

GREATER SPRINGFIELD
SENIOR SERVICES, INC.

Area Plan 2022-2025

Greater Springfield Senior Services Area Plan 2022-2025

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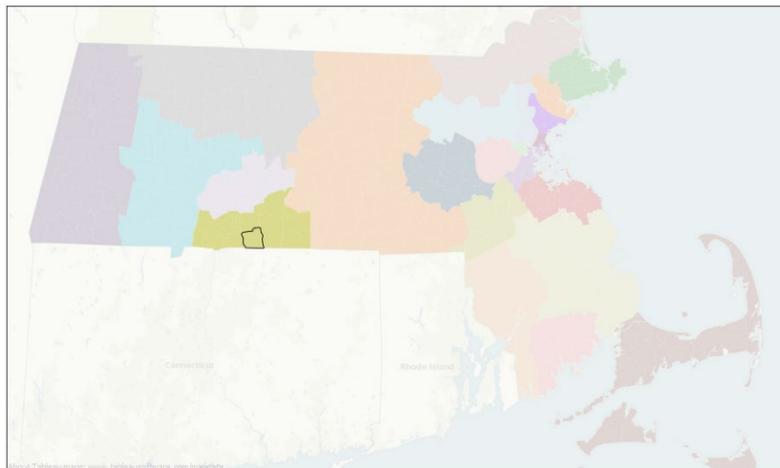
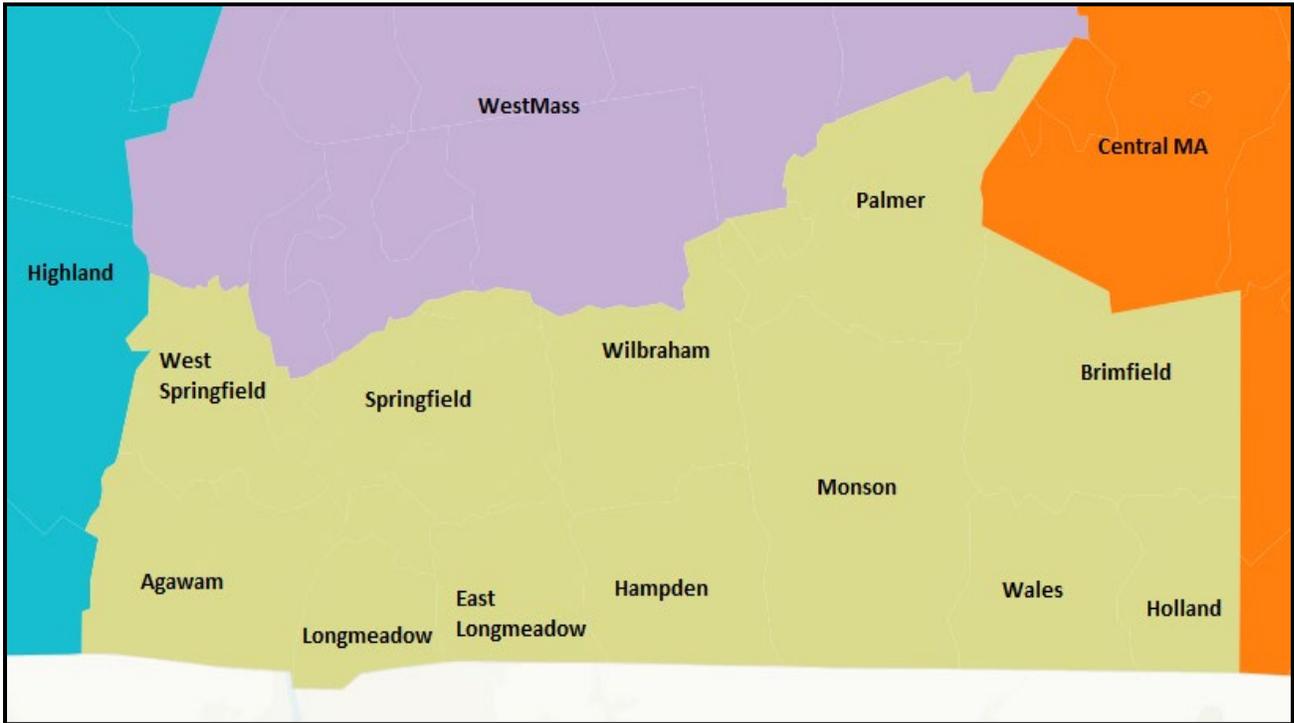
Planning and Service Area Map

Greater Springfield Senior Services, Inc. Area Agency on Aging/Aging Services Access Point

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"Greater Springfield Senior Services, Inc., is dedicated to maintaining the quality of life for older adults, caregivers, and those living with a disability through the provision of programs and services that foster independence, dignity, safety, and peace of mind."

~ Greater Springfield Senior Services, Inc.'s Mission Statement

Incorporated in 1972, Greater Springfield Senior Services, Inc. (GSSSI) is a private non-profit organization funded in part through contracts with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA). GSSSI is dedicated to being the area leader in improving the quality of life for older adults, those living with a disability, and caregivers by providing and supporting community-based services and supports that foster independence and individual choice.

