:

- The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Woodrow Wilson Library in Mason District recently received a Gates Foundation grant to install 7 fully equipped computers for general use. Information on grants from the Gates Foundation can be found at:

<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/>

- The AOL Time Warner Foundation. This foundation is dedicated to using the power of media, communications and information technology to serve the public interest and strengthen society. Information on grants can be found at:

<http://www.aoltwfoundation.org/grants/grants.html>

The facility should have a dedicated computer and printer with access to the Internet. It would also need its own telephone line to handle inquiries and not tie up the library phone lines. Volunteers could be trained on how to access the various web sites, such as Access America for Seniors, Senior Navigator and BenefitsCheckUp.

Initial contact with the Foundations should be in the form of a short proposal, which should include:

1. Contact information and a descriptive project title;
2. A brief executive summary;
3. Background on the issue or need to be addressed;
4. Background of the organization and its capacity to undertake the work;
5. A project description, including the goals, objectives, timeline and specific activities to be funded;
6. A plan for evaluation and the anticipated outcomes of the project;
7. A plan for continuance or self-sufficiency for the project upon completion of the proposed grant.
8. Detailed budgets for the proposed grant and the project overall.

## **Housing**

### **Overview**

The goal of the Administration on Aging is to enable all Americans to live comfortably, safely and independently in their own homes as they age, regardless of income or ability level. This is referred to as Aging in Place.

In order for Aging in Place to be successful, Fairfax County must consider many components. Of particular need are municipal features, services and leisure facilities. The County indeed has many of these elements in place, but they need to be improved considerably in order to apply to our aging population.

The U.S. housing stock is growing old along with its citizens. Today, the medium aged house is over 30. The average house was built in the 1970's. Many of the homes in older suburbs were built in 1950's or before.

We are beginning to think of our older communities as villages or Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRC) to a degree. Many seniors prefer to stay in the neighborhoods with which they are familiar and also like the vibrancy of new families living nearby. We have to adjust to accommodate an aging population instead of encouraging flight.

In addition to the physical changes related to aging, there are serious social changes which need to be addressed: isolation from family and friends, loss of peers, children living far away and ever changing neighborhoods. However, in general, our aging community stays active a lot longer than in years past and still demand the same quality of life they always had.

### **Services Currently Available**

In Mason District, we are fortunate, as an older community, to have many municipal features and services (fire departments, hospitals, doctors, neighborhood maintenance, libraries, grocery stores, police department etc.), already established. Making services and leisure activities more accessible is still a challenge in serving the growing senior population who cannot see so well, hear so well, or walk so well.

According to a May 1999 article in the Los Angeles Times, many aging adults put off asking for help in any type of home renovation as they are reluctant to acknowledge their vulnerability. Also the study states; finding a trustworthy, affordable person or company to do the work is one of the most urgent concerns of the senior citizen.

Although a few countries, such as Sweden and Denmark, are advanced in helping their seniors through government-funded programs, federal help in this country is limited.

HUD's home Investment Partnerships Programs provides some communities with funds for rehabilitating homes or apartments. HUD figures show the program funds renovated 5,547 elders' homes in 1997 and 4,883 in 2000.

Local coalitions of architects, builders, remodelers, hospitals, younger disabled people and the elderly could unite in hopes of creating a national model of cooperation. The Home Modification Project was formed to address this need.

In Philadelphia, city and general funds help pay for home renovations and repairs for many poor residents. But even with generous funding from the state's lottery, the demand is far greater than the resources. The need has been so great that the director of Housing for the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, a non-profit organization that serves seniors, has created a housing department staff specifically within a senior citizens assistance agency.

In Westchester County, New York, the Office of Aging created a new department of Senior Services and Zoning Ordinances to accommodate the necessary changes required currently, as well as for planning in the future.

In California, community leaders have initiated a community center concept that maintains communication networks that provide daily continuing care with its aging neighbors.

The John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University has been addressing this need through the Joint Center for Housing Studies.

Cornell University has developed surveys to address the concerns of an aging population and has offered solutions to current housing problems and how to finance renovations and repairs and other necessary needs for the aging population.

The University of Southern California at its Gerontology Center has initiated a National Directory of Home Modification and Repair Programs.

The North Carolina State University School of Design in its Center For Universal Design has participated in contests specifically in cooperation with the NAHB Research Center and the Administration On Aging to address the needs of our baby boomers and an aging society.



Local governments receive Federal Funding through such programs as the Community Development Block Grants and HOME programs that provide affordable housing for rehabs and new construction housing opportunities and they are used or “retrofitted” as the localities see fit. HOME programs are also subsidized through such actions as bond referendums.

