

## **Prioritization of Discretionary Funds**

(Guidelines for Funding Decisions)

Snohomish County Long Term Care & Aging (LTCA), the Area Agency on Aging for Snohomish County, administers federal, state and local funds for services provided to older people and adults with disabilities. Most of the funding the Agency receives is designated for specific services such as COPES and Medicaid Personal Care, support to family caregivers, and USDA funds for meal programs. The agency also receives “discretionary” funding from the federal Older Americans Act and the State Senior Citizens Services Act. These funds are more flexible and can be used to support services to adults age 60 and over; primarily based on locally defined needs.

LTCA uses an established process to make decisions when changes occur in the amount of funding available. Following the guidelines listed below, the Council on Aging’s Finance, Allocation and Evaluation Committee reviews information provided by LTCA staff and then develops recommendations that are presented to the full Council. Service providers, as well as the general public, have an opportunity to provide input, review, and comment on the funding recommendations. All meetings of the Committee and Council are open to the public.

### **Priority in Funding Services**

1. In making decisions to increase or decrease funding for services, the agency’s first priority is to create and maintain a comprehensive and coordinated network of services for older persons in Snohomish County.
2. An emphasis will be placed on maintaining and enhancing services that are targeted for frail and vulnerable older persons. A person is considered vulnerable if he/she meets the following criteria:
  - A. Is unable to perform one or more activities of daily living without assistance due to physical, cognitive, emotional, psychological or social impairment; **or**
  - B. Has behavioral or mental health problems that could result in premature institutionalization, or is unable to provide for his/her own health and safety primarily due to cognitive, behavioral, psychological/emotional conditions which inhibit decision-making and threaten the ability to remain independent; **and**
  - C. Lacks an informal support system: has no family, friends, neighbors or others who are both willing and able to perform the service(s) needed or the informal support system needs to be temporarily or permanently supplemented.

## **Factors in Funding Decisions**

Although flexibility exists in the use of discretionary funds, the federal Older Americans Act mandates the following services be funded:

- Congregate Nutrition
- Home Delivered Meals
- In-Home Services
- Legal Services
- Access Services (outreach, information & assistance, case management, and/or transportation services)

In addition, Information and Assistance is considered central to a comprehensive and coordinated network of services for older persons. The Older Americans Act of 1965 called for Area Agencies on Aging to “provide for the establishment and maintenance of information and assistance services in sufficient numbers to assure that all older individuals... have reasonably convenient access” to services.

## **Approach to Developing Funding Priorities**

When prioritizing services for additional funding, or when reductions in funding must be made, the following strategic questions will be considered:

- Does the service reach the priority population?  
(In addition to the vulnerable elderly described above, the priority population includes those with greatest economic or social need, low-income racial and ethnic groups and other under-represented groups, those with severe disabilities, rural elderly, limited English-speaking, and those with Alzheimer’s disease or related disorders.)
- Does the service enhance a person’s ability to live independently?
- To what extent does the service fill a gap or unmet need in the network?
- Does the service respond to a new need or shift in demographics?
- Is the service cost-effective compared with the benefits received?
- Are there other primary sources of funding for the service?
- Should current and historical levels of funding for the service continue?
- What amount of funding is necessary to maintain adequate operating levels of the service?