The GSSSI program service area (PSA) includes the following twelve cities and towns: Agawam, Brimfield, East Longmeadow, Hampden, Holland, Longmeadow, Palmer, Springfield, Monson, Wales, West Springfield, and Wilbraham. In addition to its work within the twelve town PSA, Greater Springfield Senior Services also investigates reports of abuse and neglect by providing protective services to older adults residing in Belchertown, Chicopee, Granby, Holyoke, Ludlow, South Hadley, and Ware.

In 1965, the Older Americans Act was enacted by Congress to authorize programs and services that provide critical supports to older adults, persons living with disabilities, and caregivers. This Act was recently reauthorized in 2020, provides the foundation for the network of Area Agencies on Aging(AAA) across the country, including the 21 AAA's in the Commonwealth.

Greater Springfield Senior Services serves as the Area Agency on Aging and the Aging Services Access Point (ASAP) for the PSA. GSSSI aims to be an advocate for older adults and continuously monitors and supports local programming available in the PSA, with particular attention paid to those programs that serve older adults with the most significant socio-economic needs, those who identify as a member of a minority group, those with limited English proficiency, individuals residing in rural areas, and those who are at risk for institutional placement. In addition, GSSSI uses its expertise and resources to advocate for public policies and regulations that support healthy aging, develop new programs to address emerging needs, and engage area stakeholders around the ever-changing landscape of services available for older adults, caregivers, and those living with disabilities.

GSSSI seeks to achieve its mission and goals through partnerships and collaborations with public and private organizations within the local community and with regional and statewide organizations that provide a no-wrong door approach to services and supports. GSSSI is a member of the Aging and Disability Resource Consortium (ADRC) and is a founding member of the Springfield Dementia Friendly Committee.

As the AAA, GSSSI conducts a Needs Assessment study every four years to identify priority areas and gaps in support and services offered in the PSA to develop the Area Plan. The Area Plan serves as a summary of GSSSI's strategy to address needs identified nationally by the Administration for Community

Living (ACL) which are listed below:

- Strengthen and expand the **Core Programs** of the Older Americans Act (OAA)
- Engage in **Participant-Directed/Person-Centered Planning** with identified priority groups so they can access resources & supports.
- Support continued **Elder Justice** efforts, including protecting the rights of older adults and the prevention of abuse and neglect.

In addition, the Area Plan seeks to address locally identified needs such as housing, transportation, caregiver supports, and a range of health concerns. The developed plan will guide Greater Springfield Senior Services for the next four years as it seeks to strengthen and develop programs within its PSA.

GSSSI's Needs Assessment study was completed from September 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020. In previous years, GSSSI conducted a multi-pronged approach to the study, conducting in-person listening sessions and surveying participants of community dining sites. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, GSSSI's 2020 study was conducted via mailed paper surveys and virtual meetings with area stakeholders utilizing online platforms such as Go-To-Meeting and Zoom. A telephonic survey was also conducted with GSSSI's Adult Foster Care program caregivers, using area college interns in the Spring of 2021 to gain further feedback and insight regarding caregiver needs.

Through these efforts, GSSSI received input from 324 older adults, caregivers, and other key stakeholders, including members of the GSSSI Board of Directors and Area Agency on Aging Advisory Board, to determine priorities and concerns within GSSSI's PSA. The results aligned with the statewide Needs Assessment, indicating that many older adults are concerned with housing, transportation, and social isolation. Areas of concern related to caregivers include the need for increased caregiver support, such as accessing respite options and finding time for self-care. Furthermore, GSSSI asked additional COVID-related questions to the caregiver survey pool and found that 41% stated they experienced increased caregiving responsibilities since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and 75% said their stress level concerning their caregiving status rose significantly since March 2020. Rounding out the top five areas of concerns identified in the 2020 Needs Assessment were Mental Health and Behavioral Health and Health Care supports, specifically accessing health care/mental health options throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Examples included the lack of care coordination and increased prescription medication costs. A comparison of the 2016 vs. 2020 Needs Assessment Survey is included below.

| 2016 | 2020 |
|---|---|
| # 1 Transportation | #1 Transportation |
| # 2 <i>Social Isolation</i> * | # 2 Housing |
| # 2 <i>Maintaining Independence</i> * | # 3 <i>Social Isolation</i> * |
| # 2 <i>Health Care</i> * | # 3 <i>Caregiver Supports</i> * |
| # 3 Economic Security | # 4 Mental Health and Behavioral Health |
| # 4 Housing | # 5 Health Care |
| # 5 Mental Health and Behavioral Health | |

* There was a three-way tie for the number two position in 2016.

* There was a two-way tie for the number three position in 2020.

GSSSI Area Plan Goals

The GSSSI Area Plan outlines seven primary goals of the Area Agency on Aging and specifically identifies agency-wide programs and services that GSSSI will employ to achieve its goals.