All of the above is evidence that the concept of “Aging in Place” has been a major consideration for National Home builders, Universities, senior organizations nationally and locally by citizens associations and government entities from California to Massachusetts.

The National Home Builders Association has been working with AARP to plan industry-enhancing activities like the Senior Housing Symposium to focus on the latest information and advances on building, remodeling and designing for the aging population. They have initiated education programs and building industry roundtables to explore how to address current and future needs in housing requirements particularly as it pertains to older women and the multicultural community.

According to AARP Research of roughly 100 million housing units in America, fewer than 10 percent have significant features for universally accessible usage. Nearly one quarter of Americans age 45 and older predict that they or someone they live with will have difficulty getting around in their homes within the next 5 years.

Another type of senior housing that is growing rapidly is the Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC). A CCRC is a self-contained retirement community that houses senior citizens at all levels of need. Residents move in while still independent. At its core is the continuum of care provided to all of its residents. As mentioned above, aging in place in the community where one has lived for many years needs a support system. Aging in place in a CCRC is less traumatic, for all the services frail and ill elderly need are available. The CCRC provides or allows Home Health Care and they have their own Assisted Living and Skilled Nursing facilities. Most CCRCs are equipped to care for those who need memory support.

### **Additional or Modified Services Recommended**

The National Directory of Home Modifications and Repair Programs has several major goals, which Fairfax County could consult in addressing the housing needs of our growing senior population. It should be the policy of Fairfax County to:

1. Promote Aging In Place
2. Improve its coordination with service providers through public/private partnership, supporting housing and home modifications
3. Maximize single family and multi-unit housing as a long-term care resource
4. Equip families and individuals with the knowledge to plan for their housing, health and supportive service needs.
5. Increase accessible and supportive housing that promotes healthy independent living.
6. Provide incentives to builders to build Patio type homes suitable for senior owners in Mason District integrated in new home developments.
7. Promote cooperation with private industry like Home Depot or Lowes to offer qualified personnel to install upgrades into seniors' homes to help make life more controllable. Home Depot has programs in place in other areas like Atlanta, GA, and Annapolis, MD, but not in Fairfax County.
8. Encourage Citizens' Associations to have senior liaisons on their boards.
9. Approach developers through the American Association of Housing and Services for the Aged and encourage them to build a more moderately priced CCRC in Mason District.
10. Explore the feasibility of building low-income CCRCs, sponsored by HUD, in Mason District.

## Legal Services

### Overview

Senior citizens have the same rights -- by law -- as the other members of society. They may also require additional legal services due to issues of health, income, and increased need for assistance. However, older persons are often less able to protect themselves, and many are undereducated about the legal services available to them. Furthermore, in Mason District, many senior citizens feel even more vulnerable because English is not their primary or native language.

It is important for older persons to prepare estate plans (wills; trusts) to direct their assets after their death, as well as advance medical directives (living wills; durable power of attorney) to make their wishes known in case of extreme medical conditions. Because of incapacitation, some older persons will require a court-appointed legal guardian or conservator to handle their personal and financial matters. Senior citizens and their caregivers often need assistance with understanding and obtaining government and insurance benefits, and they require education about their legal needs and rights.

Northern Virginia attorneys who specialize in elder law include Legal Services of Northern Virginia (serving persons with limited income) and 13 AARP-approved attorneys (offering special rates for senior citizens). Fairfax County volunteers provide guardianship services and insurance counseling. However, increased staffing (paid and volunteer) is needed in order to provide affordable legal services to this growing older population. In addition, many senior citizens remain unaware of both their legal needs and of the assistance available.

Over the next 20 years, the need for legal services for older persons will grow rapidly for at least three reasons:

1. The over-65 population is expected to double in Fairfax County.
2. The number and complexity of laws affecting the lives of this population will increase.
3. Advances in technology, particularly in medicine and communications, will raise new issues in legal, privacy, and ethical areas for which senior citizens will need legal advice and counseling to resolve. For instance, wireless forms of the Internet will make it possible to track the movements and actions of senior citizens who live alone; chips may be imbedded in the body to monitor vital physical data.

Mason District has a higher number of citizens over the age of 65 than any other district in Fairfax County. Additional legal services will be required in order to meet the needs of Mason District senior citizens by the year 2020.

## Services Currently Available

### 1. Attorneys:

#### Legal Services of Northern Virginia

- Provides legal services in certain civil cases for persons with limited income, assistance with public benefits and advance directives, such as powers of attorney and living wills.
- Legal services are available to income-eligible seniors. Also, paralegal and limited legal services are available to all senior citizens residing in Fairfax County.
- Intake services from 9:00 – 12:00, Monday – Friday.
- Call the Fairfax Legal Aid Branch of Legal Services of Northern Virginia at (703) 532-3733.

