

The older adult population in the US is growing quickly—there are more than 46 million older adults in the US and that number is projected to increase to 90 million by 2050. Older Americans overwhelmingly desire to live in place independently and productively. To support this growth, it is crucial for public health departments to act now to incorporate healthy aging practices into their assessment, planning and overall initiatives designed to protect and promote the health of people of all ages, including the social and environmental needs that affect their health.

## Healthy Aging

Healthy aging is the process of maintaining and promoting physical, mental (cognitive and emotional), spiritual, meaningful social engagement, and social well-being and function as people age.

## Age-Friendly Public Health System (AFPHS)

An Age-Friendly public Health System is one that recognizes aging as a core public health issue and leverages its skills and capacities to improve the health and well-being of older adults.

PHAB encourages health departments to include initiatives and strategies focused on healthy aging and the creation of an Age-Friendly Public Health System (AFPHS) into their work on accreditation. This tip sheet is provided to health departments to suggest foundational strategies for using healthy aging efforts in the accreditation journey. These ideas are based on the AFPHS framework developed by Trust for America's Health (TFAH). PHAB offers additional details in a working paper entitled "Healthy Aging and Health Department Accreditation Think Tank Report with Recommendations" (January 2021).

## Age-Friendly Public Health System and Accreditation Standards and Measures

### State/Community/Tribal Health Assessment and Improvement Plans (EPHS/Domains 1 and 5)

The first component of TFAH's AFPHS framework encourages health departments to collect data to assess community health status (including inequities) and aging population needs to inform the development of interventions. The health assessment process presents opportunities to advance healthy aging by including older adult health data in the state/community health assessment and related processes – e.g., what data are collected, how and where they are collected, who is involved in the process, what messages are resulting from the findings to inform targeted action, how the findings are communicated, and who delivers and receives the findings.

### Strengthen, Support, and Mobilize Communities and Partnerships to Improve Health (EPHS/Domain 4)

The second component of the AFPHS framework highlights the health department roles of connecting and convening multiple sectors and professions that provide the supports, services, and infrastructure to promote healthy aging. Community engagement and partnerships are key components of advancing healthy aging and developing an AFPHS. Health departments should be encouraged to connect with and/or convene aging stakeholders such as the aging services network, Age-Friendly Communities, and Age-Friendly Health Systems. This function can be viewed by health departments as part of their role as chief health strategist for their jurisdiction.

### Communicate Effectively to Inform and Educate People About Health & Improve and Innovate Public Health Functions (EPHS/Domains 3 and 9\*)

The AFPHS framework encourages health departments to communicate and disseminate research findings and best practices to support healthy aging. Activities can include developing communication plans and strategies that consider validated standards or tips for reaching and communicating with populations of older adults, and encouraging health departments to develop messaging to promote and share evidence-based practices, and practice-based evidence to support healthy aging.

### Assure an Effective System that Enables Equitable Access to the Individual Services and Care (EPHS/Domain 7)

The AFPHS framework also focuses on coordinating existing supports and services to avoid duplication of efforts, identify gaps, and increase access to services and supports; and complementing and supplementing existing supports and services, particularly in terms of integrating clinical and population health approaches. Activities could include working with health care providers to introduce the Age-Friendly Health Systems framework and educate their workforce about healthy aging best practices and evidence; introducing the AFPHS framework to aging stakeholders, including Age-Friendly Communities leaders; and, working with Medicaid and other purchasers of aging-related services to incorporate healthy aging incentives into their programs.

## Additional Resources on Healthy Aging

- Alzheimer's Association Public Health Resources: <https://alz.org/professionals/public-health>
- Association of State and Territory Health Officials (ASTHO) HBI Road Map Module: <https://learn.astho.org/p/hbi-action-plan>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging Program and Healthy Aging Data Portal: <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/agingdata/index.html>
- Healthy Brain Initiative Roadmap: <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/2018-2023-Road-Map-508.pdf>
- HBI Road Map for Indian Country: <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/healthybrain/pdf/HBI-Road-Map-for-Indian-Country-508.pdf>
- Healthy Aging in Action: <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/healthy-aging-in-action508.pdf>
- Trust for America's Health (TFAH) Age-Friendly Public Health: <https://www.tfah.org/initiatives/age-friendly-public-health/>

This document uses the language in the current (2020) version of the Essential Public Health Services (EPHS). See <https://phnci.org/national-frameworks/10-ephs>.

\*EPHS 9 corresponds to Domains 9 and 10 of the PHAB Standards & Measures, version 1.5.