The goals identified within this plan are:

- To continue to information and referral services and outreach to the local community.
- Ensure older adults, persons living with a disability, and caregivers have access to a wide range of in-home support services to meet their care needs & support their right to make choices specific to their lifestyle.
- Provide a diverse menu of Nutrition services in accordance with EOE Nutrition Program guidelines and consider the community's changing needs.
- To continue to offer assistance and support for caregivers who are overburdened with the stress and challenges related to their caregiver role.
- To offer evidence-based healthy aging programs that support health promotion and support the community's Age-Friendly and Dementia Friendly initiatives.
- To prevent, detect, assess, and investigate elder abuse & neglect and protect the rights of older adults, people living with disabilities, and caregivers across the PSA by providing equal access to the justice system.
- To advocate for residents in skilled nursing homes, rest homes, and assisted living facilities.

Within these seven overarching goals, the GSSSI Area Plan guides the comprehensive system of services and supports intended for residents in the GSSSI PSA. Throughout the 2022-2025 timeframe for this Area Plan, GSSSI will continue to strengthen and support the programs that have become a helping hand for so many older adults in the local community. GSSSI is committed to the continuous understanding of the changing needs of older adults and aims to empower them to live their lives with dignity in a place and manner of their choosing.

CONTEXT

Greater Springfield Senior Services, Inc. is one of 21 Area Agencies on Aging in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and one of 25 Aging Service Access Points (ASAP) within Massachusetts. GSSSI has served in its capacity as the Area Agency on Aging since 1972 and plays a significant role in planning and community development. GSSSI leverages its expertise and resources to advocate for public policies that support healthy aging, develop new programs to address emerging concerns, and identify the needs of community members. In addition, GSSSI continuously listens to its stakeholders and engages in coalition building to address needs and gaps for residents in its program service area (PSA).

GSSSI developed this plan with guidance from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs on federal and state focus areas and with direction & assistance from older adults and their advocates living within the PSA. In addition, GSSSI has researched trends and data within its PSA to understand better our communities and the residents who reside within them.

Federal and State Focus Areas

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs and the U.S. Administration for Community Living identified three primary focus areas that all local Area Plans must address within their PSA.

- The Older Americans Act **Core Programs** are services authorized and funded through this legislation. They are grouped under broader categories that include the following:
 - Title III-B: Supportive services that provide access to support, in-home assistance, and legal services.
 - Title III-C1: Congregate meals located within community dining sites that offer nutritious meals and combat social isolation.
 - Title III-C2: Home-delivered meals that provide a nutritious lunchtime meal and serve as a daily wellness check for homebound individuals.
 - Title III-D: Evidence-based health education that focuses on disease prevention and health promotion.
 - Title III-E: The Massachusetts Family Caregiver Support Program provides one-to-one counseling and information to caregivers and access to supports and respite.
 - Assisted Living and Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs that provide advocacy for residents of assisted living and long-term care facilities.
- **Person-Centered Planning** practices connect individuals with resources & services while focusing on personal choice and providing a degree of control over the support they choose.
- **Elder Justice** efforts that protect the rights of all older adults and prevent elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Greater Springfield Senior Services will use these focus areas to provide the framework for developing and providing support and services across the PSA for the duration of this area plan.

Local Needs Assessment

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs provides a format for each AAA to conduct a Needs Assessment within its PSA. GSSSI will incorporate those findings into this Area Plan to ensure that the plan targets the needs of individuals living within its PSA. GSSSI completed most of the Needs Assessments between September 2020 and December 2020. During that time, GSSSI distributed paper surveys to target populations, including older adults whose first language is not English, older adults who identify as Hispanic or Latino, and older adults whose income falls below the federal poverty line (FPL). In addition, GSSSI held virtual listening sessions with older adults and advocates on the GSSSI Board of Directors and the AAA Advisory Board. Finally, to gain additional insight on the needs and concerns of caregivers, with the assistance of local college interns, GSSSI conducted a telephonic survey in the Spring of 2021 to caregivers currently enrolled in the GSSSI Adult Foster Care Program. GSSSI received feedback from 324 older adults, their caregivers, and advocates through these efforts. Overall, the findings aligned with the statewide Needs Assessment indicating that a large percentage of older adults are concerned with housing, transportation, and social isolation.

Areas of concern related to caregivers include the need for increased caregiver support, such as accessing respite care and finding time for self-care. Furthermore, GSSSI asked additional COVID-19 related questions to the caregiver survey pool, and 41% stated they experienced increased caregiving responsibilities since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and 75% said their stress level concerning their caregiving status rose significantly since March of 2020. Rounding out the top five areas of concerns identified in the 2020 Needs Assessment were Mental Health and Behavioral Health and Health Care supports, specifically accessing health care/mental health options throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Examples included the lack of care coordination and increased prescription medication costs. A comparison of the 2016 vs. 2020 Needs Assessment Survey is included in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Needs Assessment Comparison from years 2016 and 2020

| 2016 | 2020 |
|---|---|
| # 1 Transportation | #1 Transportation |
| # 2 Social Isolation | # 2 Housing |
| # 2 Maintaining Independence | # 3 Social Isolation |
| # 2 Health Care | # 3 Caregiver Supports |
| # 3 Economic Security | # 4 Mental Health and Behavioral Health |
| # 4 Housing | # 5 Health Care |
| # 5 Mental Health and Behavioral Health | |

* There was a three-way tie for the number two slot in 2016.