#### AARP-approved Attorneys

- AARP members eligible for free 30-minutes initial consultation with AARP-approved attorney – 13 serving in Northern Virginia; call 800-424-3410, for a list of participating attorneys
- Consultations in person or by phone
- Also eligible for special rates for services

#### AARP Legal Services Network

- Statewide Legal Hotline programs
- 800-424-3410; [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)

#### Fairfax Lawyer Referral and Information Service

- Offers half hour with attorney for \$40

#### National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, Inc. (NAELA)

1604 North Country Club Road

Tucson, AZ 85716

Phone: 520-881-4005

Fax: 520-325-7925

Website: <http://www.naela.org>

NAELA is a nonprofit association assisting lawyers, bar associations, and others who work with older people and their families. Contact NAELA for information on lawyers specializing in issues pertinent to older people, resources to legal information, assistance, and education. A list of publications is available.

### 2. Secondary Support and Advocacy Groups:

#### Legal Counsel for the Elderly

Works to expand the availability of legal services to older people and enhance the quality of existing services. It ensures that incapacitated or institutionalized older people receive quality legal care.

**Services:**

- The National Support Center for Law and Aging provides assistance to local legal and advocacy agencies through materials, training, workshops, and technical assistance.
- Volunteer programs recruit, train, and support volunteers to serve as long-term-care ombudsmen, monitor guardianship and conservatorship cases, and provide bill payer and representative payee assistance.
- The National Volunteer Lawyers Project matches legal cases that impact large numbers of older people with volunteer law firms.
- The Senior Lawyers Project tests ways retired lawyers can provide free legal services to needy older people.
- The National Elder Law Studies Program provides individual home study courses in elder law as well as a paralegal certificate with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Graduate School.

**Address:**

**601 E Street NW.  
Washington, DC 20049  
(202) 434-2120  
FAX (202) 434-6464  
TTY (202) 434-6562**

**Legal Services for the Elderly**

- Advisory center for lawyers who specialize in the legal problems of older persons, offering advice, memoranda of law, and briefs to other lawyers who serve older clients.

Issues of interest to the LSE include, but are not limited to, Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, supplemental security income, unemployment insurance, disability, voluntary and involuntary commitment, involuntary committee appointment, conservatorship, intestacy, age discrimination, pensions, elderly rent increase exemptions, rent control/housing, and nursing home care.

**Address:**

17th Floor  
130 West 42nd Street  
New York, NY 10036  
(212) 391-0120  
E-mail: [hn4923@handsnet.org](mailto:hn4923@handsnet.org)

**3. Specific Guardianship Services:**

Volunteer guardianship, both personal and conservatorial (financial), for incapacitated persons in Fairfax County. Volunteers serve as legal guardians/conservators for older clients who have been determined by the court to be incapable of handling financial/personal matters.

**Providers**

- **Fairfax Area Agency on Aging**, Agency Programs. Currently, there are four volunteers, handling a maximum of two cases each. Contact at 703-324-5411.
- **Local attorneys**. Many attorneys in Fairfax County provide conservatorial guardianship, for an annual fee.
- **Personal Support Network**. In recent years, Virginia funded several pilot projects in public guardianship throughout the state in which private agencies provided guardianship for a fee. Personal Support Network, the local state-designated provider, currently serves approximately 20 Northern Virginians who require a surrogate decision-maker, but who have no appropriate individual in their lives to serve in this capacity.

**Cost to participant**

Free. (A percentage of assets is paid to attorneys for conservatorial guardianship.)

**Limitations**

The volunteers program cannot serve the seriously mentally ill if they are not in a nursing home, safe residential program, etc. In Fairfax, roughly 75% of severely mentally ill clients are in nursing homes.

Currently, there are no statistics available specifically on Mason District.

**4.. Education For Senior Citizens On Legal Issues:****VICAP (Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program)**

- Fairfax Area Agency on Aging program educates, counsels, and assists older consumers on medical benefit programs and problems with Medicare, Medicaid, and medical bill paying.

**AARP “Legal Check-Up Seminars”**

- comparable to a medical check-ups; educates senior citizens of basic legal concerns

Contact: 800-424-3410 or [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)

**5. Available Elder Law Paralegal Training/Services:****Local law schools/students****Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC), Alexandria campus**

- offers Associates in Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree in legal assisting. Approved by the American Bar Association, this program consists of 65 semester hours and is designed to be completed by a student with no prior college experience, in four semesters. However, students who already have bachelor’s degrees can complete the program -- 13 courses -- in two semesters. According to NVCC, the majority of the students in this program are working adults who take courses on a part-time basis. The Summer 2001 tuition rate (in-state) at NVCC is \$39.45 per credit. For someone with a bachelor’s degree, the cost of completing the current Legal Assistant Program would be approximately \$513.

