

## VISION STATEMENT

Snohomish County Long Term Care & Aging is dedicated to creating and sustaining:

- a caring and compassionate community that fully understands the aging process and the issues involved in meeting the needs of older persons
- a community that endeavors to improve the quality of life for older persons, their families and caregivers in Snohomish County
- a community composed of older persons who maximize their independence and have freedom in life choices
- a community where older persons are respected, valued and accepted as individuals who both contribute to and are supported by the community
- a community that supports and reaches out to older persons who are disabled, isolated, low-income, persons of color, limited English speaking, or any who face barriers to full participation in programs and services.

This vision for a compassionate, elder-friendly community would ensure that all older persons, especially older adults who are vulnerable or disabled:

- have adequate income for retirement.
- have their basic need for food, nutrition and shelter met.
- have access to affordable health care, including dental care, mental health services and prescription medications.
- have meaningful opportunities, both paid and volunteer, to remain active in the community.
- are supported in their efforts to plan and manage their own lives.
- are protected from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- are linked to the community, regardless of their geographic location, income, cultural background or ability to speak English.
- are able to readily gain information and assistance in accessing services.
- have affordable housing options and a transportation system providing access to community activities and services.
- benefit from a physical environment that encourages connection rather than isolation.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Snohomish County Long Term Care & Aging provides community leadership on issues related to aging. It plans, coordinates, and advocates for the development and delivery of a range of services that help older persons and younger adults with disabilities meet their needs and maximize their potential.

### **We accomplish this mission by:**

- collaborating with provider agencies, local governments, and businesses to plan for the changing demographics of our community.
- advocating, monitoring, evaluating, educating and commenting upon policies, programs, and other community actions that affect older individuals.
- targeting our efforts toward the most economically, socially, and physically vulnerable members of our community.
- providing support to family caregivers and assisting them in sustaining their caregiving efforts.
- assisting adults with functional impairments in accessing, obtaining and effectively using necessary services which will enable them to maintain the highest level of independence in the least restrictive setting and avoid or delay institutionalization.
- promoting and protecting the rights of residents in long-term care facilities, including nursing homes, adult family homes and boarding homes.
- encouraging, supporting and funding programs and institutions which assist older persons in remaining active, independent, and engaged in civic affairs.

## **STAKEHOLDERS AND PROVIDERS**

LTCA works closely with a wide network of service providers, clients, and community members invested in creating an elder-friendly community. The Area Agency on Aging continually receives input and guidance from this network through both formal and informal processes.

Staff provide guidance, assistance, and services to help the Council on Aging (COA) be effective in the community. The COA meets monthly to discuss issues and topics of concern, as well as to vote on proposals, service provisions, plans, and legislative advocacy campaigns. Service providers and the general public are invited to attend COA meetings.

In addition, approximately three COA meetings each year feature a community education session on topics such as “Maintain Your Brain” or “Managing Mood, Mind, and Stress for Healthy Aging.” These presentations are jointly sponsored by LTCA, COA, and The Everett Clinic, the largest physician practice in Snohomish County. The sessions are promoted in the Clinic’s newsletter distributed to 140,000 households and in local newspapers.

Service providers offer input at COA Finance, Allocation and Evaluation Committee meetings and regularly make presentations to the full COA membership. The COA Legislative Committee agrees upon a yearly advocacy agenda, attends meetings with local, state, and federal legislators, and helps organize candidate forums and legislative receptions.

The COA Senior Center Committee provides a forum for all the senior center directors in the county to meet, exchange ideas, collaborate on projects and purchasing strategies, and stay abreast of the latest research in their field. COA members serve as liaisons to the individual senior centers and have assisted with various projects including conducting focus groups and troubleshooting computer problems.

The COA Mental Wellness Committee continues to research best practices and advocate for expanded mental health services for older adults. In 2010, the committee held its first annual mental health and aging event for the community.

In recent years, the COA has encouraged its members to join other boards and organizations in order to advocate for the needs of older adults. Currently, COA members serve on the North Sound Mental Health Advisory Board, the Chemical Dependency/Mental Health Tax Advisory Board, and the Providence Palliative Care Advisory board. Furthermore, COA members have started an intergenerational mentoring program at Cocoon House, a non-profit organization serving homeless youth.

Staff meet regularly with service providers in formal settings (such as Request for Proposal processes and monitoring visits), as well as more informal situations. Service providers are currently working with staff on methods to better address communities of color, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) clients, and populations from the most rural areas. As an extension of our 7.01 Plan with tribal entities, staff members regularly attend the Tulalip Tribes Elder Breakfast and other events.

Staff members also work with providers and other government entities to expand knowledge about changing demographics and to plan for an elder-friendly community. Most recently, staff collaborated with the Snohomish Community Services Division to include seniors in a Low-Income Needs Assessment, and with the Snohomish County Health District on an assessment of the health status of county residents age 55+.