** There was a two-way tie for the number three slot in 2020.

Greater Springfield Senior Services, Inc. has concluded the following assessment statements based on the Needs Assessment results.

- Older adults in the GSSSI PSA want access to readily accessible transportation options.
- Older adults in the GSSSI PSA need more affordable housing options, including more resources to remain in their current homes.
- Older adults are becoming increasingly socially isolated, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a coordinated effort is needed to develop appropriate supports to reach those elders.
- Caregivers have experienced increased stress during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Older adults and persons living with disabilities want to improve/increase care coordination to understand the complex health and support services system.
- Older adults and caregivers need access to more mental health supports that can accommodate the caregiver’s lifestyles.

GSSSI also completed a review of available [U.S. Census Bureau](#) data and the [Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative Community Profile](#) to better understand the population of GSSSI's PSA.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2010, of the total population of GSSSI's PSA, 291,482 residents, 59,874 or 20.5% are over the age of 60 in comparison, the state average of residents over the age of 60 falls at 17.7%. Furthermore, per the 2018 Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative Community Profile, of the estimated population of GSSSI's PSA, 5.7% of residents over the age of 65 had income levels below the poverty line in the year 2017, with the City of Springfield having the most significant percentage at 13.1% (the state average is 8.7%). Additionally, on average, 31% of residents in the PSA over the age of 60 live alone, with an average of 15.4% reporting that they have difficulty with self-care (7.9% is the statewide average.)

According to the projections from the UMass Donohue Institute Population Estimates Project, all twelve towns in GSSSI's primary PSA have seen a steady growth of adults over the age of 60 since the 2010 Census (2020 Census results were not available before the publication of this document) and this trend will continue. Additionally, the data shows that four of the most rural towns in GSSSI's PSA are projected to significantly surpass the statewide average of a 12.8% growth of the older adult population by 2025. Additionally, all twelve towns in GSSSI's PSA will experience a projected growth rate of between six to twenty-two percent over adults aged 60 plus within this Plan's timeframe. See Table 2 [below](#).

| <u>Table 2: Population Change Projections</u> | 2010 Census Population 60 + | 2020 Projections Population 60 + | 2025 Projections Population 60 + | Percentage Change from 2020 to 2025 |
|--|------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Springfield | 23,884 | 29,046 | 31,594 | + 12.1% |
| Agawam | 7064 | 9139 | 10,250 | + 12.2% |
| Brimfield | 753 | 1184 | 1379 | + 21.6% |
| East Longmeadow | 4026 | 5228 | 5885 | + 12.6% |
| Hampden | 1347 | 1887 | 2160 | + 14.5% |
| Holland | 453 | 735 | 886 | + 20.5% |
| Longmeadow | 4081 | 4891 | 5222 | + 6.8% |
| Monson | 1701 | 2498 | 2931 | + 17.3% |
| Palmer | 2496 | 3226 | 3689 | + 14.4% |
| Wales | 368 | 576 | 648 | + 12.5% |
| West Springfield | 5971 | 7395 | 8074 | + 9.3% |
| Wilbraham | 3632 | 4719 | 5190 | + 10% |
| Statewide | 1,272,271 | 1,712,133 | 1,930,643 | +12.8% |

Data Source: UMass Donohue Institute MassDOT Vintage 2018 Population Projections, September 2018 ([UMDI-DOT V2018](#))

GSSSI also reviewed additional reports provided by EOE, including call trend data from GSSSI's Information and Referral Department and discussions held with all twelve Council's on Aging in the GSSSI PSA during the FFY 2021 Title 111 sub-grantee monitoring period. This information and data compiled throughout this process provided direction for the GSSSI FFY 2022-2025 Area Plan. GSSSI will use this data to develop strategies to respond to the needs of older adults, persons living with disabilities, and their caregivers in the years to come.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 1: To continue to provide information & referral services and outreach supports to the local community.

Information and Referral

GSSSI will continue to serve as a single information entry point for community members to support the Commonwealth's "No Wrong Door Initiative." The No Wrong Door (NWD) System initiative is a collaborative effort of statewide Aging & Disability Resource Consortiums (ADRC) that support state efforts to streamline access to long-term services and support (LTSS) options for older adults and individuals living with disabilities. In order to connect callers with the appropriate information, all GSSSI Information and Referral Specialists must undergo at minimum 40 hours of training annually with a focus on a range of community supports and services. Ongoing training efforts will include principles of customer services, dealing with callers under the age of 60, and other topics identified in the Fiscal Year 2020 Call Trend Reports and the Needs Assessment Project. During the unprecedented events of 2020, the I&R team was able to shift their attention to gathering and disseminating the evolving spectrum of information related to the pandemic, particularly food insecurity resources, assisting callers in setting up COVID-19 vaccine appointments while maintaining a sizable call volume.

Additionally, all GSSSI Specialists receive intensive training on potential economic supports available in the community. Two I&R Specialists are certified as counselors in the SHINE program (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of All) and assist callers on a wide range of issues relating to Medicare and prescription medications.