This program sponsors internships. The internships are evaluated and approved individually by the Program Director. The Program is receptive to new internship proposals.

*Contact information:*

Teresa S. Blier

Program Director for Legal Assisting and Administration of Justice  
Division of Visual and Performing Arts & Public Services  
Northern Virginia Community College Alexandria Campus  
3001 North Beauregard Street  
Alexandria, VA 22311-5097  
703-845-6277

### **George Mason University School of Law**

- Offers a supervised externship program that affords its students an opportunity to receive academic credit for practical and substantive legal work performed outside of a classroom setting. Externship description is available on the George Mason Law School website at [www.gmu.edu/departments/law](http://www.gmu.edu/departments/law).

Basic requirements:

- Externship must be approved in advance of start date.
- Work must be done under the direct supervision of a practicing attorney.
- Assignments must be substantive and legal in nature
- Sixty (60) hours of work are required for each academic credit. Additionally, there is a weekly one-hour workshop during the Fall and Spring Semesters.
- No compensation may be received for work performed during the externship.

Full-time students are eligible for the externship program after completing one year of study; part-time students are eligible to participate after completing three semesters.

The Office of Career Development and Alumni Services maintains the information on individual externship opportunities. Entities interested in offering an opportunity must provide a written description of the work and position, including information about the specific organization. It should be sent, or faxed, to the following address:

Career Development and Alumni Services  
George Mason University School of Law  
3401 North Fairfax Drive  
Arlington, VA, 22201-4498

Additional contact information:

telephone 703-993-8020  
fax 703-993-8012  
E-mail [lawcareer@gmu.edu](mailto:lawcareer@gmu.edu).

### **George Washington University Law School**

- Offers an Outside Placement Program. Program is similar to the George Mason externship program in that it offers the students the opportunity to gain exposure to the day-to-day practice of law for academic credit.

The Director of Outside Placement, Professor Mary Brittingham, consults with the students individually on their placement interests, manages the program. Professor Brittingham indicated that the program structure may be undergoing some change, but said that, generally, the following are the program 's basic requirements:

- Work must be for a non-profit organization
- Work must be done under the direct supervision of a practicing attorney.
- Assignments must be substantive and legal in nature
- No compensation may be received for work performed during the internship

At this time, the director of the program reviews all requests for interns. Entities interested in offering an opportunity should provide a written description of the work and position, including information about the specific organization. It should be mailed, or faxed, to the following address:

Professor Mary Brittingham  
Associate Professor of Clinical Law  
Outside Placement Program Director  
Jacob Burns Community Legal Clinics  
George Washington University Law School  
2000 G St, N.W.  
Washington, D.C., 20052

Additional contact information:

Telephone 202-994-7039  
Fax 202-994-4693

### **The Graduate School of the U. S. Department of Agriculture**

- Offers paralegal training with a Certificate of Accomplishment in what the USDA calls "the rapidly expanding field of elder law." Their certificate program consists of four required courses, six electives and an internship. Some courses are available through the Evening Programs department as well as by correspondence. The electives cover subjects such as Nursing Home Law, Consumer Law, Social Security, Protective Services Law, Medicare and Medigap, Financing Long-Term Health Care, and Public Benefits.

The minimum tuition for such a program is about \$2,000. Further information can be obtained by contacting the USDA Correspondence and Online Program at (202) 314-3670.

### **6. Potential local resources**

- AARP, Annandale Chapter – approximately 80 members; monthly meetings at Annandale Methodist Church; provides back-up transportation for residents of Evergreen House. Contact at 800-424-3410 or [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org).
- RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program), Alexandria Chapter -- part of ElderCorps; local membership of approximately 700 serves Northern Virginia region; volunteers select sites where they would like to work. Contact at 703-549-1607.
- National Association of Retired Federal Employees (NARFE). Contact at 703-875-0774.



### Additional or Modified Services Recommended

In order to address the growing legal services needs of senior citizens in Mason District, we recommend the following additional or modified services.

1. Fairfax County should disseminate extensive information about the legal needs and services for older persons on both its web site and at libraries:

Fairfax County should:

- Provide information and list Internet resources in free publications for senior citizens.
- Set up computer kiosks, *staffed by volunteers*, at easily accessible sites to provide Internet access to senior citizens. *(See the Communications section of the Report regarding recommendation that this be done at neighborhood libraries.)*
- Designate funds for mailings summarizing legal needs and services. Set up an e-mail mailing list on the Fairfax County website where senior citizens and their caregivers can receive e-mails of new developments pertinent to their population.
- Advertise public legal education seminars available for older persons. Post this information on the relevant pages of the Fairfax County web site and at libraries.

2. **Develop programs staffed by attorneys, paralegals, and trained seniors to provide elder law services to seniors.**

Several local attorneys confirmed that paralegals or other non-attorney sources could handle much of the legal services and legal education required for the elderly. (See "Available Elder Law Paralegal Training/Services" above for training sites and opportunities.)

To encourage and assist individuals to enter this program, the Task Force recommends the following:

- Congress should enact a law providing for tuition assistance for qualified individuals who enter a paralegal program specializing in elder law. This could be in the form of tax credits, subsidized loans, interest-free loans or outright grants. Special consideration should be given to the "Young Seniors" (generally considered to be from 60 to 70). We should contact AARP Management and solicit their interest and support in getting such a law enacted.
- Develop programs in consultation with our area legal services organizations to identify specific short-term and long-term needs (i.e. types of assistance and support needed). Prepare materials describing potential internships with the various County legal service organizations, such as Legal Services of Northern Virginia, in consultation with these organizations, and distributed to the

identified colleges and universities. This information could also be designed and maintained as part of Fairfax County's website.

- Work with one or two local colleges/universities to design and promote a Seniors for Seniors legal learning program, with a focus on elder law. This program would be designed to encourage seniors to go back to school to learn about elder law to help their fellow seniors.

3. Encourage local attorneys to offer the following:

- Pro bono work
- AARP affiliation

Provides lower rates for senior citizens

- Sliding scale fees
- Public education seminars

Public education on legal topics pertinent to senior citizens, such as estate planning and advanced medical directives (living will, medical power of attorney).

Paralegals specializing in elder law could also provide community education. (See *Recommendation 2.*)

In addition, these seminars could be broadcast over the local community service channels and/or formatted for viewing over the Internet. (See *Communications section for further discussion of this suggestion.*)

4. Lobby for additional funding for Legal Services of Northern Virginia

- Fairfax Area Agency on Aging has received complaints from clients that Legal Services of Northern Virginia has been unable to take their case because their caseload is too large.
- Although there are 20 lawyers for every 10,000 people in the US, the Legal Services Corporation Act has set a "minimum access" goal of two LSC attorneys for every 10,000 people who are at or below the official poverty level, (not including institutionalized poor in nursing homes, mental hospitals and licensed board and care facilities). This goal was met only once, in 1981.

5. Increase the number of available guardians for older persons who become incapacitated.

- Expand the pilot projects started by the State of Virginia.
- Explore possibilities for public/private partnerships. (See *Recommendation 6.*)

6. Explore public/private partnership possibilities to fund the above recommendations on education for seniors, and on paralegal training.

7. Encourage groups providing educational material and legal services to translate these into native languages of non-native English speakers represented in Mason District.

## Transportation

### Overview

The ability to move freely from place to place, while often taken for granted, is crucial to the well being of the senior citizen. Any other plans that are developed, such as health care, counseling, social activities or education are of no value if senior citizens cannot get from their home to the facility.

A study was prepared by Ecosometrics, Inc. for the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Transportation.<sup>5</sup> The study, "Transportation Needs and Problems Among the Elderly", stated that lack of transportation is strongly associated with income level, isolation and loneliness, and self-care problems. Senior citizens who own and drive a car experience very few transportation problems, but the figures show dramatic declines of both automobile ownership and driving with advanced age. Clearly, as the average age of our population increases, particularly the "senior" senior citizens (those over 85), contemporary transportation solutions will be come less and less adequate and additional options and alternatives will be required.

A national study conducted by the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National Association of Counties, identified three priority concerns of the suburban elderly: lack of home and community-based care, housing, and transportation.

Transportation serves both human and economic needs. It can enrich an older person's life by expanding opportunities for social interaction and community involvement, and it can support an individual's capacity for independent living by allowing an individual to continue working.

Transportation is therefore the critical link that assures access to vital services such as health care and going to the grocery store. The availability of adequate transportation allows older Americans to live independently and helps prevent isolation and premature institutionalization. For many senior citizens who do not drive an automobile, family and friends provide much of the transportation. However, for others, community transportation is the only connection to the outside world.

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<sup>5</sup>Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, Older Americans 2000: Key Indicators of Well-Being, Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, August 2000. Also available at [www.agingstats.gov](http://www.agingstats.gov).

## Services Currently Available

Services can be divided into the following types:

### 1. Community Based Systems

These systems usually operate door to door and on a demand response. This means they require advance reservations and provide transportation from one specific location to another. They require payment of fare or donations on a per ride basis.