GSSSI is proud to partner with community organizations to bring expertise to staff and consumers. For example, the MassHealth Enrollment Center (MEC) has dedicated personnel GSSSI staff can access to facilitate applications and resolve any processing issues. They also provide training to GSSSI staff upon request about MassHealth and the application process to better assist their consumers in the field.

GSSSI ensures all staff, not just I&R Specialists, have access to translation services. The GSSSI Human Resources Department keeps a list of all bilingual staff available to assist with translation services. GSSSI also contracts with Language Line Solutions, which can telephonically assist with translation in over 240 languages. GSSSI will maintain its Teletype (TTY) phone, and I&R will be training annually on its use to help with communication of Deaf and hard-of-hearing callers. GSSSI will maintain its membership in the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) to have all the Information and Referral Department AIRS certified. Additionally, the I&R team will continue to make strides towards becoming AIRS accredited.

Outreach

Greater Springfield Senior Services will continue to engage in community-wide outreach efforts to inform residents of the PSA about GSSSI services and supports and other community resources. GSSSI has fostered and maintained a relationship with Baystate Health, the largest healthcare system in the area that serves over 800,000 people throughout Western New England. GSSSI was asked to participate in Project ECHO. Additionally, GSSSI was invited to participate in an evidence-based program called Tai Ji Quan: Movement for Better Balance, funded through Dartmouth Hitchcock & Baystate Health's Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grants. GSSSI utilizes volunteers to teach older adults in Springfield Tai Ji Quan to improve balance. Baystate provided GSSSI with funds for twenty new iPads to lend to participants when Covid-19 restricted in-person classes.

GSSSI also provides Title III-B funds to eight local Councils on Aging (Brimfield, Hampden, Holland, Monson, Palmer, Springfield, Wales, and Wilbraham) to provide direct assistance and outreach services residents of their cities and towns. Title III grantees will be supported by annual monitoring and training with GSSSI departments such as Protective Services and Information and Referral. Additionally, GSSSI has created a position of Outreach Director to centralize agency outreach activities and collect and analyze outreach data to identify gaps in community needs and services.

GSSSI will continue to offer agency materials in various languages, including Spanish and Russian, and continuously assess the need to translate documents into other languages based on community needs. In addition, GSSSI will review all of its outreach documents for literacy standards and ensure that they are available in multiple formats.

Housing was identified as the top priority in the 2016 and 2020 Needs Assessments. Survey respondents stated that they wanted to access more affordable housing options, but many did not understand how or where to access resources. GSSSI will ensure that all staff receive training on housing supports and will build new partnerships with housing supports, as appropriate.

Additionally, the I&R department will create a housing support guide to ensure that callers, internal staff, and community members have up-to-date information about affordable housing and potential grants and loans for housing repair.

I&R Specialists can also connect callers with the GSSSI Options Counselor (OC), who can give more hands-on support in determining housing and other support options. In addition, the O.C. is trained to have more in-depth, holistic discussions about services and supports the consumer may be interested in, including long-term housing supports.

In June 2021, GSSSI started four Supportive Housing Programs with the West Springfield Housing Authority and East Longmeadow Housing Authority. This housing model aims to ensure residents have access to services and supports to continue living independently. Residents will have access to a Supportive Housing Coordinator, in addition to tailored education and enhanced social supports. GSSSI is excited to continue building this program and assisting older adults in living a more active lifestyle.

Goal 2: Ensure that older adults, those living with a disability, and caregivers have access to a wide range of in-home support services that meet their care needs & support their right to make choices that fit their lifestyle.

In-Home Support Services

GSSSI administers many in-home care programs across its PSA, each with various funding sources. These programs include a broad range of services to support independence and individual choice. Services include but are not limited to personal care, homemaking services, meal preparation, grocery shopping, laundry, and transportation assistance. GSSSI uses an interdisciplinary team approach to assess and create a care plan for each consumer. In coordination with informal and formal supports, the consumer is at the center of and directs the care plan using person-centered planning methods. GSSSI Case Managers are trained to holistically assess each potential consumer and help connect them to supports and services which meet their needs. If a consumer is not eligible for the program for which they are being assessed, staff are trained to re-refer the consumer to the Information and Referral Department who will explore other services that may be more appropriate.

Access Services

The lack of accessible transportation was listed as a top concern in the 2020 Needs Assessment. GSSSI provides a Title III grant to the Town of Monson to provide transportation services for residents who lack access to the local Pioneer Valley Transit Authority services. In FFY 2019, the town provided 86 round-trip rides to medical appointments, grocery stores, and other social outings. However, FFY 2020 numbers were slightly lower due to the Covid-19 pandemic at 62 round trip rides.

GSSSI's I&R department maintains and updates a list of all local transportation options in the area include public transportation and rides through the local Councils on Aging.

Consumers in many of GSSSI's programs have access to transportation to medical appointments as a component of their care plan. However, many consumers still need to utilize transportation services to other appointments and social programs. GSSSI will continue to explore innovative ways to connect residents within its PSA to accessible transportation options. In addition, GSSSI staff will remain active on the Regional Coordinating Council for Transportation hosted by MassDOT.