*Fastran* is Fairfax County's Paratransit Bus System division within the Fairfax County Department of Community and Recreation Services. County staff are responsible for budgeting, planning, scheduling and monitoring the service. The buses are operated, maintained, and dispatched by a private contractor.

*Fastran* serves two groups of people:

- Clients who are sponsored by human service agencies. These clients cannot drive, find a ride, use Metro or Connector buses, or afford taxi fares.
- MetroAccess riders who are unable to use traditional fixed route bus or rail service due to physical or cognitive disability.

### 2. Informal Systems

Although senior citizens rely on transportation in family automobiles, many places of worship, senior centers, hired drivers and volunteer organizations provide transportation services.

### 3. Public Mass Transit

Public transit offers a practical way for senior citizens to maintain mobility. They follow a fixed route and schedule, requiring payment of a fare on a per ride basis. Substantial senior citizen discounts are available in the Washington Metropolitan area. Identification cards are required, which must be obtained in advance at a Metro Sales Center or a public library. For buses, the fare is 50 cents for any and all rides, upon showing the ID card. Senior citizen Metro cards are available, but they can only be purchased at a Metro Sales Center or one of the major supermarket chains. The fare discount is approximately 50% and there is no rush hour surcharge. However, they are not sold in the fare machines. They come in denominations of \$2, \$5 and \$10. Unlike regular Metro fare cards, there is no minimum fare balance for their acceptance at the turnstiles.

Unfortunately, public transit is geared to the commuter, rather than the senior citizen. The layout of routes and the frequency of scheduling are designed for the convenience of those going to and from work, rather than the senior citizen going to the doctor, pharmacy or shopping.

Route information and schedules are difficult to get and most senior citizens may not know how to obtain this information. Telephone calls to Metro usually require long waits. Bus schedules are available at Metro Sales Centers, public libraries and on the Internet.

### Additional or Modified Services Recommended

A recent study entitled "Responding to the Needs of Seniors: Transportation Options in Fairfax County" was made by the Fairfax County Department of Transportation. The Task Force concurs with the study conclusions and recommendations.

In particular, we want to emphasize and make additional suggestions listed in the report:

1. It is hard to find information about transportation services. We recommend adding this information to the Fairfax County Web Page. Also, post this information on bulletin boards at neighborhood libraries, along with leaflets describing the services. Make sure that library staff are aware that they have this information, so they can provide assistance to senior citizens who inquire.
2. Expand the TaxiCab Voucher Program. The County has already started this program on a pilot basis, based on zip codes.
3. Expand *Fastran* by increasing service hours and eliminating restrictions on trip purpose.
4. Establish a shuttle bus service in Mason District so that Seniors can get from one area to another, for instance, Annandale to Bailey's Crossroads, or other communities within Mason District. These could be small vans that run in the daylight hours on a regular schedule. Monthly passes could be purchased to cover some of the expenses. Progress is already being made in this effort. Through a grant from the Baileys Crossroads Revitalization program, a focus group is being formed to investigate this type of service.
5. Fairfax County Adult Education should re-institute senior outings. These were generally local and included, for instance, the Van Gogh exhibit, the White House Christmas Tour, etc. They used school buses for transportation, but were dropped a few years ago because of the shortage of school bus drivers.
6. Recognize that, in the long term (10 to 20 years), technology advances will reduce the need for transportation for routine trips to the pharmacy, doctor and grocery supplies. These services already exist on the Internet in a limited, primitive form that are not readily available to most senior citizens. Based on past experience, technical improvements will make these services more user friendly and cheaper, requiring no more skills than are required to use the telephone today. This means that county resources, over the long term, will shift from providing transportation to providing training and assistance in using these new techniques.
7. The Federal Interagency Forum on Aging recently released a report entitled "Older Americans 2000: Key Indicators of Well-being"<sup>6</sup>. Their finding was that

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<sup>6</sup> Federal Interagency Forum on Aging, "Older Americans 2000: Key Indicators of Well-being". Available at [www.agingstats.gov](http://www.agingstats.gov).

“more information is needed on the effects of transportation on the quality of life.” They stated that more data are needed on the number of trips older people take and the types of transportation they use.

8. Fairfax County should undertake such a study on a county level in order to adequately plan future transportation needs. County staff should review the recent Census demographics for the county particularly with regard to the population density and income distribution of senior citizens and correlate these data with existing public and subsidized transportation facilities. They should contact the Director of the Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-related Statistics for assistance and advice on conducting such a review. The contact is:

Kristen Robinson, Ph.D.  
Staff Director  
Federal Interagency forum on Aging-related Statistics  
6525 Belcrest Road, Room 790  
Hyattsville, MD 20782  
Phone: (301) 458-4460  
E-Mail: [kgr4@cdc.gov](mailto:kgr4@cdc.gov)Housing

## **Safety and Security**

### **Overview**

Senior citizens of Mason District have the same desires as everyone – to feel safe and secure, be it in the home or in a public atmosphere. Seniors are the most susceptible targets of crime for many reasons due to physical status, mental status, and location. Crime against senior citizens is on the increase partially because this part of our population is growing with each passing year.

In the past, people stayed in the same house or neighborhood and interacted with their neighbors. People took responsibility for their neighborhood and community. As we are all aware, the present situation no longer reflects that type of security felt and seen by citizens in the past. The residential neighborhoods in Mason District now reflect the diverse makeup of persons and lifestyles. Many of the persons 65 years and older are choosing to live out their lives in their own homes instead of moving to alternative housing. This trend will likely continue until assisted living facilities and nursing homes are under strict and enforced regulations. That leaves Mason District with a significant senior citizen population that should feel and be safe within their community.

The types of safety and safety issues include consumer protection (fraud); neglect; physical and mental abuse; and theft not only of physical property, but also the theft of personal information, known today as “identity theft.”

## Services Currently Available

Mason District, as part of Fairfax County, has an extensive and impressive number of public and private programs available which assist citizens, seniors in particular, to live in their homes and function in the community safely.

**1. Fairfax TRIAD** is a partnership that consists of a representative from the sheriff's department, police chief and persons representing the older citizens within the community. The primary goals are to reduce criminal victimization of older persons and enhance the delivery of law enforcement services. TRIAD focuses on reducing fear of crime and improving the quality of life for senior Virginians. Each TRIAD is designed to meet the needs of seniors in each community and is guided by a senior advisory council called the S.A.L.T. Council (Seniors and Law Enforcement Together). The telephone number for the Fairfax TRIAD is: 703-324-5411.

Activities and programs available to seniors through TRIAD include:

- How to avoid becoming a victim
- Neighborhood watch programs
- Elder abuse prevention, recognition and reporting
- File of Life card with medical information
- The Smoke Detector Program
- Senior walks at malls & parks
- Telephone assurance
- Senior Citizen Police Academies
- Adopt-a-Senior Program
- Consumer protection topic speakers
- Current information distribution for seniors

**2. Fairfax County Adult Protective Services (APS)**, provided through the Fairfax County Department of Family Services, "...investigate when adults are at risk of neglect, abuse, or exploitation." Adults are defined, for APS purposes, as:

- 18 years or older and physically or mentally incapacitated or
- 60 years or older

According to the APS, "In FY 1999, Fairfax County Adult Protective Services received 670 reports of alleged incidents of abuse, neglect or exploitation of elderly or disable adults, 389 (58%) of which were substantiated cases. Of those, 18% were abuse cases, 76% were neglect cases and 6% were cases of exploitation."

The APS Hotline is: 703-324-7450. Additional information about APS can be found at <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/service/dfs>.

**3. Consumer Affairs Organizations:** According to AARP surveys, over half of telemarketing fraud victims are 50 years of age or older. Consumer fraud of all kinds is a major concern,



whether it is a handyman that does not perform work as promised or whether it is a voice over the telephone --- or an e-mail received via the Internet --- that makes false promises for money. A new type of theft/fraud is on the rise, also: identity theft. There are a variety of organizations that can provide information on a variety of fraudulent activities which can protect the individual from being a victim.

-- *The Better Business Bureau (BBB) of Metropolitan Washington* provides information on individual businesses in the form of "BBB Reliability Report." The website (<http://www.dc.bbb.org/dc.html>) also provides information on senior issues and a separate area that describes a wide variety of "scams."

-- *AARP* (<http://www.aarp.org>) has booklets available to inform persons about the appropriate questions to ask an unfamiliar handyman in order to assist the homeowner in determining his/her legitimacy.

-- *National Fraud Information Center (NFIC)*, operated by the National Consumers League, can be found on the Internet at <http://www.nfic.org>. Individuals can ask questions or report telemarketing fraud by calling NFIC's toll-free hotline, 1-800-876-7060, or through its website.

-- *National Consumers League Elder Fraud Project* was begun in 1995. Today, the Project offers educational materials, including a brochure, a 20-minute video that explains the vulnerabilities of older people to fraudulent situations and how best to dissuade them from becoming victims of fraud, and a report about the Elder Fraud Project. The brochure can be viewed on the website (<http://www.fraud.org/elderfraud/eldproj.htm>); single copies are free. There is a charge for bulk copies of the brochure and for the video.