Participant-Directed/Person-Centered Planning

GSSSI will ensure all relevant program staff have received training on and understand the benefits of person-centered planning. This will be accomplished through ongoing training to ensure consumers have an active voice in their care plans and the services and supports they wish to utilize.

GSSSI provides the Consumer-Directed Care Program and the Personal Care Management Program. These programs are participant-directed and offer consumers the ability to select and hire their own workers to perform personal care, grocery shopping, and other tasks. These programs allow the consumer a greater choice as they select the caregiver who assists them with their care needs. In these programs, the Case Manager or Skills Trainer acts as a facilitator to assist the consumer in creating their care plan. In addition, these programs can be priceless for those consumers who wish to have home-care workers who are fluent in their native language.

The Options Counseling Program at GSSSI will continue to utilize the person-centered planning model in which the consumer identifies their area of greatest need. The O.C. will then provide information about possible programs and services to meet those needs. If the consumer is agreeable, the O.C. will assist in making a warm-transfer referral and follow up with the consumer to make sure their needs are met. The program's goal is to empower the consumer to make an educated choice about what services they might need and build a rapport with the consumer to feel comfortable reaching back out in the future if needed.

Goal 3: Provide a diverse menu of Nutrition services that adhere to EOEA Nutrition Program guidelines and consider the community's changing needs.

Congregate Meals & Home-Delivered Meals

The Nutrition Program is one of the original core programs at Greater Springfield Senior Services. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, one of GSSSI's annual goals was to increase participant numbers in the congregate meal programs. However, most community dining sites are closed at this publication due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. GSSSI anticipates there will be a return to congregate dining in the future, but openings will likely be staggered, and it will take some time to see a return of pre-COVID-19 participant numbers. GSSSI and three town-run nutrition programs currently offer Grab & Go style meals until community dining sites re-open and COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. While GSSSI intends to

promote and support the re-opening of congregate dining sites, community sites offering Grab & Go meals report serving a significant number of new participants in the program. Many new participants state reluctance to "come into the building" to pick up their meals. Many prefer the Grab and Go style meals as they fit into their more active lifestyle. GSSSI and community partners will explore the possibility of offering a hybrid model (Congregate/Grab & Go) Nutrition program that meets ACL guidelines and attracts new participants to community dining sites.

In addition to community dining and Grab & Go meals, GSSSI continues to provide most of its Title III funding to the Home-Delivered Meal Program (HDM). GSSSI considers this a priority program, and during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the program saw a 37% increase in HDM referrals. GSSSI currently offers a hot lunchtime meal to homebound individuals within six towns, including the City of Springfield, in its PSA. For consumers who need evening and weekend meals, GSSSI offers cold suppers and frozen meals. The Nutrition Program also offers therapeutic meals to eligible consumers, including Medically Tailored Meals for consumers following a renal, cardiac, or diabetic diet. Pureed traditional meals are also available. In addition, GSSSI offers authentic Latino meals for HDM consumers twice a week, and pre-Covid, a Latino congregate meal, was offered five days a week at a local Springfield senior center. Finally, GSSSI awards Title III-C funding, through the ACL and EOEA, to five towns (Agawam, East Longmeadow, Longmeadow, Monson, and West Springfield) who use the funds to manage their nutrition programs following all required EOEA guidelines.

Currently, GSSSI's Medically Tailored Meal (MTM) program is only available to residents of Springfield. However, in January 2021, GSSSI was awarded a \$51,000, three-year Better Together Grant from Baystate Health Systems to expand the MTM program to Palmer, Wilbraham, Brimfield, Holland, and Wales. According to [Baystate Medical's 2019 Community Needs Assessment](#), the older adult population in the geographic areas suffers from an exponentially high cardiac, renal, diabetic disease rate. Additionally, the town of Palmer was identified as a food desert.

The project hopes to enroll 75 new MTM consumers in the program within the three-year grant period. In addition to offering consumers medically tailored meals, each new referral will be offered the chance to speak with the GSSSI Registered Dietician for nutrition education.

Nutrition Education

GSSSI offers Nutrition Education to community members in a variety of ways. In-home and telephonic nutrition consults are available to residents over 60 within GSSSI's PSA at no cost. A registered dietician will work with consumers to improve their diet, learn how to make healthier food choices, and use nutrition to help control chronic health conditions. Health education materials are also printed on the back of all Nutrition Program menus. In addition, when community dining sites are open, in-person education sessions will be planned to increase potential attendance.

The Nutrition Program will continue to provide emergency shelf-stable meals to mitigate the risk of consumers who cannot receive a home-delivered meal during the winter months and other emergencies. The shelf-stable meal packs contain approximately one-third of the Daily Recommended Intake recommendations. Traditionally, the shelf-stable meal packs provide three meals, but GSSSI increased the meal pack's size to include seven meals during the pandemic.