Address and telephone of the National Consumers League:

1701 K Street, N.W., Suite 1200  
Washington, DC 20006  
Phone: 202-835-3323

-- *Federal Trade Commission (FTC)* has an Identity Theft Hotline: 1-877-438-4338; TDD: 202-326-2502. Complaints can also be filed through the FTC website on identity theft: <http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft>. The Commission has published a free, comprehensive guide to help individuals guard against and recover from identity theft. The booklet is entitled "ID Theft: When Bad Things Happen to Your Good Name."

Mailing address: Identity Theft Clearinghouse  
Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20580

**4. Fairfax Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Telephone Reassurance Program** was created as a social calling program. Fairfax residents, 60 years or older, are matched with volunteer callers. The volunteer calls once a week at an agreed upon time and talks with the client. To refer a senior client, call 703-324-5411; to volunteer, call 703-324-5406.

**5. Fairfax Area Agency on Aging Senior Friendship Program** helps the senior citizen who is isolated and homebound to be matched with community volunteers who provide companionship and support through weekly visits. To refer a senior client, call 703-324-5411; to volunteer, call 703-324-5406.

**6. Personal Emergency Response System (PERS)** is an excellent investment for peace of mind for those homebound seniors, because they can call for help and get assistance for themselves. When the person touches a small button on a necklace (or wristband) a signal is sent over the telephone lines to a control center that is staffed by emergency specialists. If the center does not get a voice response from the person then an emergency situation is assumed and help is sent immediately. If the person can answer the specialist then the specialist can be told what the existing situation is and shall respond appropriately to the caller's emergency.

Med-Alert (1-800-MED-ALERT) is one company to provide this service at a cost of \$50 for a one-time sign-up fee and a \$30 monthly monitoring fee.

**7. Safe Return Program of the Alzheimer's Association** is a nationwide registration and identification program that assists in the safe return of people who wander and get lost due to Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Registration of individuals can be made through the Association's website, <http://www.alz.org/caregiver/programs/safereturn.htm> , or by calling its toll free number: (888) 572-8566, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (central time). There is a \$45 fee.

The local chapter of the Association is the National Capital Area Chapter:

11240 Waples Mill Road, Suite 402

Fairfax, VA 22030

866-259-0042

<http://www.alz-nca.org>

**8. Commercial Banking:** One service that is not tapped often due to lack of promotion, possibly on purpose, is that banks will give free assistance to the senior citizen, such as a recent widow, who has never written a check much less balanced a checkbook. A bank officer will make a house call if the situation warrants. Seniors can feel comfortable that the officer will guide and assist with safety tips to prevent a senior from being victimized. There are also banking safety tip brochures.

**9. Grocery Stores:** The major grocery stores are cooperative with assisting a person who is noticed or found "wandering" around the parking area or inside the store. Employees are made aware of this possibly happening at times and are on the alert. If it has been ascertained that the person in need of assistance has come alone, then the police come and aid that person in returning home.

### Additional or Modified Services Recommended

1. Mason District should coordinate an effort with the Fairfax TRIAD, Department of Family Services, and District civic associations to extend their programs and services to the neighborhood level.
  - Query each civic association in Mason District to find out what each is doing to promote/advocate the safety of seniors in their neighborhoods. Analyze this information to determine which parts of the community would benefit from additional assistance in this effort (for example, help a neighborhood organization develop a "Senior Friendship" program of its own)
  - Conduct focus groups on senior concerns regarding crime and safety issues at the neighborhood level on a regular basis (twice yearly) and use the information to keep County organizations current on these issues.
2. Mason District should work with the local business community to determine if formal employee training and/or guidelines for helping a senior in need is necessary.
3. Mason District should work with the business community (for example, banks), the religious community, and other parts of the County government to provide presentations through the civic organizations on crime/safety. These presentations could be broadcast over the Fairfax County channel and then archived for additional access in an appropriate location on the Fairfax County website.
4. To help individual seniors with unwanted solicitations at their homes, Mason District should work with appropriate organizations (civic associations and business community) to provide lawn signs stating "Absolutely No Soliciting". In addition, provide seniors with a "hotline" to contact the appropriate District or County staff to report unwanted and repeated solicitations.
5. Mason District should work with civic associations to explore the feasibility of having available, within communities, "safe houses" similar to the school program to indicate to a senior who he/she can go in an emergency.
6. Mason District should work with Fairfax County and the business community to educate our seniors about the steps to take to prevent being victimized electronically (for example, identity theft). Fairfax County should take steps to have localized resources for resolving consumer issues of this nature (*i.e.*, add information about this type of event to the County website and find other ways in which to "push" this type of information to community seniors).