GSSSI is committed to making fresh fruits and vegetables more accessible to older adults. GSSSI distributes \$25,000 worth of Farmer's Markets annually to local COAs and other community partners. Additionally, GSSSI maintains an annual budget to supply all HDM consumers with seasonal fresh fruit and other specialty items quarterly. GSSSI will explore outside partnerships to continue this program on a more regular basis. GSSSI also participates in the Western Mass Food Partnership, a coalition with the

Food Bank of Western Mass and other local Aging Service Access Points, to provide home-delivered meals, nutrition assessments, and seasonal fresh produce boxes to Accountable Care Organization (ACO) members who have been identified as having food insecurity issues. Many of these members are under the age of 60 and live with a disability.

GSSSI surveys all Nutrition Program participants annually, and results will be used in menu planning, staff training, and Nutrition Program QA/QI activities. Results will also be made available to EOEA, the GSSSI Board of Directors, and the AAA Advisory Group.

GSSSI also awards Title III funding to Open Pantry Community Services, Inc., to support their emergency community pantry and their Senior Food Choice Program. The program is an education-based service that aims to promote healthy eating based on the USDA nutritional standards. Once a month, older adults are paired with a personal shopper at the pantry, who will assist and educate them about their food choices. In addition, the program hopes to take the stigma out of utilizing food pantries, especially amongst vulnerable older adults. During FFY 2020, the program served over 714 older adults in Hampden county.

Goal 4: To continue to offer assistance and support for caregivers who are overburdened with the stress and challenges related to their caregiver role

The Massachusetts Family Caregiver Support Program (MFCSP) at GSSSI meets the needs and addresses the challenges that many family caregivers silently face daily. Caregiver Specialists are trained to assist the caregiver in identifying their needs and the support they may require to continue their caregiving responsibilities. In addition, a Caregiver Specialist can help connect the caregiver with direct support such as a scholarship for respite care or a local support group.

The results of the telephonic caregiver survey GSSSI conducted in the Fall of 2021 concluded that caregivers' stress levels concerning their caregiver role increased significantly since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the MFCSP was awarded an Elder Mobile Outreach Team (EMOT) grant from EOEA to assist with caregiver mental health issues. GSSSI continues to be committed to advancing the health and well-being of older adults through offering access to timely, flexible behavioral health services. Older adults are the population s most seriously impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the EMOT funding, GSSSI provided caregivers in our PSA access to additional behavioral health supports and in-home respite for their loved one.

GSSSI is also able to award caregiver scholarships when funding is available. In response to the increased need for caregiver mental health supports, GSSSI is working with area licensed mental health clinicians by awarding caregiver scholarships so caregivers can access counseling. Counseling can happen in-home, telephonically, or virtually and at a time that works best for the caregiver.

Additionally, GSSSI is committed to assisting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (and other kinship caregivers.) GSSSI will reach out to local support groups and schools to educate the community about what services GSSSI may provide to this caregiving group.

Goal 5: To offer evidence-based healthy aging programs that support health promotion and support the community's Age-Friendly and Dementia Friendly initiatives.

Evidence-Based Programming

Greater Springfield Senior Services will continue to offer and support evidence-based healthy aging programs through its Title III D and Title III C programs. GSSSI currently has staff or agency volunteers trained in the following Evidence-Based programs: Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance, Chronic Disease Self-Management, Savvy Caregiver, Powerful Tools for Caregiving, Healthy Eating for Successful Living in Older Adults, Healthy IDEAS (Identifying Depression, Empowering Activities for Seniors), EnhanceWellness.

Due to the ongoing pandemic and staffing turnover, many programs are on hold or are being conducted virtually to the extent possible. GSSSI intends to re-focus its efforts to offer Savvy Caregiver as a virtual option to address the caregiver concerns brought forth in the Needs Assessment. Additionally, GSSSI hopes to train more volunteers to provide the Healthy IDEAS program to assist with mental health supports for homebound individuals. Finally, GSSSI remains committed to serving those who may identify as a minority and older adults with limited English proficiency and will seek new avenues to provide Evidence-Based programs to those groups.

Age and Dementia Friendly Initiatives

Many cities and towns in GSSSI's PSA have been designated as either Age-Friendly or Dementia-Friendly or both. GSSSI will meet with local leaders in those initiatives to assess how GSSSI can assist and promote those efforts. GSSSI was a founding member of the Springfield Dementia Friendly Coalition and will continue to serve that organization as a board member. GSSSI views its role as support to organizations interested in providing supports and fostering age-friendly community development. As local municipalities open for in-person programming, GSSSI anticipates expanding these efforts.

Goal 6: To prevent, detect, assess, and investigate elder abuse & neglect and protect the rights of older adults, people living with disabilities, and caregivers across the PSA by providing equal access to the justice system.

Elder Justice

GSSSI has been designated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) to assess reports of concern filed on members of the community 60 and older who are suffering from abuse or neglect in accordance with 651 CMR 5.00. Reports of concern may include allegations of physical, sexual, & emotional abuse and reports of financial exploitation, caretaker neglect, and self-neglect. The Protective Services Program's catchment area covers nineteen (19) cities and towns in Western Massachusetts.

The Protective Services Program must investigate reports of concern within regulatory timeframes. When abuse or neglect is substantiated, a Protective Services Worker provides an ongoing service plan to alleviate risk and make appropriate referrals to assist clients. The P.S. team will also connect at-risk older adults to services and supports using person-centered and participant-directed methods. The department has an after-hours response system that promotes parity and consumer safety. The P.S. team provides training to mandated reporters and educates the public about preventing and identifying elder abuse and neglect. The Protective Services Department works closely with the Hampden County District Attorney's Office and the Springfield Police Department on various initiatives to support at-risk older adults in the

community. The Protective Services Program Director recently began participating in an ad-hoc group comprised of the Springfield Police and Fire Department, Baystate Heath, and the Friends of the Homeless Shelter to strategize how to assist at-risk older adults with suitable supportive support temporary housing. GSSSI also participates in Project Call, collaborating with the Holyoke Police Department, West Mass Elder Care, and Woman Shelter Campaneros to assist at-risk older adult women to access community supports and resources.

The Protective Services Program Director has also started providing “Critical Incident Training” to new Police Recruits at the Western Massachusetts Police Academy on an ongoing basis. In addition, through a DPH-funded Elder Mental Health grant, GSSSI partners with the Behavioral Health Network (BHN) to embed a Crisis Clinician within the P.S. department. The Crisis Clinician is available for staff consults, short-term therapeutic interventions, and assistance with navigating a mental health crisis assessment.

GSSSI offers a Money Management Program for older adults who cannot manage their finances. Consumers who need monthly support paying their bills and managing their budget will be assigned highly trained Money Management volunteers. Adults within the bill payer program may discontinue service at any time. The Social Security Administration appoints GSSSI to manage Social Security and SSI benefits if needed. The monthly check-ins by the volunteers also serve as a financial wellness check to protect at-risk older adults against financial exploitation.

Legal Services

Greater Springfield Senior Services will continue its commitment to providing equal access to legal services across its PSA. In addition, GSSSI will work closely with its Title III-B legal services subgrantee, Community Legal Aid, Inc., to ensure targeted populations access education and legal assistance. Community Legal Aid is also dedicated to providing outreach and education to GSSSI staff and other community partners.

The I&R Department maintains a list of local, state, and national legal resources, including hotlines and programs specializing in Elder Law. In addition, information about scams and other legal services is frequently disseminated to all agency staff via email from the Information and Referral Department.

Goal 7: To advocate for residents in skilled nursing homes, rest homes, and assisted living facilities.

Ombudsman Programs

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program at GSSSI aims to ensure residents of long-term care facilities and rest homes have access to an advocate that can support them and provide guidance around resident rights and quality of care. Certified volunteers visit the 16 nursing facilities and two rest homes in the PSA weekly to meet with residents and resolve issues. The ongoing presence of the Ombudsman volunteers serves to build rapport and trust amongst the residents. For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, in-person visits were not allowed. Instead, volunteers were issued cell phones to facilitate private conversations, and, with assistance from facility staff, volunteers were also able to utilize virtual platforms to visit with residents. As restrictions have been lifted, volunteers have returned to making in-person visits following all local and state safety protocols. In addition, the Ombudsman team will collaborate with the Options Counseling and State Home Care Programs to support resident transitions back to the community.

GSSSI was asked to house one of five Assisted Living Ombudsman Program Coordinators in the state. In the Spring of 2021, a supervisor was hired and responsible for advocating and supporting residents in 66 assisted living facilities across seven counties. GSSSI is committed to supporting this program's growth

and will embark on volunteer recruitment during the beginning of this planning period.

GSSSI will ensure that all Ombudsman materials are present and available in multiple languages and formats at skilled nursing facilities, rest homes, and assisted living facilities across each program's PSA.

Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement

Greater Springfield Senior Services places a high value on Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement (QA/QI). GSSSI is committed to providing programs that continuously strive for excellence and improvement. GSSSI employs a dedicated QA/QI Director who guides and coordinates all agency QA/QI activities and develops the annual GSSSI Quality Improvement Plan. In addition to an agency Quality Improvement Plan, each program has its own Quality Improvement Plan summarizing the performance measures, data reports, and surveys utilized to measure compliance and improvement. GSSSI also conducts monthly Quality Improvement Committee meetings with representatives from each department. These meetings are an opportunity for departments to share their best practices, outcomes from performance improvement activities, and ongoing quality improvement education.

Customer Satisfaction Surveys

As part of GSSSI's commitment to excellence, consumer feedback is encouraged and used to improve the consumer experience with our programs and services. All GSSSI programs and services measure consumer satisfaction in some capacity. For example, some programs are provided with standardized surveys from EOEA or other funding sources, and GSSSI staff generate surveys to understand the consumer/stakeholder experience better.

The survey results are coordinated through the QA/QI Department annually, and programs use the information to assess performance and identify areas of improvement.

Conclusion

Greater Springfield Senior Services, Inc. will continue to meet older adults' existing and emerging needs across its program service area. GSSSI will invest in community collaborations and partnerships that leverage all funding sources available. GSSSI will work over the next four years to achieve the goals outlined in this area plan.

